

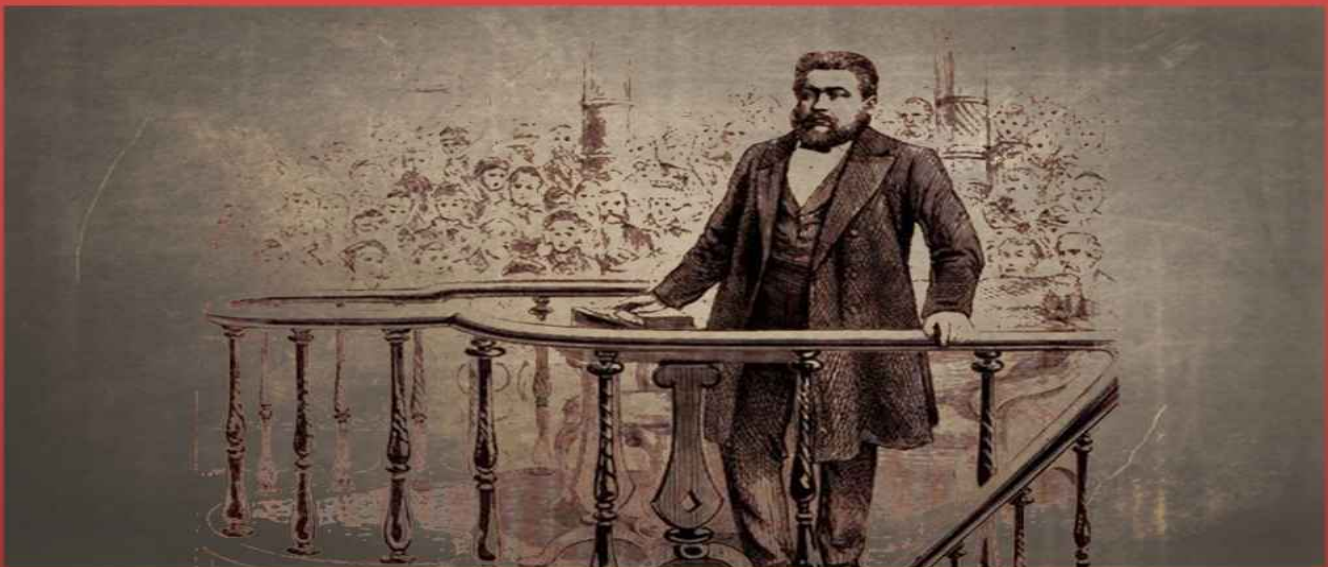
A journey through the Bible



Spurgeon's Commentary On

The Bible

An Exposition



Charles H. Spurgeon

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CHAPTER ONE

Genesis

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CHAPTER 1

Verses 1-31

[Genesis 1:1](#). *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.*

When that “beginning” was, we cannot tell. It may have been long ages before God fitted up this world for the abode of man, but it was not self-existent; it was created by God, it sprang from the will and the word of the all-wise Creator.

[Genesis 1:2](#). *And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep.*

When God began to arrange this world in order, it was shrouded in darkness, and it had been reduced to what we call, for want of a better

name, “chaos.” This is just the condition of every soul of man when God begins to deal with him in his grace; it is formless, and empty of all good things. “There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way.”

[Genesis 1:2](#). *And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.*

This was the first act of God in preparing this planet to be the abode of man, and the first act of grace in the soul is for the Spirit of God to move within it. How that Spirit of God comes there, we know not, we cannot tell how he acts, even as we cannot tell how the wind bloweth where it listeth, but until the Spirit of God moves upon the soul nothing is done towards its new creation in Christ Jesus.

[Genesis 1:3-4](#). *And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.*

“Light be.” “Light was.” God had but to speak the word, and the great wonder was accomplished. How there was light before there was any sun, — for the sun was not created until the fourth day of the week — it is not for us to say. But God is not dependent upon his own creation. He can make light without a sun, he can spread the gospel without the aid of ministers, he can convert souls without any human or angelic agency, for he does as he wills in the heavens above and on the earth beneath.

[Genesis 1:5](#). *And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.*

It is a good thing to have the right names for things. An error is often half killed when you know the real name of it; its power lies in its being indescribable; but as soon as you can call it “darkness,” you know how to act towards it. It is a good thing also to know the names of truths, and the names of other things that are right. God is very particular in the Scripture about giving people their right names. The Holy Spirit says, “Judas, not Iscariot,” so that there should be no mistake about the person intended. Let us also always call persons and things by their right names: “God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night.” “And the evening and the morning were the first day.” Darkness first and light afterwards. It is so with us spiritually; first darkness, then light. I suppose that, until we get to heaven, there will be both darkness and light in us; and as to God’s providential dealings, we must expect darkness as well as light. They will

make up our first day and our last day, till we get where there are no days but the Ancient of Days.

[Genesis 1:6-8](#). *And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day.*

“The firmament” — an expanse of air in which floated the waters which afterwards condensed, and fell upon the earth in refreshing showers. These waters above were divided from the waters below. Perhaps they were all one steamy conglomeration before, but now they are separated. Note those four words, “and it was so.” Whatever God ordains always comes. You will find that it is true of all his promises that, whatever he has said, shall be fulfilled to you, and you shall one day say of it all, “and it was so.” It is equally certain concerning all his threatenings that what he has spoken shall certainly be fulfilled, and the ungodly will have to say “and it was so.” These words are often repeated in this chapter. They convey to us the great lesson that the word of God is sure to be followed by the deed of God. He speaks, and it is done.

[Genesis 1:9-13](#). *And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so. And God called the dry land Earth, and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas. And God saw that it was good. And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself upon the earth: and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good. And the evening and the morning were the third day.*

Having attended to the air, God further exercised his power by setting the earth in order. Observe the remarkable fact that, no sooner had God made the dry land appear, than it seemed as if he could not bear the sight of it in its nakedness. What a strange place this world must have looked, with its plains and hills and rooks and vales without one single blade of grass, or a tree, or a shrub; so at once, before that day was over, God threw the mantle of verdure over the earth, and clad its mountains and valleys with forests and plants and flowers, as if to show us that the fruitless is uncomely in God’s sight, that the man who bears no fruit unto God is unendurable to

him. There would be no beauty whatever in a Christian without any good works, and with no graces. As soon as ever the earth appeared, then came the herb, and the tree, and the grass. So, dear brethren, in like manner, let us bring forth fruit unto God, and bring it forth abundantly, for herein is our heavenly Father glorified, that we bear much fruit.

[Genesis 1:14-19](#). *And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years: And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so. And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good. And the evening and the morning were the fourth day.*

Whether the sun and moon are here said to be absolutely created, or whether they were only created so far as our planet was concerned by the dense vapours being cleared away so that the sun and moon and stars could be seen, is a matter of no consequence at all to us. Let us rather learn a lesson from them. These lights are to rule, but they are to rule by giving light. And, brethren, this is the true rule in the Church of God. He who gives most light is the truest ruler, and the man who aspires to leadership in the Church of God, if he knows what he is at, aspires to be the servant of all by laying himself out for the good of all, even as our Saviour said to his disciples, "Whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all." The sun and moon are the servants of all mankind, and therefore do they rule by day and by night. Stoop, my brothers, if you wish to lead others. The way up is downward. To be great, you must be little. He is the greatest who is nothing at all unto himself, but all for others.

[Genesis 1:20-23](#). *And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven. And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good. And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth. And the evening and the morning were the fifth day.*

There was no life in the sea or on the land until all was ready for it. God would not make a creature to be unhappy. There must be suitable food to feed upon, and the sun and moon to cheer and comfort ere a single bird shall chirp in the thicket or a solitary trout shall leap in the stream. So, after God has given men light, and blessed them in various ways, their spiritual life begins to develop to the glory of God. We have the thoughts that soar like fowl in the open firmament of heaven, and other thoughts that dive into the mysteries of God, as the fish dive in the sea, and these are after-development, after-growths of that same power which at the first said, "Let there be light."

[Genesis 1:24-25](#). *And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so. And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and everything that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good.*

There is as much wisdom and care displayed in the creation of the tiniest creeping insect as in the creation of leviathan himself. Those who use the microscope are as much amazed at the greatness and the goodness of God as those are who use the telescope. He is as great in the little as he is in the great. After each day's work, God looks upon it, and it is well for us every night to review our day's work. Some men's work will not bear looking at, and tomorrow becomes all the worse to them because today was not considered and its sin repented of by them. But if the errors of today are marked by us, a repetition of them may be avoided on the morrow. It is only God who can look upon any one day's work, and say of it, as a whole, and in every part, that it is "good." As for us, our best things need sprinkling with the blood of Christ, which we need not only on the lintels and side posts of our house, but even on the altar and the mercy-seat at which we worship God.

[Genesis 1:26-28](#). *And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have*

dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

God evidently meant the two persons, male and female, to complete the man, and the entireness of the manhood lies in them both. The earth is completed now that man has come upon it, and man is completed when the image of God is upon him, when Christ is formed in him the hope of glory, but not till then. When we have received the power of God, and have dominion over ourselves, and over all earthly things, in the power of God's eternal Spirit, then are we where and what God intends us to be.

[Genesis 1:29-30](#). *And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so.*

Now you see God's commissariat. He has not made all these creatures in order to starve them, but he has supplied them with great variety and abundance of food, that their wants may be satisfied. Does God care for the cattle, and will he not feed his own children? Does he provide for ravens and sparrows, and will he suffer you to lack anything, O ye of little faith? Observe that God did not create man until he had provided for him neither will he ever put one work of his providence or of his grace out of its proper place, but that which goes before shall be preparatory to that which follows after.

[Genesis 1:31](#). *And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good.*

Taken in its completeness, and all put together, God saw that it was very good. We must never judge anything before it is complete.

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CHAPTER 2

Verses 1-17

[Genesis 2:1-8](#). *Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had*

made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made. These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, And every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew: for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground. But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground. And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there he put the man whom he had formed.

Everything was ready for man's use, every fruit-bearing tree for his nourishment, every creature to do his bidding, for it was the will of God that he should "have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth." God did not place the man formed in his image, after his likeness, in an unfurnished house or an empty world, and leave him to provide for himself all that he required but he prepared everything that man could possibly need, and completed the whole plan by planting "a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed."

[Genesis 2:9](#). *And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.*

That tree of life in the midst of the earthly paradise was to be symbolic of another tree of life in the paradise above, from which the children of God shall never be driven as Adam and Eve were driven out of Eden.

[Genesis 2:10-14](#). *And a river went out of Eden to water the garden, and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads. The name of the first is Pison: that is it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; And the gold of that land is good: there is bdellium and the onyx stone. And the name of the second river is Gihon: the same is it that compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia. And the name of the third river is Hiddekel: that is it which goeth toward the east of Assyria. And the fourth river is Euphrates.*

That river in Eden also reminds us of the "pure river of water of life clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb," of

which we read almost at the end of the Revelation that was given to John in Patmos. Thus the beginning and the end of the Bible call our attention to the tree of life and the river of life in the paradise below and the better paradise above.

[Genesis 2:15](#). *And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden; of Eden to dress it and to keep it.*

There was to be occupation for man even in paradise, just as they who are before the throne of God in glory “serve him day and night in his temple.” Idleness gives no joy, but holy employment will add to the bliss of heaven.

[Genesis 2:16-17](#). *And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden, thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.*

Apparently, Adam was not forbidden to eat of the fruit of the tree of life, though, after his fall, he was cast out of Eden, as God said, “lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever.” He might freely eat the fruit of every tree in the garden except one: “of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it.” It was a slight prohibition, yet the test was more than man, even in a state of innocence, was able to endure, and, alas! his failure involved all his descendants, for he was the federal head of the human race, and “by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men.” Happily, there is another federal Head, and therefore we read, “For if through the offense of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.”

This exposition consisted of readings from [Genesis 2:1-17](#); and Revelation 22.

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CHAPTER 3

Verses 1-24

[Genesis 3:1-9](#). *Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman*

said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed; fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons. And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden. .And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?

In tones of mingled pity and rebuke he asked, “Where art thou?”

[Genesis 3:10-11](#). *And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. And he said, —*

Note the calm majesty of every word. Here is no human passion, but divine dignity: “And he said,” —

[Genesis 3:11-12](#). *Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat! And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.*

There is no sign of true confession here. Adam had been an unfallen creature a few hours before, but, now, he had broken the commandment of the Lord, and you can see how completely death was brought into his moral nature; for if it had not been so, he would have said “My God, I have sinned, canst thou and wilt thou forgive me?” But instead of doing so, he laid the blame for his sin upon his wife, which was an utterly mean action: “The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.” He almost seemed to lay the blame upon God because he had given him the woman to be with him. He was guilty of unkindness to his wife and of blasphemy against his maker, in seeking to escape from confessing the sin which he had committed. It is an ill sign with men when they cannot be brought frankly to acknowledge their wrong-doing.

[Genesis 3:13](#). *And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done?*

Oh, that question! How far reaching it is! By her action, and her husband's, the flood-gates had been pulled up, and the flood of sin had been let loose upon the world. They had struck a match, and set the world on fire with sin. And every one of our sins is essentially of the same nature, and has in it, substantially, the same mischief. Oh, that at any time when we have sinned, God would ask each one of us the question, "What is it that thou hast done?"

[Genesis 3:13](#). *And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.*

Still, you see, there is no confession of guilt, but only the attempt to push the blame off upon somebody else. The Lord God did not ask the serpent anything, for he knew that he was a liar, but he at once pronounced sentence upon him: —

[Genesis 3:14-15](#). *And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.*

And, now, there is no creature so degraded as that once bright angel, who is now the devil. He is always going about with serpentine wriggling, Seeking to do more mischief. On his belly does he go, and still is dust his meat. That which is foul, material, carnal, he delights in. And his head is bruised, blessed be the name of the Woman's promised seed! The old serpent's head is bruised with a fatal bruising, while the wounded heel of our Saviour is the joy and delight of our hearts.

[Genesis 3:16-17](#). *Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life;*

How obliquely fell the curse! Not, "Cursed art thou," as the Lord said to the serpent; but, "Cursed is the ground for thy sake."

[Genesis 3:18-21](#). *Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return. And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living. Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them.*

Some creature had to die in order to provide them with garments, and you know who it is that died in order that we might be robed in his spotless righteousness. The Lamb of God has made for us a garment which covers our nakedness so that we are not afraid to stand even before the bar of God.

[Genesis 3:22-24](#). *And the LORD God said, Behold the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.*

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SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

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CHAPTER 7

Verses 1-24

[Genesis 7:1](#). *And the LORD said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark;*

Notice that the Lord did not say to Noah, “Go into the ark,” but “Come,” plainly implying that God was himself in the ark, waiting to receive Noah and his family into the big ship that was to be their place of refuge while all the other people on the face of the earth were drowned. The distinctive word of the gospel is a drawing word: “Come.” Jesus says, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;” and he will say to his people at the last, “Come, ye blessed of my Father inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” “Depart” is the word of justice and judgment, but “Come” is the word of mercy and grace. “The Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark;” —

[Genesis 7:1](#). *For thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation.*

Therefore God drew a distinction between him and the unrighteous, for he always hath a special regard for godly people.

[Genesis 7:2-3](#). *Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and his female: and of beasts that are not clean by two, the male and his female. Of fowls also of the air by sevens the male and the female; to keep seed alive upon the face of all the earth.*

Of the clean creatures which might be offered in sacrifice to God you see that there was a larger proportion than there was of the unclean, that there might be sufficient for sacrifice without the destruction of any species. The unclean beasts were mostly killers and devourers of others, and therefore their number was to be less than that of the clean species. Oh, that the day might soon come when there would be more of clean men and women than of unclean, when there would be fewer sinners than godly people in the world, though even then there would be the ungodly “by two” like the unclean beasts.

[Genesis 7:4](#). *For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and every living substance that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth.*

It is the prerogative of the king to have the power of life and death, and it is the sole prerogative of the King of kings that — “He can create, and he can destroy.” But what destructive power is brought into operation because of human sin! Sin must be a very heinous thing, since God, who despiseth

not the work of his own hands, will sooner break up the human race, and destroy every thing that liveth rather than that sin should continue to defile the earth. He has destroyed the earth once by water because of sin, and he will the second time destroy it by fire for the selfsame reason. Wherever sin is, God will hunt it; with barbed arrows will he shoot at it; he will cut it in pieces with his sharp two-edged sword, for he cannot endure sin. Oh, how foolish are they who harbour it in their own bosoms, for it will bring destruction to them if they keep it there!

[Genesis 7:5](#). *And Noah did according unto all that the LORD commanded him.*

Here was positive proof of his righteousness, in that he was obedient to the word of the Lord. A man who does not obey God's commands may talk about righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith, but it is clear that he does not possess it, for faith works by love, and the righteousness which is by faith is proved by obedience to God. "Noah did according unto all that the Lord commanded him," and so proved that he was righteous before God.

[Genesis 7:6](#). *And Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters was upon the earth.*

He was nearly five hundred years old when he began to preach about the flood, — a good old age to take up such a subject. For a hundred and twenty years he pursued his theme, — three times as long as most men are ever able to preach, and now at last God's time of long-suffering is over, and he proves the truthfulness of the testimony of his servant by sending the flood that Noah had foretold.

[Genesis 7:7-8](#). *And Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him, into the ark, because of the waters of the flood. Of clean beasts, and of beasts that are not clean, and of fowls, and of every thing that creepeth upon the earth,*

This largest and most complete menagerie that was ever gathered together was not collected by human skill; divine power alone could have accomplished such a task as that.

[Genesis 7:9](#). *There went in two and two unto Noah into the ark, the male and female, as God had commanded Noah.*

They "went in." Noah had not to hunt or search for them, but they came according to God's plan and purpose, even as, concerning the salvation which is by Christ Jesus, his people shall be willing to come to him in the

day of his power; with joyfulness shall they come into the ark of their salvation.

[Genesis 7:10-11](#). *And it came to pass after seven days, that the waters of the flood were upon the earth. In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.*

Perhaps the world was in its prime, when the trees were in bloom, and the birds were singing in their branches, and the flowers were blooming on the earth, “the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.”

[Genesis 7:12-13](#). *And the rain was upon the earth forty day and forty nights. In the selfsame day entered Noah, and Shem, and Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife, and the three wives of his sons with them, into the ark;*

These eight persons are very carefully mentioned. “The Lord knoweth them that are his,” “and they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up” — or, shut up — “my jewels,” as he was about to do in the case. In similar fashion, God makes a very careful enumeration of all those who believe in him, precious are they in his sight, and they shall be preserved when all others are destroyed.

[Genesis 7:14](#). *They, and every beast after his kind, and all the cattle after their kind, and every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind, and every fowl after his kind, every bird of every sort.*

“Every bird of every sort,” that is, every kind of bird; they are all mentioned over again. God makes much of salvation, oh, that we also did! We may recount and rehearse the story of our rescue from universal destruction, and we need not be afraid or ashamed of repeating it. As the Holy Ghost repeats the words we have here, you and I may often tell out the story of our salvation, and dwell upon the minute particulars of it, for every item of it is full of instruction.

[Genesis 7:15-16](#). *And they went in unto Noah into the ark, two and two of all flesh, wherein is the breath of life. And they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God had commanded him: and the LORD shut him in.*

Now the jewels are all in, and therefore the casket is closed.

[Genesis 7:17](#). *And the flood was forty days upon the earth;*

Just as it had been foretold, for God's providence always tallies with his promises or with his threats. "Hath he said, and shall he not do it?"

[Genesis 7:17](#). *And the waters increased, and bare up the ark, and it was lift up above the earth.*

You can see it begin to move until it is afloat. The same effect is often produced on us; when the flood of affliction is deep, then we begin to rise. Oh, how often have we been lifted up above the earth by the very force that threatened to drench and drown us! David said, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted," and many another saint can say that he never was floated until the floods were out, but then he left the worldliness with which he had been satisfied before, and he began to rise to a higher level than he had previously attained.

[Genesis 7:18-19](#). *And the waters prevailed, and were increased greatly upon the earth; and the ark went upon the face of the waters. And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and all the high hills, that were under the whole heaven, were covered.*

If Moses had meant to describe a partial deluge upon only a small part of the earth, he used very misleading language; but if he meant to teach that the deluge was universal, he used the very word which we might have expected that he would use. I should think that no person, merely by reading this chapter, would arrive at the conclusion that has been reached by some of our very learned men, — too learned to hold the simple truth. It looks as if the deluge must have been universal when we read that not only did the waters prevail exceedingly upon the earth, but that "all the high hills, that were under the whole heaven;" that is, all beneath the canopy of the sky, "were covered." What could be more plain and clear than that?

[Genesis 7:20-23](#). *Fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail; and the mountains were covered. And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, and every man: All in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died. And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven; and they were destroyed from the earth: and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark.*

This is the counterpart of what will follow the preaching of the gospel those who are in Christ shall live, shall rise, and reign with him for ever but

none of those who are outside of Christ shall so live. “Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark.”

[Genesis 7:24](#). *And the waters prevailed upon the earth an hundred and fifty days.*

[GENSIS CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 8

Verses 1-22

[Genesis 8:1](#). *And God remembered Noah,*

Noah had been shut up in the ark for many a day, and at the right time God thought of him, practically thought of him, and came to visit him. Dear heart, you have been shut out from the world now for many days, but God has not forgotten you. God remembered Noah, and he remembers you.

[Genesis 8:1](#). *And every living thing, and all the cattle that was with him in the ark:*

Does God remember cattle? Then he will certainly remember men made in his own image He will remember you, though you think yourself the most worthless one on the face of the earth: “God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that was with him in the ark.”

[Genesis 8:1](#). *And God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters asswaged;*

Winds and waves are wholly under God’s control. I suppose that this was a very drying wind, so the waters began to turn to vapor, and gradually to disappear. It is God who sends the winds; they seem most volatile and irregular, but God sends them to do his bidding. Blow it east, or blow it west, the wind comes from God; and whether the waters increase or are assuaged, it is God’s doing. Are the waters very deep with you, dear friend? God can dry them up, and, singularly enough, he can stop one trouble with another, he can dry up the water with the wind. I have known him very strangely with his people, and when they thought they were quite forgotten, he has proved that he remembered them, and both the winds of heaven and the waters of the sea have had to work their good. There is not an angel in heaven but God will make him to be a servant to you if you need him; there is not a wind in any quarter of the globe but God will guide it to you if it is

necessary; and there are no waves of the sea but shall obey the Lord's will concerning you.

[Genesis 8:2](#). *The fountains also of the deep and the windows of heaven were stopped, and the rain from heaven was restrained;*

God works upwards, and stops the windows of heaven. He works downwards, and stays the breaking up of the fountains of the deep.

“He everywhere hath sway,
And all things serve his might.”

Be not afraid; he can open the windows of heaven, and pour down abundant blessings for you, and he can let down the cellar-flaps of the great deep, and stop its flowing fountains.

“When he makes bare his arm,
What shall his work withstand?”

[Genesis 8:3-5](#). *And the waters returned from off the earth continually: and after the end of the hundred and fifty days the waters were abated. And the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat. And the waters decreased continually until the tenth month: in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, were the tops of the mountains seen.*

God told Noah when to go into the ark, but he did not tell him when he should come out again. The Lord told Noah when to go in, for it was necessary for him to know that; but he did not tell him when he should come out, for it was unnecessary that he should know that. God always lets his people know what is practically for their good. There are many curious points on which we should like to have information, but God has not revealed it, and when he has not revealed anything, we had better not try to unravel the mystery. No good comes of prying into unrevealed truth. Noah knew that he would come out of the ark one day, for was he not preserved there to be a seed-to keep the race alive? Noah was not told when he should be released, and the Lord does not tell you when your trouble will come to an end. It will come to an end; therefore wait, and be patient, and do not want to know the time of your deliverance. We should know too much if we knew all that will happen in the future. It is quite enough for us if we do our duty in the present, and trust God for the rest. Still, I think that Noah must have been very pleased when he felt the ark grating at last on the mountains of Ararat. He could not build a cook for his big ship; but God had prepared a berth for it on the mountain side Now, as he looked out, he could see, here

and there, a mountain top rising like an island out of the great expanse of water.

[Genesis 8:6-7](#). *And it came to pass at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made: And he sent forth a raven, which went forth to and fro,*

Sometimes alighting on the ark; then flying away again.

[Genesis 8:7-10](#). *Until the waters were dried up from of the earth. Also he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters were abated from of the face of the ground; But the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto him into the ark, for the waters were on the face of the whole earth: then he put forth his hand, and took her, and pulled her in unto him into the ark. And he stayed yet other seven days;*

I wonder whether Noah sent out these creatures on the Sabbath mornings. The mention of seven days, and the resting in between seems to look like it. Oh, dear friends, sometimes people send out a raven on the Lord's day morning, and it never brings them anything. Send out a dove rather than a raven; come to the house of God with quiet, gentle, holy expectation, and your dove will come back to you. It may be that it will bring you something worth bringing one of these days, as Noah's dove brought to him.

[Genesis 8:10-11](#). *And again he sent forth the dove out of the ark; And the dove came in to him in the evening; and, lo, in her mouth was an olive leaf pluckt off: so Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth.*

The waters were abated as far as the fruit trees; not only the tallest forest trees, but some of the fruit trees were uncovered from the water. The dove had plucked off "an olive leaf." Perhaps you have seen a picture of the dove carrying an olive branch in its mouth, which, in the first place, a dove could not pluck out of the tree, and in the second place, a dove could not carry an olive branch even if she could pluck it off. It was an olive leaf, that is all. Why cannot people keep to the words of Scripture? If the Bible mentions a leaf, they make it a bough; and if the Bible says it is a bough, they make it a leaf.

[Genesis 8:12](#). *And he stayed yet other seven days; and sent forth the dove; which returned not again unto him any more.*

Noah could read something from that leaf that the dove brought to him, but he learned more when she did not return to him. He knew that she had found a proper resting-place, and that the earth was clear of the flood.

[Genesis 8:13](#). *And it came to pass in the six hundredth and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, the waters were dried up from off the earth:*

That was a happy New Year's day for Noah. He was glad to find himself at rest once more, though not yet at liberty.

[Genesis 8:13](#). *And Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and, behold, the face of the ground was dry.*

Why did not Noah come out? Well, you see, he had gone in by the door, and he meant to come out by the door, and he that opened the door for him, and shut him in, must now open the door for him, and let him out. He waits God's time, and we are always wise in doing that. You lose a great deal of time by being in a hurry. Many people think they have done a great deal when they have really done nothing. Better take time in order to save time. Slow is sometimes faster than fast. So Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked out, but he did not go out till God commanded him to do so.

[Genesis 8:14](#). *And in the second month,*

Nearly two months Noah waited for the complete drying of the earth.

[Genesis 8:14](#). *On the seven and twentieth day of the month, was the earth dried.*

"The face of the ground was dry" in the first month; "the earth was dried," the second month. Noah might have thought it was dry enough before; but God did not think so, there was enough mud to breed a pestilence, so Noah must wait until God had made the earth ready for him.

[Genesis 8:15-16](#). *And God spoke unto Noah, saying, Go forth of the ark, Noah must wait till God speaks to him. Oh, that some people would wait for God's command, but they will not! He shall bless thy going out and thy coming in if thou wilt go forth and come in when he bids thee. "Go forth," says the Lord, "Go forth of the ark."*

[Genesis 8:16-19](#). *Thou, and thy wife, and thy sons, and thy sons' wives with thee. Bring forth with thee every living thing that is with thee, of all flesh, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth; that they may breed abundantly in the earth, and be fruitful, and multiply upon the earth. And Noah went forth, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him: Every beast, every creeping thing, and every fowl, and whatsoever creepeth upon the earth, after their kinds, went forth out of the ark.*

That was a very wonderful procession, it was the new beginning of everything upon the earth. Whatever evolution or any other folly or evil of man may have done, everything had to begin again over. Everybody was drowned save these great fathers of the new age, and all must begin from this stock.

[Genesis 8:20](#). *And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD, and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.*

Common sense would have said, "Spare them, for you will want every one of them." But grace said, "Slay them, for they belong to God. Give Jehovah his due." I have often admired that widow of Sarepta. When she had but a handful of meal, she made a little cake for God's prophet first, but then God multiplied her meal and her oil. Oh, if we would but seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, all things should be added unto us! Out of the small stock he had, Noah took of the clean beasts, and of the clean fowls, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

[Genesis 8:21](#). *And the LORD smelled a sweet savour;*

Noah's faith was pleasing to God. It was Noah's confidence in a bleeding sacrifice that gave him acceptance with the Lord. God thought upon his Son, and that great Sacrifice to be offered long afterwards on the cross, and he "smelled a sweet savour."

[Genesis 8:21](#). *And the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done.*

God always speaks comfortable words to those who bring an acceptable sacrifice. If you would hear the voice of a divine promise, go to the atoning blood of Jesus. If you would know what perfect reconciliation means, his to the altar where the great Sacrifice was presented.

[Genesis 8:22](#). *While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.*

They never have ceased. He have this year had a long and dreary winter; it looked as if spring would never come. Only a few days ago, the chestnuts were just beginning to turn green, and then there came the little spikes, and now you can see them in full flower. How faithfully God fulfils his covenant with the earth! How truly will he keep his covenant with every

believing sinner! Oh, trust ye in him, for his promise will stand fast for ever!

Verses 15-22

[Genesis 8:15-21](#). *And God spake unto Noah, saying, Go forth of the ark, thou, and thy wife, and thy sons, and thy sons' wives with thee. Bring forth with thee every living thing that is with thee, of all flesh, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth; that they may breed abundantly in the earth, and be fruitful, and multiply upon the earth. And Noah went forth, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him: every beast, every creeping thing, and every fowl, and whatsoever creepeth upon the earth, after their kinds, went forth out of the ark. And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD, and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And the LORD smelled a sweet savour;*

Until then, the earth had been obnoxious to Jehovah. He had put it away from him as a foul thing, drowned beneath the flood; but after the offering of Noah's sacrifice, the Lord smelled "a savour of rest."

[Genesis 8:21-22](#). *And the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground. And any more for man's sake, for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done. While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.*

Thus we see what we may expect so long as the earth remains, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. Now let us read a few verses from Jeremiah's prophecy.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Genesis 8:15-22](#); and [Jeremiah 33:15-26](#).

Verses 20-22

[Genesis 8:20-21](#). *And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offering on the altar. And the LORD smelled a sweet savour; —*

A savour of rest, —

[Genesis 8:21-22](#). *And the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done. While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.*

So that you all live under a covenant, — a gracious covenant, and, by virtue of it, the day succeeds the night, the summer follows the winter, and the harvest in due course rewards the labour of the seedtime. All this ought to make us long to be under the yet fuller and higher covenant of grace, by which spiritual blessings would be scoured to us, — an eternal day to follow this earthly night, and a glorious harvest to follow this time of seed-sowing.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Genesis 8:20-22](#); [Genesis 9:8-17](#); and [Isaiah 54:1-10](#).

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CHAPTER 9

Verses 8-17

[Genesis 9:8-10](#). *And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, sayings, And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you; And with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth.*

Happy fowls, and happy cattle, and happy beasts of the earth to be connected with Noah, and go to come under a covenant of preservation and we, — though only worthy to be typified by these creatures which God had preserved in the ark, — are thrice happy to be in the same covenant with him who is our Noah, our rest, our sweet savour unto God.

[Genesis 9:11-17](#). *And I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth. And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token for a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud. And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh, and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, —*

What a wonderful expression that is! It is similar to that remarkable declaration of Jehovah, recorded in [Exodus 12:13](#). “When I see the blood, I will pass over you.” The blood was not to be sprinkled inside the house where the Israelites might be comforted by a sight of it, but outside the house, where only God could see it. It is for our sake that the rainbow is set in the cloud, and we can see it there; yet infinite mercy represents it as being there as a refreshment to the memory of God: “The bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it,”-

[Genesis 9:16](#). *That I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth.*

So, when my eye of faith is dim, and I cannot see the covenant sign, I will remember that there is an eye which never can be dim, which always sees the covenant token; and so I shall still be secure notwithstanding the dimness of my spiritual vision. For our comfort, we must see it; but for our safety, blessed be God, it is only needful that he should see it.

[Genesis 9:17](#). *And God said unto Noah, This is the token of the covenant, which I have established between me and all flesh that is upon the earth.*

Now let us read what the Lord says, through the prophet Isaiah, concerning this covenant.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Genesis 8:20-22](#); [Genesis 9:8-17](#); and [Isaiah 54:1-10](#).

[GENSIS CONTENTS](#)

Genesis Chapter 10

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

Genesis Chapter 11

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER 12

Verses 1-7

We will read two or three passages in the Book of Genesis concerning God blessing his servant Abraham. Turn first to the twelfth chapter.

[Genesis 12:1](#). *Now the lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee:*

It was God's intention to keep his truth and his pure worship alive in the world by committing it to the charge of one man, and the nation that should spring from him. In the infinite sovereignty of his grace, he chose Abraham, —passing by all the rest of mankind,—and elected him to be the depository of the heavenly light, that through him it might be preserved in the world until the days when it should be more widely scattered. It seemed essential to this end that Abraham should come right out from his fellow-countrymen, and be separate unto Jehovah, so the Lord said to him, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee."

[Genesis 12:2-3](#). *And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.*

There, you see, was the missionary character of the seed of Abraham, if they had but recognized it. God did not bless them for themselves alone, but for all nations: "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."

[Genesis 12:4](#). *So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.*

He had already attained a fine old age, but he had another century of life before him, which he could not then foresee, or expect. If, at his age, he had said, "Lord, I am too old to travel, too old to leave my country, and to begin to live a wandering life," we could not have wondered; but he did not talk in that fashion. He was commanded to go and we read, "So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him."

[Genesis 12:5-6](#). *And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came. And Abram passed through the land*

unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land.

Fierce and powerful nations possessed the country; it did not seem a very likely place to be the heritage of a peace-loving man like Abraham. God does not always fulfill his promises to his people at once; else, where would be the room for faith? This life of ours is to be a life of faith, and it will be well rewarded in the end. Abraham had not a foot of land to call his own, except that cave of Machpelah which he bought of the sons of Heth for a burying-place for his beloved Sarah.

[Genesis 12:7](#). *And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him.*

Thus, you see, Abraham began his separated life with a blessing from the Lord his God.

Further on in his history he received a still larger blessing when he returned from his victory over the kings.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Genesis 12:1-7](#); [Genesis 14:17-24](#); and [Genesis 22:15-18](#).

[GENESIS CONTENTS](#)

Genesis Chapter 13

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER 14

Verses 17-24

[Genesis 14:17-18](#). *And the King of Sodom went out to meet him after his return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer, and of the kings that were with him, at the valley of Shaveh, which is the king's dale. And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God.*

One who exercised both the kingship and the priesthood, the only person that we know of who did this, and who, therefore, is a wonderful

type of that marvellous King-Priest of whom we read in the 110th Psalm, and in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

[Genesis 14:19-20](#). *And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all.*

It must have been peculiarly refreshing to Abraham to be met by a man of kindred spirit, and one whom he recognized as his superior. No doubt he was weary, though triumphant; and so, just then, the Lord sent him special refreshment, and, beloved, how sweet it is to us when the greater Melchizedek meets us! Jesus Christ our great King-Priest, still meets us, and brings us bread and wine. Often, the very symbols on his table have been refreshing to us, but their inner meaning has been far more sustaining and comforting to our spirit. There is no food like the bread and wine that our blessed Melchizedek brings forth to us, even his own flesh and blood. Well may we give him tithes of all that we have. Nay more, we may say to him, "Take not tithes, O Lord, but take all!"

[Genesis 14:21](#). *And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself.*

They were all Abraham's by right as the spoils of war.

[Genesis 14:22-23](#). *And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto the LORD, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich:*

Sometimes, a child of God will find himself cast, through force of circumstances, into very curious companionship. For the sake of Lot, Abraham had to go and fight the enemies of the king of Sodom, and sometimes, in fighting for religious liberty, we have had to be associated with persons from whom we differ as much as Abraham differed from the king of Sodom but right must be fought for under all circumstances. Yet, sooner or later, there comes a crucial test in which our true character will be discovered. Shall we personally gain anything by this association? We loathe it even while we recognize that it is needful for the time being, but we have not entered it for the sake of personal gain.

[Genesis 14:24](#). *Save only that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men which went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them*

take their portion.

They had a right to it. What we do ourselves, we do not always expect others to do. There is a higher code of morals for the servant of God than for other men; and we may often think of what they do, and not condemn them, although we could not do the same ourselves, for we are lifted into a higher position as the servant of the Lord.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Genesis 14:17-24](#); Genesis 15.

[GENESIS CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 15

Verses 1-21

[Genesis 15:1-3](#). *After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward. And Abram said, Lord GOD, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus? And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir.*

Perhaps he did not doubt the promise, but he wanted to have it explained to him. He may have wondered if it meant that one born in his house, though not his son, was to be his heir; and that, through him, the blessing would come. He takes the opportunity of making an enquiry, that he may know how to act. At the same time, there does seem to be a clashing between Abraham's question, "What wilt thou give me?" and the declaration of God, "I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." There is a great descent from the language of the Lord to that of the most stable believer, and when you and I are even at our best, I have no doubt that, if all could be recorded that we think and say, some of our fellow-believers would feel that the best of men are but men at the best, and that God's language is after a nobler fashion than ours will ever be, till we have seen his face in glory.

[Genesis 15:4-5](#). *And, behold, the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come out of thine own bowels shall be their heir. And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look*

now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.

Now was his faith tried indeed, he had no child, he was himself old, and his wife also was old, yet the Lord's promise was, "So shall thy seed be" as the stars of heaven. Could he believe it? He did.

[Genesis 15:6](#). *And he believed in the LORD and he counted it to him for righteousness.*

Oh, what a blessing to learn the way of ample faith in God! This is the saving quality in many a life. Look through Paul's list of the heroes of faith; some of them are exceedingly imperfect characters' some we should hardly have thought of mentioning, but they had faith; and although men, in their faulty judgment, think faith to be an inferior virtue, and often scarcely look upon it as a virtue at all, yet, in the judgment of God, faith is the supremest virtue. "This," said Christ, "is the work of God," the greatest of all works, "that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." To trust, to believe, this shall be counted to us for righteousness even as it was to Abraham.

[Genesis 15:7-8](#). *And he said unto him, I am the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it. And he said, Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?*

What! Abraham, is not God's promise sufficient for thee? O father of the faithful, though thou dost believe, and art counted as righteous through believing, dost thou still ask, "Whereby shall I know?" Ah, beloved! faith is often marred by a measure of unbelief; or, if not quite unbelief, yet there is a desire to have some token, some sign, beyond the bare promise of God.

[Genesis 15:9-11](#). *And he said unto him, Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon. And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another: but the birds divided he not. And when the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away.*

Here is a lesson for us. Perhaps you have some of these unclean birds coming down upon your sacrifice just now. That raven that you did not lock up well at home, has come here after you. Eagles and vultures, and all kinds of kites in the form of carking cares, and sad memories, and fears, and doubts, come hovering over the sacred feast. Drive them away; God give you grace to drive them away by the power of his gracious Spirit!

[Genesis 15:12](#). *And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him.*

He had asked for a manifestation, a sign, a token, and, lo, it comes in the “horror of great darkness.” Do not be afraid, beloved, if your soul sometimes knows what horror is. Remember how the favored three, on the Mount of Transfiguration, “feared as they entered into the cloud;” yet it was there that they were to see their Master in his glory. Remember what the Lord said to Jeremiah concerning Jerusalem and his people, They shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that I procure unto it.” That is the right spirit in which to receive prosperity, but as for adversity, rejoice in it, for God often sends the richest treasures to his children in wagons drawn by black horses. You may except that some great blessing is coming nigh to you when a “horror of great darkness” falls upon you.

[Genesis 15:13](#). *And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years;*

It was to be a long while before the nation should enter upon its inheritance. Here is a promise that was to take four hundred years to ripen! Some of you cannot believe the promise if its fulfillment is delayed for four days; you can hardly keep on praying, if it takes four years; what would you think of a four hundred years promise? Yet it was to be so long in coming to maturity because it was so vast. If Abraham’s seed was to be like the stars of heaven for multitude, there must be time for the increase to come.

[Genesis 15:14-17](#). *And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full. And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces.*

True emblems of the Church of God with her smoke and her light, her trying affliction, yet the grace by which she still keeps burning and shining in the world.

[Genesis 15:18-21](#). *In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates: The Kenites, and the Kenizzites,*

and the Kadmonites and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.

He mentions the adversaries to show how great would be the victories of the race that should come and dispossess them. Let us always look upon the list of our difficulties as only a catalogue of our triumphs. The greater our troubles, the louder our song at the last.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Genesis 14:17-24](#); Genesis 15.

GENESIS CONTENTS

Genesis Chapter 16

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

Genesis Chapter 17

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER 18

Verses 17-33

[Genesis 18:17-19](#). *And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.*

Abraham is called “the friend of God.” It was not merely that God was his Friend; that was blessedly true, and it was a great wonder of grace; but he was honoured to be called “the friend of God”—one with whom God could hold sweet converse, a man after his own heart, in whom he trusted to whom he revealed his secrets. I am afraid there are not many men of Abraham’s sort in the world even now; but, wherever there is such a man,

with whom God is familiar, he will be sure to be one who orders his household aright. If the Lord is my Friend, and if I am indeed his friend, I shall wish him to be respected by my children, and I shall endeavor to dedicate my children to his service. I fear that the decline of family godliness, which is so sadly remarkable in these days, is the source of a great many of the crying sins of the age; the Church of God at large would have been more separate from the world if the little church in each man's house had been more carefully trained for God. If you want the Lord to confide in you, and to trust you with his secrets, you must see that he is able to say of you what he said of Abraham, "he will command his children and his household after him."

[Genesis 18:20-22](#). *And the LORD said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous; I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know. And the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom: but Abraham stood yet before the LORD.*

He was in no hurry to close that blessed interview; when he had once come into the Lord's immediate presence, he lingered there. Those who are friends of God like to be much in their Lord's company.

[Genesis 18:23](#). *And Abraham drew near,*

There is nothing like coming very close to God in prayer: "Abraham drew near." He was about to use his influence with his great Friend; not for himself, but for these men of Sodom, who were going to be destroyed. Happy are those who, when they are near to God, use the opportunity in pleading for others, ay, even for the most wicked and abandoned of men.

[Genesis 18:23-25](#). *And said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?*

Abraham bases his argument upon the justice of God; and when a man dares to do that, it is mighty pleading, for, depend upon it, God will never do an unjust thing. If thou darest to plead his righteousness, his infallible justice, thou pleadest most powerfully.

[Genesis 18:26-30](#). *And the LORD said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes. And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes: peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous: wilt thou destroy all the city for lack of five? And he said, If I find there forty and five, I will not destroy it. And he spake unto him yet again, and said, Peradventure there shall be forty found there. And he said, I will not do it for forty's sake. And he said unto him, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: Peradventure there shall thirty be found there. And he said, I will not do it, if I find thirty there.*

This time the patriarch has advanced by ten; before, it was by fives. Pleading men grow bolder and braver in their requests. A man who is very familiar with God will, by-and-by, venture to say that which, at the first, he would not have dared to utter.

[Genesis 18:31-32](#). *And he said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord: Peradventure there shall be twenty found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for twenty's sake. And he said, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: Peradventure ten shall be found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for ten's sake.*

He went no farther than to plead that Sodom might be spared if ten righteous persons could be found in it. I have heard some say that it was a pity Abraham did not go on pleading with God; but I would not dare to say so. He knew better when to begin and when to leave off than you and I do; there are certain restraints in prayer which a man of God cannot explain to others, but which he, nevertheless, himself feels. God moves his servants to pray in a certain case, and they do pray with great liberty and manifest power. Another case may seem to be precisely like it: yet the mouth of the former suppliant is shut, and in his heart he does not feel that he can pray as he did before. Do I blame the men of God? Assuredly not; the Lord dealth wisely with his servants, and he tells them, by gentle hints, which they quickly understand, when and where to stop in their supplications.

[Genesis 18:33](#). *And the LORD went his way, as soon as he had left communing with Abraham: and Abraham returned unto his place.*

We know that the angels went down to Sodom, where they were received by Lot, and despitefully used by the Sodomites. We will continue our reading at the twelfth verse of the next chapter.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Genesis 18:17-33](#); [Genesis 19:12-28](#).

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CHAPTER 19

Verses 12-28

[Genesis 19:12](#). *And the men said unto Lot, Hast thou here any besides? son in law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring them out of this place:*

Let me bid every Christian man to look about him, among all his kith and kin, to see which of them yet remain unconverted. Let your prayers go up for them all: “Son in law, and thy sons, and thy daughters.”

[Genesis 19:13-14](#). *For we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the LORD and the LORD hath sent us to destroy it. And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons in law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law.*

“The old man is in his dotage,” said they; “he always was peculiar, he never acted like the rest of the citizens; he came in here as a stranger, and he has always been strange in his behavior.”

[Genesis 19:15-16](#). *And when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city. And while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the LORD being merciful unto him; and they brought him forth, and set him without the city.*

I have always felt pleased to think that there were just hands enough to lead out these four people, Lot, and his wife, and their two daughters. Had there been one more, there would have been no hand to lay hold of the fifth person; but these two angels, with their four hands, could just lead these four persons outside the doomed city. God will always have agents enough to save his elect; there shall be sufficient gospel preaching, even in the darkest and deadest times, to bring his redeemed out of the City of Destruction. God will miss none of his own.

[Genesis 19:17](#). *And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.*

Perhaps the old man's legs trembled under him; he felt that he could not run so far; and, beside, the mountain seemed so bleak and dreary, he could not quite quit the abodes of men.

[Genesis 19:18-21](#). *And Lot said unto them, Oh, not so, my Lord: Behold now, thy servant hath found grace in thy sight, and thou hast magnified thy mercy, which thou hast shewed unto me in saying my life; and I cannot escape to the mountain, lest some evil take me, and I die: behold now, this city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one: Oh, let me escape thither, (is it not a little one?) and my soul shall live. And he said unto him, See, I have accepted thee concerning this thing also, that I wilt not overthrow this city, for thou hast spoken.*

I think that I have said to you before that this sparing of Zoar is an instance of the cumulative power of prayer. I may liken Abraham's mighty pleading to a ton weight of prayer, supplication that had a wonderful force and power. Lot's petition is only like an ounce of prayer. Poor little Lot, what a poor little prayer his was! Yet that ounce turned the scale. So, it may be that there is some mighty man of God who is near to prevailing with God, but he cannot quite obtain his request; but you, poor feeble pleader that you are, shall add your feather's weight to his great intercession, and then the scale will turn. This narrative always comforts me I think that Zoar was preserved, not so much by the prayer of Lot, as by the greater prayer of Abraham which had gone before; yet the mighty intercession of the friend of God did not prevail until it was supported by the feeble petition of poor Lot.

[Genesis 19:22](#). *Haste thee, escape thither;*

The hand of justice was held back until God's servant was safe. There can be no destruction of the world, there can be no pouring out of the last plagues, there can be no total sweeping away of the ungodly till, first of all, the servants of God are sealed in their foreheads, and taken to a place of security. The Lord will preserve his own. He lets the scaffold stand until the building is finished; then, it will come down fast enough.

[Genesis 19:22-28](#). *For I cannot do any thing till thou be come thither. Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar. The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar. Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and*

upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven; and he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that, which grew upon the ground. But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt. And Abraham gat up early in the morning to the place where he stood before the LORD: and he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and beheld, and, lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace.

What must Abraham's meditations have been! What should be the meditations of every godly man as he looks towards Sodom, and sees the smoke of its destruction? It might do some men great good if they would not persistently shut their eyes to the doom of the wicked. Look, look, I pray you, upon that place of darkness and woe where every impenitent and unbelieving spirit must be banished for ever from the presence of the Lord! Look till the tears are in your eyes as you thank God that you are rescued from so terrible a doom! Look till your heart melts with pity for the many who are going the downward road, and who will eternally ruin themselves unless almighty grace prevent!

This exposition consisted of readings from [Genesis 18:17-33](#); [Genesis 19:12-28](#).

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Genesis Chapter 20

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

Genesis Chapter 21

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER 22

Verses 1-19

[Genesis 22:1](#). *And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt-*
That is, "God did test or try"-

[Genesis 22:1-2](#). *Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am. And he said, Take now thy son,*

“But, Lord, I have two sons, Ishmael and Isaac.”

[Genesis 22:2](#). *Thine only son,*

“But, Lord, both Ishmael and Isaac are my sons, and each of them is the only son of his mother.”

[Genesis 22:2](#). *Isaac, whom thou lovest,*

See how definitely God points out to Abraham the son who is to be the means of the great trial of his father’s faith: “Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou loves”,-

[Genesis 22:2](#). *And get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.*

It was usually the way, in God’s commands to Abraham, to make him sail under sealed orders. When he was first bidden to leave his country and his kindred, and his father’s house, he had to go to a land that God would shew him. They have true faith who can go forth at God’s command, not knowing whither they are going. So Abraham did, and now the Lord says to him, “Take Isaac, and offer him for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.”

[Genesis 22:3](#). *And Abraham rose up early in the morning,-*

Obedience should be prompt, we should show our willingness to obey the Lord’s command by not delaying: “Abraham rose up early in the morning,”-

[Genesis 22:3](#). *And saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him.*

All the details are mentioned, for true obedience is very careful of detail. They who would serve God aright must serve him faithfully in little things as well as in great ones. There must be a saddling of the ass, a calling of the two young men as well as Isaac, and a cleaving of the wood for the burnt offering. We must do everything that is included in the bounds of the divine command, and do it all with scrupulous exactness and care. Indifferent obedience to God’s command is practically disobedience, careless obedience is dead obedience, the heart is gone out of it. Let us learn from Abraham how to obey.

[Genesis 22:4](#). *Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off.*

His was deliberate obedience; he could bear suspense, thinking over the whole matter for three days, and setting his face like a flint to obey his Lord's command.

[Genesis 22:5](#). *And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.*

Abraham did not deceive the young men, he believed that he and Isaac would come to them again. He believed that though he might be compelled to say his son, "God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure." Abraham bade the young men stay where they were, they must not see all that he was to do before the Lord. Oftentimes, our highest obedience must be a solitary one; friends cannot help us in such emergencies, and it is better for them and better for us that they should not be with us.

[Genesis 22:6](#). *And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife;*

That knife was cutting into his own heart all the while, yet he took it. Unbelief would have left the knife at home, but genuine faith takes it.

[Genesis 22:6-8](#). *And they went both of them together. And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together.*

Abraham here spoke like a prophet; in fact, throughout this whole incident, he never opened his mouth without a prophetic utterance; and I believe that, when men walk with God, and live near to God, they will possibly even without being aware of it, speak very weighty words which will have much more in them than they themselves apprehend. Is it not written, concerning the man whose delight is in the law of the Lord, "his leaf also shall not wither"? Not only shall his fruit be abundant, but his casual word, "his leaf also shall not wither." So was it with it Abraham. He spoke like a prophet of God when he was really speaking to his son in the anguish of his spirit, and in his prophetic utterance we find the sum end substance of the gospel: "My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering." He is the great Provider, and he provides the offering, not only for us, but for himself, for the sacrifice was necessary to God as well as to man. And it is a burnt offering, not only a sin-offering but an offering

of a sweet savour unto himself. “So they went both of them together.” Twice we are told this, for this incident is a type of the Father going with the Son and the Son going with the Father up to the great sacrifice on Calvary. It was not Christ alone who willingly died, or the Father alone who gave his Son, but they went both of them together,” even as Abraham and Isaac did here.

[Genesis 22:9](#). *And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there,*

See him pulling out the large, rough, unhewn stones that lay round about the place, and then fling them up into an altar.

[Genesis 22:9-10](#). *And laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.*

So that, in intent and purpose, he had consummated the sacrifice, and therefore we read in [Hebrew 11:17](#), “By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only-begotten son.” He had virtually done so in the esteem of God though no trace of a wound could be found upon Isaac. How often God takes the will for the deed with his people! When he finds them willing to make the sacrifice that he demands, he often does not require it at their hands. If you are willing to suffer for Christ’s sake, it may be that you shall not be caused to suffer and if you are willing to be a martyr for the truth, you may be permitted to wear the martyr’s crown even though you are never called to stand at the stake, the scaffold or the block.

[Genesis 22:11](#). *And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I.*

Abraham always gives the same answer to the Lord’s call, “Here am I.”

[Genesis 22:12](#). *And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.*

The needful test had been applied, and Abraham’s faith had endured the trial. God knows all things by his divine omniscience, but now he knew by this severe test and trial which he had applied, that Abraham really loved him best of all. Notice that the angel says, “Now I know that thou fearest God.” I do not think that the gracious use of godly fear has ever been sufficiently estimated by the most of us; here, the stress is not laid upon the faith, but upon the filial fear of Abraham. That holy awe, that sacred

reverence of God is the very essence of our acceptance with him.” The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” “The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him.” This is a very different thing from slavish fear; it is a right sort of fear, the kind of fear that love does not cast out, but which love lives with in happy fellowship.

[Genesis 22:13](#). *And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son.*

Here is another type of our Saviour’s great sacrifice on Calvary,-the ram offered in the place of Jesus. How often do you and I have our great Substitute very near to us, yet we do not see him because we do not lift up our eyes and look. “Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns.” So, if you lift up your eyes, and look the right, ay, you will see the great sacrifice close by you held fast for you, even as this ram was caught to die instead of Isaac. Oh, that you may have grace to turn your head in the right direction, and look to Christ and live!

[Genesis 22:14](#). *And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen.*

God will foresee; “God will”-as we usually say,-“provide,” which is being interpreted, fore-see. He will have everything ready against the time when it will be needed. He who provided the ram for a burnt offering in the place of Isaac will provide everything else that is required; and you may depend upon it that he who, in the greatest emergency that could ever happen, provided his only-begotten and well-beloved Son to die us the Substitute for sinners, will have foreseen every other emergency that can occur, and will have fore-provided all that is needful to meet it. Blessed be the name of Jehovah-jireh!

[Genesis 22:15-16](#). *And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, and said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD,*

“Because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself.”

[Genesis 22:16-18](#). *For because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his*

enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.

There stands the old covenant, the covenant of grace made with Abraham concerning his seed. Paul writes to the Galatians, “Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.” It is in Christ that all the nations of the earth are to be blessed. If there is a nation that has not yet heard the gospel, it must hear it, for so the promise stands, “In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.” We may look for a glorious future from the preaching of Christ throughout every land, for so the covenant was made with Abraham because he had obeyed God’s voice.

God had been good to Abraham before that time, for he was his beloved friend, but now he lifts him up to a higher platform altogether, and makes him a greater blessing than ever. It may be that God is about to test and try some of you in order that he may afterwards make you to be greater and more useful than you have ever been before.

[Genesis 22:19](#). *So Abraham returned unto his young men, As he said that he would.*

[Genesis 22:19](#). *And they rose up and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham dwelt at Beersheba.*

So the Lord bore his servant through this great trial, and blessed him more than he had ever blessed him before.

Verses 15-18

[Genesis 22:15](#). *And the angel of the lord called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, and said, By myself have I sworn, saith the lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: that in blessing I will bless thee,—*

“Whenever I am engaged in blessing, I will bless thee. I will not pronounce a benediction in the which thou shalt not share: ‘In blessing I will bless thee,’”—

[Genesis 22:17-18](#). *And in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.*

See the result of one man’s grand act of obedience, and note how God can make that man to be the channel of blessing to all coming ages. Oh, that

you and I might possess the Abrahamic faith which thus practically obeys the Lord, and brings a blessing to all the nations of the earth!

This exposition consisted of readings from [Genesis 12:1-7](#); [Genesis 14:17-24](#); and [Genesis 22:15-18](#).

[GENESIS CONTENTS](#)

Genesis Chapter 23

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER 24

Verses 1-16

Our subject is the value of divine guidance, and we shall, therefore, read two passages of Scripture illustrating the truth which we hope to enforce.

[Genesis 24:1](#). *And Abraham was old, and well stricken in age: and the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things.*

Happy man that can say that, who has a blessing everywhere! And yet Abraham had his “but,” for as yet Isaac was unmarried, and perhaps he little dreamed that for twenty years afterwards he who was to build the house of Abraham was to remain childless. Yet so it was. There was always a trial for Abraham’s faith, but even his trials were blessed, for “God blessed Abraham in all things.”

[Genesis 24:2](#). *And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house, that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh:*

According to the Eastern manner of swearing.

[Genesis 24:3](#). *And I will make thee swear by the LORD, the God of heaven, And the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell:*

This holy man was careful of the purity of his family; he knew what an ill-effect a Canaanitish wife might have upon his son, and also upon his offspring. He was, therefore, particularly careful here. I would that all parents were the same.

[Genesis 24:4-5](#). *But thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac. And the servant said unto him,*

Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land: must I needs bring thy son again unto the land from whence thou camest?

The servant was very careful. Those that swear too readily they know not what, will ere long swear till they care not what. Better still is it for the Christian to remember the word of Christ, "Swear not at all, neither by heaven, nor by earth, nor by any other oath." Doubtless the doctrine of the Saviour is that all oaths of every sort are lawful to the Christian, but if they ever be taken, it should be with deep circumspection and with earnest prayerfulness, that there be no mistake about the matter.

[Genesis 24:6](#). *And Abraham said unto him, Beware thou that thou bring not my son thither again.*

He knew that God had called him and his kindred to inherit the land of Canaan, and, therefore, he was not willing that they should go back to their former dwelling-places.

[Genesis 24:7](#). *The LORD God of heaven, which took me from my father's house, and from the land of my kindred, and which spake unto me, and that sware unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land; he shall send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence.*

What simple faith! This was the very glory of Abraham's faith; it was so simple, so childlike. It might be many miles to Padanaram, but it does not matter to faith. "My God will send his angel." Oh! we are always making difficulties and suggesting hardships; but if our faith were in lively exercise, we should do God's will far more readily. "Who art thou, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain." Brethren, let us be of good heart and of good courage in all matters, for doubtless the angel of God will go before us.

[Genesis 24:8-11](#). *And if the woman will not be willing to follow thee, then thou shalt be clear from this my oath: only bring not my son thither again. And the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and sware to him concerning that matter. And the servant took ten camels of the camels of his master, and departed; for all the goods of his master were in his hand: and he arose, and went to Mesopotamia, unto the city of Nahor. And he made his camels to kneel down without the city by a well of water at the time of the evening, even the time that women go out to draw water.*

Now I think I may freely say that this looks something like what we call "a wild-geese chase." He was to go and find a wife for a young man left at

home; he knew nothing of the people among whom he was to sojourn, but he believed that the angel of God would guide him aright. What ought he to do, now he had come near to the time when the decision must be made? He should seek counsel of God, and observe that he did so.

[Genesis 24:12-14](#). *And he said, O LORD God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham. Behold, I stand here by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water: And let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou hast shewed kindness unto my master.*

I do not know that he is to be imitated in setting a sign to God; perhaps not, but he did his best; he left the matter with God, and a thing is always in good hands when it is left with him. There is a deal of wisdom in this sign, however. Why did he not say, “The damsel that shall first offer me to drink”? No; she might be a little too forward, and a forward woman was not a fit spouse for the good and meditative Isaac. He himself was to address her first, and then she must be ready, with all cheerfulness, to do far more than he asks. She was to offer him to drink, and draw water for his camels; she would thus not be afraid of work, she would be courteous, and she would be kind, and all these meeting in one might show him, and by this test he might very wisely discover, that she was a fitting woman for Isaac, and might become his spouse.

[Genesis 24:15](#). *And it came to pass, before he had done speaking,*

Ay, he did not know that promise, “While they are yet speaking I will hear”; but God keeps his promises before he makes them, and, therefore, I am sure he will keep them after he has made them.

[Genesis 24:15-16](#). *That, behold, Rebekah came out, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham’s brother, with her pitcher upon her shoulder. And the damsel was very fair to look upon, a virgin, neither had any man known her: and she went down to the well, and filled her pitcher, and came up.*

And so on; I need not read the rest of the story, because we now find that, through earnest prayer, the good servant has been rightly led. We will now turn to another passage where we shall have another instance of a

difficult case, where another person put his case before the Lord, and sought guidance and found it.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Genesis 24:1-16](#); [1 Samuel 30:1-13](#); [1 John 1:1-3](#).

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Genesis Chapter 25

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

Genesis Chapter 26

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER 27

Verses 1-29

[Genesis 27:1-4](#). *And it came to pass, that when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim, so that he could not see, he called Esau his eldest son, and said unto him, My son: and he said unto him, Behold, here am I. And he said, Behold now, I am old, I know not the day of my death: Now therefore take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and take me some venison; And make me savoury meat, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat: that my soul may bless thee before I die.*

A sad misfortune to lose the sight of the eyes! How greatly, how much more than we do, ought we to thank God for the prolongation of our sight, and it has been well remarked by one of our greatest men of science “that we seldom hear Christian men thank God as they should for the use of spectacles in these modern times.” A philosopher has written a long paper concerning the blessings which he found in old age from this invention, and we, enabled still to read the Word when our sight decays, should be exceedingly grateful for it. After all, with all alleviations, it is a very great trial to be deprived of one’s eyesight, but those who are in good company. Whilst they have some of the greatest divines in modern history, they have

here one of the best of men — one of the patriarchs whose eyes were dim so that he could not see. He seems to have had some sort of mistiness of soul about this time which was far worse, and so he desired to give the blessing to Esau, whom God had determined should never have it.

[Genesis 27:5-11](#). *And Rebekah heard when Isaac spake to Esau his son. And Esau went to the field to hunt for venison, and to bring it. And Rebekah spake unto Jacob her son, saying, Behold, I heard thy father speak unto Esau thy brother, saying, Bring me venison, and make me savoury meat, that I may eat, and bless thee before the LORD before my death. Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to that which I command thee. Go now to the flock, and fetch me from thence two good kids of the goats; and I will make them savoury meat for thy father, such as he loveth: And thou shalt bring it to thy father, that he may eat, and that he may bless thee before his death. And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, Behold, Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man:*

He does not appear to have raised any objection to what she proposed on moral grounds, but only on the ground of the difficulty of it and the likelihood of being discovered. It only shows how low the moral sense may be in some who, nevertheless, have a desire towards God and have a faith in him. In those darker days we can hardly expect to find so much of the excellences of the spirit as we ought to find now-a-days in those who possess the spirit of God fully.

[Genesis 27:12-15](#). *My father peradventure will feel me, and I shall seem to him as a deceiver; and I shall bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing. And his mother said unto him, Upon me be thy curse, my son: only obey my voice, and go fetch me them. And he went, and fetched, and brought them to his mother: and his mother made savoury meat, such as his father loved. And Rebekah took goodly raiment of her eldest son Esau, which were with her in the house, and put them upon Jacob her younger son:*

And Esau, altogether a man of the world, one very like the sons of other families around about, took care to adorn himself in goodly raiment. It seems always more becoming to the worldling than the Christian. Jacob had a suit good enough for this occasion, but the worldly man had not. I would that those who fear God were less careful about the adornments of their persons. There are far better ornaments than gold can buy — ornaments neat, and raiment comely — may we all possess them.

[Genesis 27:16-19](#). *And she put the skins of the kids of the goats upon his hands, and upon the smooth of his neck: And she gave the savoury meat and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob. And he came unto his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I who art thou, my son? And Jacob said unto his father, I am Esau thy firstborn;*

Which, whatever may be said about it, was a plain lie, and is not to be excused upon any theory whatever. It was as much a sin in Jacob as it would be in us, except that perhaps he had less light, and the general cunning of those who surrounded him may have made it more easy with him and a less tax on conscience for him to do this than it would be in our case. "I am Esau," said he. Why is all this recorded in the Bible? It is not to the credit of these men. No! the Holy Spirit does not write for the credit of man: he writes for the glory of God's grace. He writes for the warning of believers now, and these things are examples unto us that we may avoid the blots and flaws in good men, and may thereby ourselves become more what we should be.

[Genesis 27:19-20](#). *I have done according as thou badest me: arise, I pray thee, sit and eat of my venison, that thy soul may bless me. And Isaac said unto his son, How is it that thou hast found it so quickly, my son? And he said, Because the Lord thy God brought it to me.*

Here he draws God's name into this lie, And this is worse still.

[Genesis 27:21-29](#). *And Isaac said unto Jacob, Come near, I pray thee, that I may feel thee, my son, whether thou be my very son Esau or not. And Jacob went near unto Isaac his father; and he felt him, and said, The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau. And he discerned him not, because his hands were hairy, as his brother Esau's hands: so he blessed him. And he said, Art thou my very son Esau? and he said, I am. And he said, Bring it near to me, and I will eat of my son's venison, that my soul may bless thee. And he brought it near to him, and he did eat: and he brought him wine, and he drank. And his father Isaac said unto him, Come near now, and kiss me, my son. And he came near, and kissed him: and he smelled the smell of his raiment, and blessed him, and said, See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed: therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine: Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee: cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee.*

So he tied his own hands: he could not revoke his blessing, or, had he done so, he would have brought the curse upon himself.

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Genesis Chapter 31

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CHAPTER 32

Verses 1-32

[Genesis 32:1](#). *And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him.*

What an encouragement the visit of these angels must have been to Jacob after the strife which he had had with Laban! But, dear friends, angels often come to meet us, though we know it not. As in the old classic story, the poor man said, "This is a plain hut, but God has been here," so we may say of every Christian's cottage, "Though it be poor, an angel has come here," for David says, "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them." As the angels of God met Jacob, I trust

that, if you have come here after some stern battle, and trial, and difficulty, you may find the angels of God meeting you here. They do come into the assemblies of the saints. Paul tells us that the woman ought to have her head covered in the assembly “because of the angels,” that is, because they are there to see that all things are done decently and in order.

[Genesis 32:2](#). *And when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God’s host: and he called the name of that place Mahanaim.*

He gave it a name to commemorate God’s having sent the angels, and called it “two camps” or “two hosts.”

[Genesis 32:3](#). *And Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother unto the land of Seir, the country of Edom.*

He is out of one trouble with Laban; now he is into another with Esau.

Well did John Bunyan say. —

“A Christian man is seldom long at ease;

When one trouble’s gone, another doth him seize.”

[Genesis 32:4-5](#). *And he commanded them, saying, Then shall ye speak unto my lord Esau; Thy servant Jacob saith thus, I have adjourned with Laban, and stayed there until now: and I have oxen, and asses, flocks, and menservants, and womenservants: and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find grace in thy sight.*

This is very respectful language, and rather obsequious, too; but when a man knows that he has done wrong to another, he ought to be prepared to humble himself to the injured individual; and, though it happened long ago, yet Jacob really had injured his brother Esau, and it was but right that, in meeting him again, he should put himself into a humble position before him. There are some proud people who, when they know that they have done wrong, yet will not own it, and it is very hard to end a quarrel when one will not yield, and the other feels that he will not either. But there is good hope of things going right when Jacob, who is the better of the two brothers, is also the humbler of the two.

[Genesis 32:6-7](#). *And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, We came to thy brother Esau, and also he cometh to meet thee, and four hundred men with him. Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed:*

And well he might be, for an angry brother, with four hundred fierce followers, must mean mischief.

[Genesis 32:7-8](#). *And he divided the people that was with him, and the flocks, and herds, and the camels, into two bands; and said, If Esau come to*

the one company, and smite it, then the other company which is left shall escape.

This is characteristic of Jacob. He was a man of plans and arrangements, a man of considerable craftiness, which some people nowadays call “prudence.” He used means, and he sometimes used them a little too much. Perhaps he did so in this case; but, at the same time, he was a man of faith, and therefore he betook himself to prayer.

[Genesis 32:9-12](#). *And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the Lord which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee: I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands. Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children. And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the seas which cannot be numbered for multitude.*

A prayer most humble, most direct in its petitions, and also full of faith. That was a grand argument for him to use: “Thou saidst, I will surely do thee good.” This is one of the mightiest pleas that we can urge in praying to God: “Do as thou hast said. Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope.” O brethren, if you can remind God of his own promise, you must win the day, for promised mercies are sure mercies.

“As well might he his being quit,
As break his promise, or forget.”

“Hath he said, and shall he not do it? “Only for this will he be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them, and we must take care that we call his promise to mind, and plead it at the mercy-seat.

[Genesis 32:13-21](#). *And he lodged there that same night; and took of that which came to his hand a present for Esau his brother; two hundred she goats, and twenty he goats, two hundred ewes, and twenty rams, thirty milch camels with their colts, forty kine, and ten bulls, twenty she asses, and ten foals. And he delivered them into the hand of his servants, every drove by themselves; and said unto his servants, Pass over before me, and put a space betwixt drove and drove. And he commanded the foremost, saying, When Esau my brother meeteth thee, and asketh thee, saying, ‘Whose art*

thou? and whither goest thou? and whose are these before thee? Then thou shalt say, They be thy servant Jacob's; it is a present sent unto my lord Esau: and, behold, also he is behind us. And so commanded he the second, and the third, and all that followed the droves, saying, On this manner shall ye speak unto Esau, when ye find him. And say we moreover, Behold, thy servant Jacob is behind us. For he said, I will appease him with the present that goeth before me, and afterward I will see his face; peradventure he will accept of me. So went the present over before him: and himself lodged that night in the company.

If Jacob had been true to his faith in God, he would have dispensed with these very prudent preparations; for, after all, the faithfulness of God was Jacob's best defense; it was from God that his safety came, and not from his own plotting, and planning, and scheming. There are some of you, dear brethren, who have minds that are naturally given to inventions, and devices, and plans, and plots, and I believe that, where this is the case, you have more to battle against than those have who are of an ample mind, and who cast themselves more entirely upon the Lord. It is a blessed thing to be such a fool that you do not know anyone to trust in except your God. It is a sweet thing to be so weaned from your wisdom that you fall into the arms of God. Yet, if you do feel that it is right to make such plans as Jacob made, take care that you do what Jacob also did. Pray as well as plan, and if your plans be numerous, let your prayers be all the more fervent, lest the natural tendency of your constitution should degenerate into reliance upon the arm of flesh, and dependence upon your own wisdom, instead of absolute reliance upon God.

[Genesis 32:22-24](#). *And he rose up that night, and took his two wives, and his two womenservants, and his eleven sons, and passed over the ford Jabbok. And he took them, and sent them over the brook, and sent over that he had. And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.*

It was the man Christ Jesus putting on the form of manhood before the time when he would actually be incarnate, and the wrestling seems to have been more on his side than on Jacob's, for it is not said that Jacob wrestled, but that "there wrestled a man with him." There was something that needed to be taken out of Jacob, — his strength and his craftiness; and this angel came to get it out of him. But, on the other hand, Jacob spied his

opportunity, and, sending the angel wrestling with him, he in his turn began to wrestle with the angel.

[Genesis 32:25](#). *And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him.*

So that he was made painfully to realize his own weakness while he was putting forth all his strength.

[Genesis 32:26](#). *And he said, let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.*

Bravely said, O Jacob! And ye sons of Jacob, learn to say the same. You may have what you will if you can speak thus to the covenant angel, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me."

[Genesis 32:27-28](#). *And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said Jacob. And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, —*

The supplanter, —

[Genesis 32:28](#). *But Israel: —*

A prince of God; —

[Genesis 32:28-29](#). *For as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed. And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name.*

That has often been the request of God's people, they have wanted to know God's wondrous name. The Jews superstitiously believe that we have lost the sound of the name of Jehovah, — that the name is unpronounceable now altogether. We think not so; but, certainly, no man knows the nature of God, and understands him, but he to whom the Son shall reveal him. Perhaps Jacob's request had somewhat of curiosity in it, so the angel would not grant it.

[Genesis 32:29](#). *And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there.*

He did not give him what he asked for, but he gave him something better, and, in like manner, if the Lord does not open up a dark doctrine to you, but gives you a bright privilege, that will be better for you.

[Genesis 32:30-32](#). *And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved. And as he passed over Peniel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh. Therefore the children of Israel eat not of the sinew which shrank, which is upon the*

hollow of the thigh, unto this day: because he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the sinew which shrank.

This exposition consisted of readings from Genesis 32. and [Psalms 119:33-40](#).

Verses 22-30

We shall read three short portions of Scripture, all illustrative of the great truth that God has sometimes given grace to his people to overcome himself, the Almighty has condescended to be vanquished by man. First, let us read the story of Jacob in the Book of Genesis, the thirty-second chapter, at the twenty-second verse: —

[Genesis 32:22-24](#). *And he rose up that night, and took his two wives, and his two womenservants, and his eleven sons, and passed over the ford Jabbok. And he took them, and sent them over the brook, and sent over that he had. And Jacob was left alone;*

He had made a quiet oratory for himself by sending everyone else of the company over to the other side of the brook; his own resolve being —

“With thee all night I mean to stay,
And wrestle till the break of day.”

[Genesis 32:24-25](#). *And there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when he saw —*

When the wrestling Man, the Angel of the covenant, saw —

[Genesis 32:25-26](#). *That he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, so he wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.*

When we come nearest to God, we must have a deep sense of our own personal weakness; it must never be supposed, if our suit prevails with heaven, that there is anything in us, or anything in our prayers, to account for our prevalence. Whatever power we have, must come from God's grace alone; and hence, usually, when we pray so as to prevail with the Lord there is at the same time a shrinking of the sinew, a consciousness of weakness, a sense of pain; yet it is just then that we are prevailing, and therefore we may rest assured that our prayer will be answered. The Angel said, “Let me go,” at the very time when Jacob felt the shrinking of the sinew: “He said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he (Jacob) said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.”

[Genesis 32:27-29](#). *And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed. And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name?*

Holy desires will be realized, and believing prayers will be answered, but mere curiosity will not be gratified. Those who read the Scriptures with a view simply to find out novelties that may tickle their fancy, read in vain. The covenant Angel will give thee what thou wilt if it be needful for thee; but he will not answer thine idle questions. He said to Jacob, “Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name?”

[Genesis 32:29-30](#). *And, he blessed him there. And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.*

Thus did Jacob the wrestler overcome his God. Now turn to the thirty-second chapter of the Book of Exodus, where we find a description of the sin of idolatry into which the Israelites fell while Moses was absent in communion with God upon the mountain. The people brought their golden ear-rings to Aaron, and he made a calf, and they bowed before it, saying, “These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.” While this wickedness was going on, Moses was on the mountain-top with God.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Genesis 32:22-30](#); [Exodus 32:7-14](#); and [Mark 7:24-30](#).

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CHAPTER 33

Verses 1-12

[Genesis 33:1-2](#). *And Jacob lifted up his eyes, and looked, and, behold, Esau came, and with him four hundred men. And he divided the children unto Leah, and unto Rachel, and unto the two handmaids. And he put the handmaids and their children foremost, and Leah and her children after, and Rachel and Joseph hindermost.*

He placed them in the order of his affection for them, the best-beloved in the rear.

[Genesis 33:3-4](#). *And he passed over before them, and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother. And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they wept.*

God had been very gracious to him, and all his fears were gone, so he met Esau as a brother, not as an enemy, and the four hundred men were willing to become his protectors.

[Genesis 33:5](#). *And he lifted up his eyes, and saw the women and the children; and said, Who are those with thee? And he said, The children which God hath graciously given thy servant.*

There was a considerable number of them altogether, more than enough, I expect most of you would think if you had them; but Jacob did not speak of them disparagingly, but he described them as “the children which God hath graciously given thy servant.”

[Genesis 33:6-10](#). *Then the handmaidens came near, they and their children, and they bowed themselves. And Leah also with her children came near, and bowed themselves: and after came Joseph near and Rachel, and they bowed themselves. And he said, What meanest thou by all this drove which I met? And he said, What meanest thou by all this drove which I met? And he said, These are to find grace in the sight of my lord. And Esau said, I have enough, my brother; keep that thou hast unto thyself. And Jacob said, Nay, I pray thee, if now I have found grace in thy sight, then receive my present at my hand:*

For, among Orientals, it is such a common custom to offer and receive presents, that, if they are not accepted, it is regarded as an affront.

[Genesis 33:10-12](#). *For therefore I have seen thy face, as though I had seen the face of God, and thou wast pleased with me. Take, I pray thee, my blessing that is brought to thee; because God hath dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough. And he urged him, and he took it. And he said, Let us take our journey, and let us go, and I will go before thee.*

This exposition consisted of readings from Genesis 32, [Genesis 33:1-12](#).

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CHAPTER 45

Verses 1-13

[Genesis 45:1-2](#). *Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him: and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren. And he wept aloud:*

Emotion long pent up grows violent; and when at last it does burst forth, it cannot be restrained: “He wept aloud.”

[Genesis 45:2-3](#). *And the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard. And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph; doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence.*

What a rush of thoughts must have passed through their minds when they remembered all their unkind behavior toward him! There is no wonder that “they were troubled at his presence.”

[Genesis 45:4](#). *And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you.*

He pleads with them, he who was far greater than they—a prince among peasants,—now prays to them; and is it not wonderful that the Lord Jesus,

our infinitely-greater Brother, at times pleads with us, even as he said to the woman at the well, “Give me to drink”? Joseph said unto his brethren, “Come near to me, I pray you.”

[Genesis 45:4-5](#), *And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved, not angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life.*

“You did very wrong, but I say nothing about that, for I want you to notice how God has over-ruled your action, how your sin has been made to be the means of your preservation and the preservation of many besides: ‘God did send me before you to preserve life.’”

[Genesis 45:6](#). *For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be eating nor harvest.*

There were to be five more dreary years of utter desolation and want.

[Genesis 45:7](#). *And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.*

How wonderfully those two things meet in practical harmony,—the free will of man and the predestination of God! Man acts just as freely and just as guiltily as if there were no predestination whatever; and God ordains, arranges, supervises, and over-rules, just as accurately as if there were no free will in the universe. There are some purblind people who only believe one or other of these two truths; yet they are both true, and the one is as true as the other. I believe that much of the theology which is tinged with free will is true, and I know that the teaching which fully proclaims electing love and sovereign grace is also true; and you may find much of both these truths in the Scriptures. The fault lies in trying to compress all truth under either of those two heads. These men were verily guilty for selling their brother, yet God was verily wise in permitting him to be sold. The inference which Joseph draws from their misconduct is, of course, an inference of love. Love may not be always logical, but it is sweetly consoling, as it must have been in this case.

[Genesis 45:8](#). *So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.*

See how Joseph traces God’s hand in his whole career.

[Genesis 45:9](#). *Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt: come down unto me, tarry not:*

See how love attracts; Joseph must have his brothers near him, now he wants to have his father also near. “Go up to my father, and say unto him, ‘Come down unto me.’” “See how great love turns pleader again; he who said to his brethren, “Come near to me,” sends to his father the message, “Come down unto me.”

[Genesis 45:10](#). *And thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou, and thy children, and thy children’s children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast:*

Our common saying, “Love me, love my dog,” is very true. Love me, love even my flocks and my herds. So the blessing of God extends to all that his chosen people have; not only to their children, but to all that they possess.

[Genesis 45:11-13](#). *And there will I nourish thee; for yet there are five years of famine; lest thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty. And, behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that it is my mouth that speaketh unto you. And ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have seen; and ye shall haste and bring down my father hither.*

Love is impatient to have the object of its affection brought near. Now we will read two short portions out of the Song of Solomon, from which you will see how love evermore craves for nearness to the loved one. The Song opens thus:—

This exposition consisted of readings from [Genesis 45:1-13](#); [Song of Solomon 1:1-7](#); [Song of Solomon 3:1-5](#).

Verses 9-28

[Genesis 45:9](#). *Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt; come down unto me, tarry not:*

Joseph, having made himself known to his brethren, bids them return to their father, and bring him down to Egypt to see his long-lost son.

[Genesis 45:10-11](#). *And thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou, and thy children, and thy children’s children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast: and there will I nourish*

thee; for yet there are five years of famine; lest thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty.

It is just like Joseph to speak thus kindly, and to put the invitation so attractively to his father: "Thou shalt be near unto me." That would be the greatest joy of all to old Jacob; and this is the greatest joy to a sinner when he comes to Christ, our great Joseph, "Thou shalt be near unto me." It is not merely that he gives us the land of Goshen to dwell in, but he promises that we shall be near unto him, and that is best of all.

[Genesis 45:12-22](#). *And, behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that it is my mouth that speaketh unto you. And ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have seen; and ye shall haste and bring down my father hither. And he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck, and wept, and Benjamin wept upon his neck. Moreover he kissed all his brethren and wept upon them: and after that his brethren talked with him. And the fame thereof was heard in Pharaoh's house, saying, Joseph's brethren are come: and it pleased Pharaoh well, and his servants. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Say unto thy brethren, This do ye; lade your beasts, and so, get you unto the land of Canaan; and take your father and your households, and come unto me: and I will give you the good of the land of Egypt, and ye shall eat the fat of the land. Now thou art commanded, this do ye; take you wagons out of the land of Egypt for your little ones, and for your wives, and bring your father and come. Also regard not your stuff; for the good of all the land of Egypt is yours.*

And the children of Israel did so: and Joseph gave them wagons, according to the commandment of Pharaoh, and gave them provision for the way. To all of them he gave each man changes of raiment; but to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver, and five changes of raiment.

Benjamin was his full brother, so he loved him best, and gave him most.

[Genesis 45:23-24](#). *And to his father he sent after this manner; ten asses laden with the good things of Egypt, and ten she asses laden with corn and bread and meat for his father by the way. So he sent his brethren away, and they departed: and he said unto them, See that ye fall not out by the way.*

This was a sure sign that Joseph knew his brethren, and they might well recognize him even by that precept, for their consciences must have told them that it had been their common habit to fall out either with or without occasion, so he bids them not to do so.

[Genesis 45:25-28](#). *And they went up out of Egypt, and came into the land of Canaan unto Jacob their father, and told him, saying, Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt. And Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not. And they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them: and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived: and Israel said,*

See how quickly the patriarch changes from Jacob into Israel; when his spirit is revived, he becomes Israel.

[Genesis 45:28](#). *It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die.*

Now we are going to read in the Gospel according to John, the fifth chapter, beginning at the twenty-fourth verse.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Genesis 45:9-28](#); and [John 5:24-44](#).

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Genesis Chapter 46

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Genesis Chapter 47

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Genesis Chapter 48

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CHAPTER 49

Verses 1-28

1, 2. *And Jacob called unto his sons, and said, Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last day. Gather yourselves together, and hear, ye sons of Jacob; and hearken unto Israel your father.*

It must have been a great comfort to the old man to have all his twelve sons with him. What a quiet answer this was to his former unbelief! They were all there, yet he could remember the time when he had said, “Ye have bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away.” Ah! we also shall have in our later days to chide ourselves for our foolish unbelief. “Jacob called unto his sons,” so he was not bereaved after all. They are all here, Jacob. It falls to the lot of few fathers to have twelve sons, and to fewer still to have all twelve of them gathered about his dying bed. “Gather yourselves together.” They were to keep together as a family; and shall not the people of God keep together? Come away from the world, beloved, but come close to one another; be one household, be it your delight to assemble around your elder Brother, the Lord Jesus Christ. “Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days.” We are not told nowadays everything about the future, but much of the future is unfolded to us in the great principles of the law and the gospel, and we may learn very much of holy foresight by coming to the oracles of God.

[Genesis 49:3](#). *Reuben, thou art my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power:*

The patriarch fixes his eyes on his firstborn; he must say something sharp that would dishonour him, but he does not deny him the rights of birthright. He clothes him with the robes and the jewels of primogeniture, and then he strips him: —

[Genesis 49:4](#). *Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel; because thou wentest up to thy father's bed; then defiledst thou it: he went up to my couch.*

So a man may have great opportunities, and yet lose them. Uncontrolled passions may make him very little who otherwise might have been great. Reuben was “the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power,” yet his father had to say to him, “Thou shalt not excel.”

[Genesis 49:5](#). *Simeon and Levi* —

They stood next according to the order of birth: “Simeon and Levi” —

[Genesis 49:6](#). *Are brethren;*

They are very much like each other.

[Genesis 49:6-7](#). *Instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united: for in their anger they slew a man, and in their selfwill they digged down a wall. Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel: I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel.*

Hence we do not read of the tribe of Simeon in the blessing of Moses at the end of Deuteronomy; but the Levites had this curse turned into a blessing, for, though they were scattered, yet they were scattered as priests and instructors to the other tribes. Happy is that man who, though he begins with a dark shadow resting upon him, so lives as to turn even that shadow into bright sunlight. Levi gained a blessing at the hands of Moses, one of the richest blessings of any of the tribes. This holy man, Jacob, in dying, did not express himself according to the rules of natural affection but he yielded himself up to the Spirit of God; hence he had to say very much that must have been very bitter for a father to say, and he said it in all faithfulness being taught of the Spirit concerning things to come.

[Genesis 49:8](#). *Judah, —*

Now the patriarch changes his tone, for he has come to that tribe which would take the birthright, out of which the Christ would come: “Judah” —

[Genesis 49:8](#). *Thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise:*

They praised God for him, they praised God by him, they praised God in him; he is the type of Jesus, of whom we can say all this with great emphasis.

[Genesis 49:8](#). *Thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father’s children shall bow down before thee.*

In the person of David, in the long line of kings of the tribe of Judah, all this came true; and in the person of the great Son of David, the Lord Jesus Christ, all this has come true to a very high degree.

[Genesis 49:9](#). *Judah is a lion’s whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up?*

The coat of arms of Judah was a lion couchant, in the fullness of his strength, keeping still, waiting to spring upon his adversary. Our Lord Christ is such a lion today; “the Lion of the tribe of Judah” couchant, lying

down: “who shall rouse him up ?” Ah ! if he be once fully aroused what power will he put forth when he shall spring upon his adversaries ?

[Genesis 49:10](#). *The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.*

Jacob’s eyes were dim, but he could see a very long way; he could see to the coming of Christ, the Shiloh, the Pacificator, the Peace-maker; he could see that day when the Jews would cry, “ We have no king but Caesar,” for the Shiloh would have come, and the scepter would have departed from Judah’s tribe. “Unto him shall the gathering of the people be.” Oh, that it might be so today! May many be gathered to Christ! He is the true center, and we gather unto him. May the divisions of the Church be soon healed by a general gathering unto Christ, who alone is the center of the Church. “Unto him shall the gathering of the people be.”

[Genesis 49:11-12](#). *Binding his foal unto the vine, and his ass’s colt unto the choice vine; he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes: his eyes shall be red with wine, and his teeth white with milk.*

They were to have a land in which would be milk for babes and wine for strong men; surely this land is “thy land, O Emmanuel!” What nourishing milk there is in the gospel, and what exhilarating wine for those who know the love of Christ!

[Genesis 49:13](#). *Zebulun shall dwell at the haven of the sea; and he shall be for an haven of ships; and his brother shall be unto Zidon.*

When the land was divided by lot, the lot was disposed by God to the complete fulfillment of Jacob’s prophecy. Many things may seem to be left to chance, but they are not, the hand of God still guides and controls. This blessing is very suggestive “Zebulun shall dwell at the haven of the sea; and he shall be for a haven of ships.” If God puts you by the mind that you are a haven for ships, the Lord, in his providence, fixes your position. See that you turn it to account for the good of others.

[Genesis 49:14-15](#). *Issachar is a strong ass couching down between two burdens: and he saw that rest was good, and the land that it was pleasant; and bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a servant unto tribute.*

Issachar’s was a poor case; he was so idle, so fond of rest, that he was willing to become a servant unto tribute. This seems hardly a blessing yet it was true of Issachar. He was strong, but then he was an ass as well as

strong, so he liked couching down between two burdens much better than bearing either one of them, yet he had to bow his shoulder to bear, and became a servant unto tribute.

[Genesis 49:16-17](#). *Dan shall judge his people, as one of the tribes of Israel. Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horse heels, so that his rider shall fall backward.*

This tribe would show more cunning than courage; it would excel rather in the strategy of war than in the force of arms. Here the old man paused, and refreshed himself by saying, —

[Genesis 49:18](#). *I have waited for thy salvation, O LORD.*

What a happy breathing-space is this! When you and I also are near our journey's end, may we be able to say, as Jacob did, "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord." He could not have said that once. This is the very Jacob who had, in his earlier days, been full of crafty policy, and tricks and schemes; but he has done with all that now, and he is able truthfully to say, "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord."

[Genesis 49:19](#). *God, a troop shall overcome him: but he shall overcome at the last.*

This has been the blessing of many a child of God, — to fight, and apparently to lose the battle, yet to win it at the end. O thou who art striving against sin, or seeking to win souls for Christ, after many disappointments may you be able to clutch this sweet assurance, "He shall overcome at the last."

[Genesis 49:20](#). *Out of Asher his bread shall be fat, and he shall yield royal dainties.*

Asher was a tribe that was placed in a very fertile region where everything was crowned with delight. Oh, to have our inheritance where we feed upon the bread of heaven, and where the deep truths of God become to us royal dainties!

[Genesis 49:21](#). *Naphtali is a hind let loose: he giveth goodly words.*

Naphtali was a tribe notable for those that could speak freely, helped of God with a holy freedom in bearing testimony to his truth.

[Genesis 49:22](#). *Joseph —*

Ah, now the patriarch comes to his beloved Joseph, and here the old man lingers long, longer than upon any other of his sons: "Joseph" —

[Genesis 49:22](#). *Is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall:*

The Hebrew puts it, “Joseph is a son of fruits, even a son of fruits by a well; whose daughters run over the wall.”

[Genesis 49:23-24](#). *The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him: but his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hand were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; (from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel:)*

Joseph is a type of him who is both the Shepherd and the Stone to us, the Shepherd who defends us, provides for us, and dies for us, and the foundation on which we build for time and eternity.

[Genesis 49:25-28](#). *Even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee; and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb: the blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren. Benjamin shall ravine as a wolf: in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil.*

All these are the twelve tribes of Israel: and this is it that their father spake unto them, and blessed them; every one according to his blessing he blessed them.

Verses 1-33

[Genesis 49:1-3](#). *And Jacob called unto his sons, and said, Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days. Gather yourselves together, and hear, ye sons of Jacob; and hearken unto Israel your father. Reuben, thou art my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power:*

All this was to Reuben’s advantage, yet he was spoiled through one fault.

[Genesis 49:4](#). *Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel; —*

So it is clear that the greatest strength and dignity and power will not serve a man, so as to make him excel, if he be unstable. There are many such persons still remaining in the world; their doctrine changes like the moon, and we never know what it is. Their spirit and temper constantly change; their pursuits are sometimes in one direction, and sometimes in another; they are “everything by starts, and nothing long;” and to each of them it may be said, “Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel.”:

[Genesis 49:4-7](#). *Because thou wentest up to thy father's bed; then defiledst thou it: he went up to my couch. Simeon and Levi are brethren; instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united: for in their anger they slew a man, and in their selfwill they digged down a wall. Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel: I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel.*

It is a very remarkable circumstance, well worthy of notice, that this curse was turned into a real blessing, especially in the case of the tribe of Levi. It is true that they were divided and scattered, like handfuls of salt, throughout the whole of Israel, for they were attendants upon the Lord's priests, and they had cities appointed to them so that, while they did dwell here, and there, and everywhere, it was in order that they might reach the whole of the people, and prove a blessing to them. Are any of you labouring under a very serious disadvantage? Does it look to you like a curse? Then pray to God to make it into a blessing. I believe that, often, the worst thing that can happen to Christian men is really the best thing, for, while nature would cry out, "The clouds are to be dreaded," grace can reply, — The clouds ye so much dread Are big with mercy, and shall break In blessings on your head.

[Genesis 49:8](#). *Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise:*

His name was praise, and such was his history to be, for David came of that tribe, and great David's greater Son, whom it is our joy to praise.

[Genesis 49:8](#). *Thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee.*

While that was true of Judah, it is still more true of him who sprang out of Judah, even our Lord and King, the Lion of the tribe of Judah.

[Genesis 49:9](#). *Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion, who shall rouse him up?*

Our Lord overcame his enemies even in the thicket of this world; and all power is given unto him now that he has "gone up" again into his glory. Let that man beware who would attack this Lion of the tribe of Judah: "Who shall rouse him up?" If you persecute his followers, you will rouse him up. If you deny his truth, trample on the doctrine of atonement, and reject his love, you will rouse him up. But beware in that day, for terrible is the King of Judah when he is once aroused. Wherefore, submit yourselves to him:

“Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little.”

[Genesis 49:10](#). *The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.*

When did the dominion depart from Judah till the Lord Jesus came as the Seat One? And unto him, to this very day, the people gather, and more and more shall gather in the latter days.

[Genesis 49:11-12](#). *Binding his foal unto the vine, and his ass's colt unto the choice wine; he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes: his eyes shall be red with wine, and his teeth white with milk.*

It was literally so with Judah, but it is gloriously as with our Lord to this day. It was his blood which yielded the juice of those rare clusters of the choice vine; and now, with garments dyed with his own blood, he comes from Edom, for he has trodden down his foes, and he cries, “I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me.”

[Genesis 49:13](#). *Zebulun shall dwell at the haven of the sea; and he shall be for an haven of ships; and his border shall be unto Zidon.*

So did Zebulun dwell even until the day when our Lord came, for Matthew writes concerning him, “Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee; and leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; the people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up.”

[Genesis 49:14-15](#). *Issachar is a strong ass couching down between two burdens: and he saw that rest was good, and the land that it was pleasant; and bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a servant unto tribute.*

This was a poor character for Issachar to possess; it was a tame-spirited tribe, that loved rest and ease, and therefore did not fight with the common foe. Issachar crouched down between the burdens instead of taking them up and bearing them; God grant that none of us may be of that lazy tribe! I think that I know some who are; they could do a great deal, but they see that rest is good, and the land is pleasant, so they idle away their days.

[Genesis 49:16-17](#). *Dan shall judge his people, as one of the tribes of Israel. Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horse heels, so that his rider shall fall backward.*

Dan is noted among the tribes for its famous leap, capturing that distant part of the country for itself. Here good old Jacob, worn out by what he had already said, exhausted by the ecstasy into which as a prophet he had been cast, paused awhile, and panted.

[Genesis 49:18](#). *I have waited for thy salvation, O LORD.*

But he soon resumed his prophecy: —

[Genesis 49:19](#). *Gad, a troop shall overcome him: but he shall overcome at the last.*

Many of God's servants belong to this tribe, for their life is spent in conflict. They do not seek it, but it comes to them; and, for a time, they seem to be overcome, yet let them clutch at the promise given by God.

[Genesis 49:20](#). *Out of Asher his bread shall be fat, and he shall yield royal dainties.*

Well fed, and then yielding correspondingly. There are some people who like to have their bread to be fat, but they yield to the King no dainties. Let it not be so with us; but let us both feed well and yield well.

[Genesis 49:21](#). *Naphtali is a hind let loose: —*

The type of what a Christian minister should be,— indeed, what every Christian worker should be,— “a hind let loose,” one who can say with David, “O Lord, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid. Thou hast loosed my bonds.”

[Genesis 49:21](#). *He giveth goodly words.*

He has liberty in speech, freedom of utterance, he is not in bonds, he is as “a hind let loose.”

[Genesis 49:22](#). *Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; —*

Where he can suck up abundant nutriment,—

[Genesis 49:22](#). *Whose branches run over the wall:*

He does more than he is expected to do; nothing seems to content him, his “branches run over the wall.”

[Genesis 49:23-24](#). *The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him: but his bow abode in strength,*

You know how sorely Joseph was persecuted by his brethren, yet how the Lord was with him in all his troubles. It appears from these words that

he was himself an archer, and that he was not in a hurry to shoot his arrows; his bow remained still. It is the strong who can afford to be quiet; as you go across the village green, a goose will hiss at you, while the strong ox lies down calmly, and takes no notice of you: “His bow abode in strength,” —

[Genesis 49:24](#). *And the arms of his hands —*

Not only his hands, but the arms of his hands —

[Genesis 49:24-27](#). *Were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; (from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel:) even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee; and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb: the blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills; they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren. Benjamin shall ravin as a wolf: in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil.*

Little Benjamin is the last of the tribes.

[Genesis 49:28-33](#). *All these are the twelve tribes of Israel: and this is it that their father spake unto them, and blessed them; every one according to his blessing he blessed them. And he charged them, and said unto them, I am to be gathered unto my people: bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, in the came that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite for a possession of a burying-place. There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife; and there I buried Leah. The purchase of the field and of the cave that is therein was from the children of Heth. And when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people.*

It is a very sweet thing to die with a blessing on your lips, and it is equally good to live in the same spirit. Our Lord Jesus was blessing his disciples when he was taken from them; and since we do not know when we shall be taken sway from our relatives, let us be always blessing them. May the Lord, who has blessed us, make us a blessing to others!

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SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER TWO

Exodus

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CHAPTER 3

Verses 1-10

[Exodus 3:1](#). *Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb.*

It must have been a great change for Moses, after forty years in the court of Pharaoh, to be spending another forty years in the wilderness. But it was not waste time; it required the first two periods to make Moses fit for the grand life of the last forty. He must be a prince, and he must be a shepherd, that he might be both a ruler and a shepherd to God's people, Israel. He must be much alone; he must have many solitary communings with his own heart; he must be led to feel his own weakness. And this will be no loss of

time to him; he will do more in the last forty years because of the two forties thus spent in preparation. And it is not lost time that a man takes in putting on his harness before he goes to the battle, or that the reaper spends in sharpening his scythe before he cuts down the corn.

[Exodus 3:2](#). *And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.*

How near God seemed in those ages when he could be beheld in a bush or sitting under an oak! And is he not equally near to us if we are but prepared for his presence? Surely pure eyes are scarce, or sights of God would be more frequent, for “the pure in heart shall see God.”

[Exodus 3:3-5](#). *And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I. And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.*

God is not to be viewed by curiosity; he is not to be approached by presumption. A holy trembling well becomes the man who would commune with the most holy God. We are not fit for intercourse with God without some measure of preparation, There is something to be put off ere we can behold the Lord.

[Exodus 3:6](#). *Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.*

Partly because of the universal superstition that if God appeared to any man, he would surely die; but in Moses' case, perhaps more because of an appreciation of the holiness of God and of his own unworthiness. There is not a man among us but what must do as Moses did if we are in a right state of mind. They that think they are perfect might presume to look, but they that are truly so, as Moses was, would, as he did, hide his face, for he was afraid to look upon God.

[Exodus 3:7](#). *And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows;*

Beautiful verse. God had seen and God had heard, as if their griefs had had two avenues to his heart. God seeth not with eyes, and heareth not with

ears, as we do, but he speaketh after the manner of men, and he saith by two ways they had reached his very soul: “I have surely seen the affliction; I have heard their cries”; and then he adds, as if to show the perfection of his sympathy with them: “I know their sorrows.” Now it is quite true today concerning us and concerning our God, he has seen, he has heard, and he knows — “I know their sorrows.” When the sorrow is known, then God begins to work. He is no passive spectator of the misery of his chosen, but his hand goes with his heart.

[Exodus 3:8](#). *And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites.*

“Now, therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me,” and when the cry of God’s children goes unto him, depend upon it there will be something moving before long. When a father hears the cries of his children, when a mother hears the cry of her babe, it is not long before there will be a movement of the heart and of the hand. I am sure, brethren and sisters, there have been crises in English history which have been entirely due to the prayers of God’s people. There have been singular occurrences which the mere reader of history cannot understand, but there is a number still alive who wait upon God in prayer, and they make history. There is more history made in the closet than in the cabinet of the ministry. There is a greater power at the back of the throne than the carnal eye can see, and that power is the cry of God’s children.

[Exodus 3:9-10](#). *Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.*

I do not wonder that Moses opened his eyes when he knew what a poor creature he was for God to say, “Come now, therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh” — the very man whose life was sought by Pharaoh — “I will send thee unto Pharaoh” — the man that had been rejected by his own people when he took their part — “Thou mayest bring forth my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.” Oh! let us be ready for any commission. If God were to say that he would build up heaven by the poorest and meanest among us, it would not be for us to draw back. Let him do what he wills

with us! Oh! for a faith to believe that in the midst of our weakness God's strength would appear.

Verses 1-14

This chapter tells of the appearance of God to Moses in the Wilderness. Has he removed from us brethren? He used to be seen by godly souls by mount and stream and sea; and even bushes were alive and blazing with the indwelt Godhead. Oh, that he would reveal himself to us tonight! I am going to read this chapter with this longing in my heart. I pray that the same longing may be in the heart of every child of God: "Show me thy face: show me thy face, my God, tonight."

[Exodus 3:1](#). *Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb.*

There is nothing dishonourable about common trade, and matters of business at all. Here is a shepherd, who keeps his flock, and God keeps him and reveals himself to him. When God wants a man to lead his people he seeks for him not among idlers, but busy, active men, and God was pleased to show himself more to Moses as a shepherd, than he had ever shown himself to him as a prince in Egypt. I find no glowing Deity in the halls of Pharaoh, but I find the consuming fire manifested in the lone wastes of the desert of Sinai.

[Exodus 3:2](#). *And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.*

Well might it say, "Behold." I have seen a bush set alight by a match. It blazed in a moment, but it was gone in another moment. It burned up so fiercely and hastily. But God was pleased to make a poor consumable bush to be the unharmed place of his abiding. He dwells today in the human person of the Saviour. The Godhead is in Christ. He dwells today in the church, which might well enough be consumed by his presence; but it is not consumed. He can come and dwell in my heart and in yours tonight, and yet we shall bear the presence of Deity to the hour of our death. He has a way of so throwing himself into our feebleness that it becomes strong, and that which might otherwise have been destroyed, is even preserved by his presence. The bush burned with fire, and was not consumed.

[Exodus 3:3-4](#). *And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. And when the LORD saw that he turned*

aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I.

Oh, that personal call, that voice from God to the heart! How much we need it. Do you not remember when first the Lord called some of you? Then he says to you tonight, “I have called thee by my name. Thou art mine.” Own that sweet impeachment, confess that you are his, and say to him, “For suffering or for service, here am I ready, aye ready, even as Moses was. Here am I.”

[Exodus 3:5](#). *And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.*

Stand as a servant stands in the presence of his master in the East. He is not expected to wear in the court of his master the shoes which have trodden in the mire of the world. Now, put off thy cares, put off thy carnal thoughts, put off thyself, put off thy sin. When God is near, solemnity and deep reverence become us. “The place whereon thou standest is holy ground.”

[Exodus 3:6](#). *Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.*

Thou needest not hide thy face if God shall appear to thee, though I am sure thou wilt do it. Thou mayest come boldly. It is thy Father’s face: it is the face of one who is reconciled to thee in Christ. Therefore open thine eyes and look; and may the Lord show himself to thee!

[Exodus 3:7](#). *And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows;*

Now, you troubled ones, are not these verses real music to you? God has seen your afflictions, there are God’s eyes; God has heard your cry, there are God’s ears. “I know their sorrows”: there is God’s mighty understanding. He is thinking about you. He knows all that which tries you tonight.

[Exodus 3:8-10](#). *And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites. Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the*

Egyptians oppress them. Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.

“Come now therefore,” This was a very extraordinary thing to follow after all that. God has seen the affliction of his people. What then? He says, “I am come down to deliver them.” What then? Why, the next thing is that he is going to use this trembling man who stands awe-struck with his shoes from off his feet in the presence of the still burning bush. “Come now, therefore.”

[Exodus 3:10](#). *And I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.*

You have been praying for a blessing. God is going to give it through you. You have been looking east and west and north and south for some deliverer that shall win souls and stir up the church. God calls you to do it. He invites you to undertake this gigantic service, and I think that I see the colour come into your face, and then fly away again. You are ready to faint at the thought of such a charge laid upon you.

[Exodus 3:11](#). *And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?*

Now, catch this: —

[Exodus 3:12](#). *And he said, Certainly I will be with thee;*

What more does Moses want? He said, “Who am I?” This showed his weakness. God said, “Never mind who you are. Certainly I will be with thee.” Here was strength enough for him.

[Exodus 3:12](#). *And this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain.*

And he did. You know how Sinai trembled while God made it his throne, and how Moses must have been strengthened when he did exceeding fear and quake before God when he recollected that this same God had appeared to him when he was alone in the desert, and had promised that they should worship him there.

[Exodus 3:14](#). *And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM:*

That is his name: the Infinite, Eternal, and Unchangeable God.

[Exodus 3:14](#). *And he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.*

Oh, what a glorious commission — to receive it direct from the self-existent God, who is the same for ever and ever, and only hath immortality. Speak to us tonight, thou great I am, Jah, Jehovah, God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob. Speak to this company in this house of prayer tonight, because of Jesus, Joshua, Jehoshua, Jehovah, Jesus. I have tried to show you how that name of Jesus has the name “Jehovah” hidden away in it. Because of him, draw near to us, O Lord.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Exodus 3:1-14](#); [Romans 9:1-25](#).

EXODUS CONTENTS

Exodus Chapter 4

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

Exodus Chapter 5

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Exodus Chapter 6

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CHAPTER 10

Verses 1-20

[Exodus 10:1-2](#). *And the LORD said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh: for I have hardened his heart, and the heart of his servants, that I might shew these my signs before him: and that thou mayest tell in the ears of thy son, and of thy son's son, what things I have wrought in Egypt, and my signs which I have done among them; that ye may know how that I am the LORD.*

God would stamp the early history of Israel with the deep impression of his Godhead. His overthrow of the proud Egyptian king should let Israel know in the very beginning how great a God had chosen her to be his own peculiar portion.

[Exodus 10:3](#). *And Moses and Aaron came in unto Pharaoh, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of the Hebrews, How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before me? let my people go, that they may serve me.*

Can you imagine these humble individuals, Moses and Aaron, thus bearding the great king whose word could make their heads to roll upon the sword? They were not afraid, for God was with them; and they who speak in God's stead are traitors if they be not brave. The ambassadors of so great a King must not demean themselves by fear, therefore right boldly said they to Pharaoh, "Thus saith the LORD God of the Hebrews, How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before me? let my people go, that they may serve me."

[Exodus 10:4-6](#). *Else, if thou refuse to let my people go, behold, to morrow will I bring the locusts into thy coast: and they shall cover the face of the earth, that one cannot be able to see the earth: and they shall eat the residue of that which is escaped, which remaineth unto you from the hail, and shall eat every tree which groweth for you out of the field: and they shall fill thy houses, and the houses of all thy servants, and the houses of all the Egyptians; which neither thy fathers, nor thy fathers' fathers have seen,*

since the day that they were upon the earth unto this day. And he turned himself, and went out from Pharaoh.

Moses had delivered his message, he had uttered his solemn warning, so he waited no longer in the tyrant's presence.

[Exodus 10:7](#). *And Pharaoh's servants said unto him, How long shall this man be a snare unto us? let the men go, that they may serve the LORD their God; knowest thou not yet that Egypt is destroyed?*

The seven former heavy judgments had so effectually bruised Egypt that the people began to cry against their king for his obstinacy in still further resisting God.

[Exodus 10:8-9](#). *And Moses and Aaron were brought again unto Pharaoh: and he said unto them, Go, serve the LORD your God: but who are they that shall go? And Moses said, We will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds will we go; for we must hold a feast unto the LORD.*

Pharaoh was inclined to make terms with Moses, but God will have no conditions with men who are rebelling against him. An unconditional surrender is all that God will accept.

[Exodus 10:10-11](#). *And he said unto them, Let the LORD be so with you, as I will let you go, and your little ones: look to it; for evil is before you. Not so: go now ye that are men, and serve the LORD for that ye did desire. And they were driven out from Pharaoh's presence.*

See how proud, how stout-hearted towards evil is this wicked and foolish king. When his people appeal to him to yield, he only does so for a moment, and then he drives out the messengers of God in anger.

[Exodus 10:12-17](#). *And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the land of Egypt for the locusts, that they may come up upon the land of Egypt, and eat every herb of the land, even all that the hail hath left. And Moses stretched forth his rod over the land of Egypt, and the LORD brought an east wind upon the land all that day, and all that night; and when it was morning, the east wind brought the locusts. And the locusts went up over all the land of Egypt, and rested in all the coasts of Egypt: very grievous were they; before them there were no such locusts as they, neither after them shall be such. For they covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened; and they did eat every herb of the land, and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left: and there remained not any green thing in the trees, or in the herbs of the field,*

through all the land of Egypt. Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron in haste; and he said, I have sinned against the LORD your God, and against you. Now therefore forgive, I pray thee, my sin only this once, and entreat the LORD your God, that he may take away from me this death only.

See how he is obliged to come to his knees at length. He will be up again soon, for his heart is not humbled, though he is eating his own words. An unhumbled heart is not subdued by judgments; it is so apparently, but really it is still a heart of stone.

[Exodus 10:18-20](#). *And he went out from Pharaoh, and entreated the LORD. And the LORD turned a mighty strong west wind, which took away the locusts, and cast them into the Red sea; there remained not one locust in all the coasts of Egypt. But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, so that he would not let the children of Israel go.*

God kept his grace back from him, so that he relapsed into his natural state of obduracy. Pharaoh is the great mirror of pride and obstinacy; I wonder whether we have a Pharaoh here. Now let us turn to the 105th Psalm, and see further what God did against this proud Pharaoh.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Exodus 10:1-20](#); and [Psalms 105:26-38](#).

[EXODUS CONTENTS](#)

Exodus Chapter 11

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER 12

Verses 1-20

[Exodus 12:1-2](#). *And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you.*

God thinks a great deal of the redemption of his people. When he redeemed them out of their Egyptian bondage, he took care that the mighty deed should be worthily commemorated. Thenceforth, the Jewish year was to begin with the celebration of the national deliverance; and now, when

any of us are converted to God, and so are set free from the slavery of sin, we should reckon that then we really begin to live. All the previous part of our life has been wasted; but when we are brought truly to know God, through faith in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, then have we realized, indeed, what life is. The month of our conversion should be to us the beginning of months, the first month of the year to us.

[Exodus 12:3-4](#). *Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house: and if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb.*

The worship of God must be rendered in an orderly manner, with due thoughtfulness and preparation. This paschal supper was not to be celebrated in any fashion that the people might choose; but they were to take time to have the lamb properly examined, that it might be found perfect in every respect, and that everything might be set in order so that the feast should be observed with due reverence and solemnity. Let us take care that we act thus in all our devotions; let us never rush to prayer or hasten to praise; but let us pause awhile, and think what we are about to do, lest we offer the sacrifice of fools, and so cause the Lord to bid us take back that which we have brought to put upon his altar without due thoughtfulness.

[Exodus 12:5](#). *Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats:*

It was to be a type of Christ, and, therefore, it must be the best that they had. It must be in the prime of its strength, otherwise it would not be a fit emblem of the “strong Son of God” whose mighty love moved him to give himself to death for us.

[Exodus 12:6-10](#). *And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening. And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it. And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof. And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire.*

Everything was to be done exactly according to God's order; the alteration of the slightest detail would have spoiled it all. I wish that all Christians would remember this rule with regard to the ordinances of God's house. They are not for us to make, or for us to alter, but for us to keep.

[Exodus 12:11](#). *And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the LORD'S passover.*

They were thus to exercise an act of faith. Why were they to eat in haste, but that they expected soon to be gone? They were to stand like travelers who are starting upon a journey, believing that God was about to set them free. Oh, that we would always exercise faith in all our devotions, for without faith it must ever be impossible to please God.

[Exodus 12:12-13](#). *For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, —*

What a grand gospel statement that is! When the sinner sees the blood, it is for his comfort; but it is God's sight of the blood that is, after all, the grand thing; and when is it that he does not see it?

[Exodus 12:13-20](#). *And the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt. And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever. Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses: for whosoever eateth leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel. And in the first day there shall be an holy convocation, and in the seventh day there shall be an holy convocation to you; no manner of work shall be done in them, save that which every man must eat, that only may be done of you. And ye shall observe the feast of unleavened bread; for in this selfsame day have I brought your armies out of the land of Egypt: therefore shall ye observe this day in your generations by an ordinance for ever. In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at even, ye shall eat unleavened bread, until the one and twentieth day of the month at even. Seven days shall there be no leaven found in your houses: for whosoever eateth that which is leavened, even that soul shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he*

be a stranger, or born in the land. Ye shall eat nothing leavened; in all your habitations shall ye eat unleavened bread.

Thus we see God instituting a commemoration of the deliverance of his people out of Egypt. How much more ought you and I, with joyful gladness, to remember the deliverance of our soul from the slavery of sin and Satan! Let us never forget it. I should like to refresh the memories of bygone times with you who know the Lord; the Lord help you now, with deepest gratitude, to recollect the day when first you saw your Saviour, and the yoke was taken from your neck, and the burden from your shoulder, glory be to the delivering Lord!

Verses 1-27

[Exodus 12:1-2](#). *And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you.*

And for this reason that, now, as a nation, they were to begin their separate history, separate in existence from all the rest of mankind.

[Exodus 12:3-4](#). *Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for a house: and if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb.*

The separation of the lamb was to take place some four days before the time of its slaughter. Probably it was kept in the house, according to the Jewish tradition it was so, and they would hear it bleating, and be reminded of the purpose for which it was to be slain.

[Exodus 12:5](#). *Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats:*

You know what a type this is of Christ, “without blemish,” offered up for us in the very fullness of his strength, in the prime and glory of his manhood, giving himself up to be our Paschal Lamb, “The Lamb of God.”

[Exodus 12:6](#). *And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening.*

Just as the sun went down, or just before it set for the evening. There is also the marginal reading “between the two evenings.” The even before the

sun set, was the first, and then the daylight after the sun set was the second evening.

[Exodus 12:7](#). *And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it.*

Not on the threshold, lest it should be trodden upon; and woe be unto the man who shall trample upon the blood of Christ! On the two side posts and on the lintel was placed the mark indicating that God had redeemed the inmates of that house with blood.

[Exodus 12:8-9](#). *And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof.*

We are to have a whole Christ, with his head of wisdom and his heart of love, the walk and conversation of Christ, and all the inward secret life and grace of Christ all to be ours.

[Exodus 12:10](#). *And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire.*

Not a bone was to be left for the Egyptians to treat with dishonour, but all was to be consumed.

[Exodus 12:11-12](#). *And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the LORD's Passover. For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against as the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD.*

All those false gods had been smitten in the different plagues; and now, inasmuch as the Egyptians regarded the firstborn in the family with veneration, the last stroke was about to be struck, and Pharaoh and all his subjects would stagger under the tremendous blow.

[Exodus 12:13](#). *And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are:*

Oh that we would all look upon the blood of Jesus as a token, — a token of divine love in giving the Well-beloved to die for us, — a token that justice has had its due, — a token that we are perfectly secure for ever!

[Exodus 12:13](#). *And when I see the blood, I will pass over you,*

It is God's view of the blood of Christ, which is the all-important matter; when he looks at Christ upon the cross, and is satisfied with the atonement that he there offered, the Lord passes over all those for whom Christ died as a Substitute.

[Exodus 12:13-15](#). *And the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt. And this day shall be unto you for a memorial, and ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever. Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses: for whosoever eateth leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel.*

Therefore he was no partaker in the redemption purchased by blood. He who is not purged from hypocrisy may say what he likes, but the blood will not save him unless he repents. There must be the putting away of this leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy, or else even the blood of atonement will not avail.

[Exodus 12:16](#). *And in the first day there shall be an holy convocation, and in the seventh day there shall be an holy convocation to you; no manner of work shall be done in them, save that which every man must eat, that only may be done of you.*

What rest this brought into the houses of the Israelites! There was not only deliverance from the plagues, but there was also rest from all manner of work. Herein is the blessedness of the blood of the Lamb; when it comes to the home and the heart of the believer, it gives him rest of soul while others are toiling in vain to get relief by their own works.

[Exodus 12:17-25](#). *And ye shall observe the feast of unleavened bread, for in this selfsame day have I brought your armies out of the land of Egypt: therefore shall ye observe this day in your generation, by an ordinance for ever. In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at even, ye shall eat unleavened bread, until the one and twentieth day of the month at even. Seven days shall there be no leaven found in your houses: for whosoever eateth that which is leavened, even that soul shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he be a stranger, or born in the land. Ye shall eat nothing leavened; in all your habitations shall ye eat unleavened bread. Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel, and said unto them, Draw out and take you a lamb according to your families, and kill the Passover. And ye shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is*

in the bason, and strike the lintel and the two side posts with the blood that is in the bason, and none of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning. For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the LORD will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you. And ye shall observe this thing for an ordinance to thee and to thy sons for ever. And it shall come to pass, when ye be come to the land which the LORD will give you according as he hath promised, that ye shall keep this service.

What! were they never to forget the slaying of the lamb and the sprinkling of the blood? No, never. Not when they came to Canaan, to the land that flowed with milk and honey, and when God had wrought other great marvels for them? No, never; and the highest honour that we shall ever have will be this, to be able truthfully to sing, —

“A monument of grace,
A sinner saved by blood.”

[Exodus 12:26-27](#). *And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the LORD’S Passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses. And the people bowed the head and worshipped.*

[EXODUS CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 13

Verse 21-22

We are going to read once more the familiar story of how the Lord relieved his people from the power of Egypt after he had brought them out of the house of bondage.

Exodus 13:21-22. And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way: and by night in pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night: he took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.

This exposition consisted of readings from Exodus 13:21-22; Exodus 14.

EXODUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 14

Verses 1-31

Exodus 14:1-2 *And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they turn and encamp before Pihahiroth between Migdol and sea, over against Baalzephon: before it ye shall encamp by the sea*

It might have been sufficient for the pillar of cloud to move that way; but it was really such an extraordinary thing for the Lord to lead the people right down to the sea that he gave a special command as well as the movement of the cloud. That Moses himself might not be staggered by what would seem to him to be such strange guidance the Lord tells him what to say to the people and then gives him this explanation:

Exodus 14:3-4. *For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in. And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, that he shall follow after them; and I will be honoured upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host; that the Egyptians may know that I am the LORD. And they did so.*

Those four words, "And they did so," though they are very short and very simple words, express a great deal. Oh, that it might always be said of all of us whenever God commands us to do anything, "And they did so."

Exodus 14:5. *And it was told the king of Egypt that the people fled: and the heart of Pharaoh and of his servants was turned against the people, and they said, Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us?*

Nothing but the grace of God will truly humble men. These Egyptians had been crushed by terrible plagues into a false kind of humility, but they were soon as proud as ever. Nothing but the omnipotent grace of God can really subdue a proud and stubborn heart.

Exodus 14:6-8. *And he made ready his chariot, and took his people with him: and he took six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt, and captains over every one of them. And the LORD hardened the heart of*

Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued after the children of Israel: and the children of Israel went out with an high hand.

They were resolute and brave as long as they realized that God was with them; and the Egyptians behind them were bold and proud although God was not with them. There were two high hands that day, the high hand of the proud, puny Pharaoh and the high hand of the ever-blessed omnipotent Jehovah.

[Exodus 14:9-10](#). *But the Egyptians pursued after them, all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, and his horsemen, and his army, and overtook them encamping by the sea, beside Pihahiroth, before Baalzephon. And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid:*

Forgetting what God had done for them, and promised to them, they became timid at the sight of their old master. They knew the cruelty of the Egyptians in time of war, and their hearts failed them.

[Exodus 14:10](#). *And the children of Israel cried out unto the LORD.*

Ah, dear friends, if they had cried to the Lord in true believing prayer, they would have been worthy of commendation; but they did not do so. They cried out unto the Lord in an unbelieving complaint, as the next verse plainly shows: —

[Exodus 14:11-12](#). *And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? Wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness.*

What cowards they were, and how faint-hearted! Were these the people that were to conquer Canaan? Were these God's chosen people? Ah, judge them not, for you and I have often been quite as faint-hearted and quite as fickle as they were. May God forgive us as he again and again forgave them!

[Exodus 14:13-15](#). *And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians, whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace. And the LORD said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward:*

Moses was no doubt praying in his heart though it is not recorded the he uttered any words in prayer; but it was not the time for prayer, it was the time for action. When people sometimes say when they know their duty, “We will make it a matter of prayer,” they generally mean that they will try to find some excuse for not doing it. You need not pray about any matter when you know what you ought to do; go and do it.

[Exodus 14:16-20](#). *But lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea. And I, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them: and I will get me honour upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I have gotten me honour upon Pharaoh, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen. And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them: and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them: and it came between the camp the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these; so that the one came not near the other all the night.*

God was like a wall of fire between them and their enemies, so that they had no cause for fear even though the Egyptians were so near.

[Exodus 14:21-25](#). *And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left. And the Egyptians pursued, and went in after them to the midst of the sea, even all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen. And it came to pass, that in the morning watch the LORD looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians. And took of their chariot wheels, that they drove them heavily: so that the Egyptians said, Let us flee from the face of Israel; for the LORD fighteth for them against the Egyptians.*

They were now in the midst of the sea between the two high walls of water, and before they could flee see what happened to them: —

[Exodus 14:26-31](#). *And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the sea, that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen. And Moses stretched forth*

his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to his strength when the morning appeared, and the Egyptians fled against it; and the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. And the water returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the hosts of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not much as one of them. But the children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left. Thus the LORD saved Israel that day out the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore. And Israel saw that great work which the LORD did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the LORD, and believed the LORD, and his servant Moses.

And well they might! Yet how soon they murmured both against the Lord and against Moses!

This exposition consisted of readings from [Exodus 13:21-22](#); Exodus 14.

[EXODUS CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 15

Verses 1-21

[Exodus 15:1-10](#). *Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LORD, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him. The LORD is a man of war: the LORD is his name. Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath he cast into the sea: his chosen captains also are drowned in the Red sea. The depths have covered them: they sank into the bottom as a stone. Thy right hand, O LORD, is become glorious in power: thy right hand, O LORD, hath dashed in pieces the enemy. And in the greatness of thine excellency thou hast overthrown them that rose up against thee: thou sentest forth thy wrath, which consumed them as stubble. And with the blast of thy nostrils the waters were gathered together, the floods stood upright as an heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea. The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the*

spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them. Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters.

They were all noise, and bluster, and boast; but observe the sublime attitude of God, how readily he eased himself of his adversaries: “Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters.”

[Exodus 15:11-14](#). *Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? Thou stretchedst out thy right hand, the earth swallowed them. Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed: thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation. The people shall hear, and be afraid: sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestina.*

That is, the heathen nations who, at that time, inhabited the land of Palestine: “Sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestina.”

[Exodus 15:15](#). *Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed; the mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold upon them; all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away.*

This great deed of God would be told, and told again, all over Palestine; and the inhabitants would feel that their end was come, for who could stand against Israel’s mighty God?

[Exodus 15:16](#). *Fear and dread shall fall upon them; by the greatness of thine arm they shall be as still as a stone; till thy people pass over, O LORD, till the people pass over, which thou hast purchased.*

And how still they were! All the forty years that the Israelites were in the wilderness, they were scarcely ever attacked; and even then, it was not by the inhabitants of Canaan, but by the wandering Bedouin tribe of the Amalekites, who slew the hindmost of them. It was wonderful that no troops ever came out of Egypt to molest God’s people after the destruction at the Red Sea; neither out of Canaan did any come to block their way. When God strikes, he makes his adversaries dread all future conflicts.

[Exodus 15:17-21](#). *Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O LORD, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in, in the Sanctuary, O LORD, which thy hands have established. The LORD shall reign for ever and ever. For the horse of Pharaoh went in with his chariots and with his horsemen into the sea, and the LORD brought again the waters of the sea upon them, but the children*

of Israel went on dry land in the midst of the sea. And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously! the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.

They sang as in an oratorio, Miriam singing the solo, and all the women joining in the jubilant chorus; and well might they rejoice after the great deliverance which the Lord had wrought for them.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Hosea 2:14-15](#); and [Exodus 15:1-21](#).

Verses 1-27

[Exodus 15:1](#). *Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LORD, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.*

Note, that they were singing, singing a very loud and triumphant song; and you would have thought that they would have kept on singing for the next forty years. It was such a triumph, such a deliverance, God's arm was made so bare before their eyes, that you would have thought that their jubilation would have lasted throughout a lifetime, at the least. On the contrary, it lasted a very little while. Yet what a song it was that they sang! "I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea." What a song of triumph that is which is sung by souls saved from sin, and death, and hell, by the great atoning sacrifice of Christ! Oh, when we first realize that we are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, we do, indeed, "feel like singing all the time", for our sins are washed away, and we have a notion that we shall always keep on singing till we join in the song of the glorified in heaven. So it ought to be; but, alas, from sad experience we know that it is not so! However, the song of Moses and the children of Israel goes on:

[Exodus 15:2](#). *The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him.*

The heart is prompted by gratitude to think of doing something for God. It thinks of preparing him a habitation; but what habitation shall we prepare for him whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain? All that we can possibly do is too little for the greatness of his grace and his glory. "Thou didst well that it was in thine heart," said the Lord to David, though he

might not prepare God a habitation. It is well that it is in our heart today to do some little thing for the glory of God. As an old Puritan says, we give for love-tokens a cracked sixpence, or a flower that soon fades. It is accepted as a love-token, not for its intrinsic value, but as an emblem of what our heart feels, and would do if it could. Even so it is with the Lord and the service his people seek to render to him. He takes our trifles, and makes much of them.

[Exodus 15:3-5](#). *The LORD is a man of war: the LORD is his name. Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath he cast into the sea: his chosen captains also are drowned in the Red sea. The depths have covered them: they sank into the bottom as a stone.*

And this is what has happened to all the powers that were against us. Our sins, where are they? Has not the Lord cast them into the depths of the sea? Yes, blessed be his name for ever! We, like Israel on the other side of the Red Sea, praise the Lord that we have escaped out of the hand of the oppressor, and that Pharaoh holds us as servants no longer. To the Lord alone is due the glory of our deliverance.

[Exodus 15:6-8](#). *Thy right hand, O LORD, is become glorious in power: thy right hand, O LORD, hath dashed in pieces the enemy. And in the greatness of thine excellency thou hast overthrown them that rose up against thee: thou sentest forth thy wrath, which consumed them as stubble. And with the blast of thy nostrils the waters were gathered together, the floods stood upright as an heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea.*

What cannot God do? The liquid becomes solid; nature itself changes when the God of nature puts forth his power. Trust thou in God, and he will do wonders for thee also, as he did for his ancient people Israel.

[Exodus 15:9](#). *The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them.*

How the powers of darkness rage and rave! What a flurry they are in! What big words they speak! What cruel designs they harbour against God's people! See how still and calm is the Lord amid all their raging.

[Exodus 15:10](#). *Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters.*

God has only to use his breath to blow upon them, and away they go, and all their boastings, too. One word from the mouth of God can destroy

all our doubts and fears. The breath of his Spirit can sink all our enemies, and make us sing for joy of heart at our great deliverance.

[Exodus 15:11-13](#). *Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? Thou stretchedst out thy right hand, the earth swallowed them. Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed: thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation.*

The song becomes prophetic. All joy gets to be prophetic; at least, the joy of earth when once it is touched with the live coal from off the heavenly altar. We begin to praise God “for all the grace we have not tasted yet,” as Israel here does. They praise the Lord for leading his people through the wilderness, and bringing them unto his holy habitation, even while they are only at the beginning of their journey.

[Exodus 15:14](#). *The people —*
That is, the Canaanites, —

[Exodus 15:14-15](#). *Shall hear, and be afraid: sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestina. Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed; the mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold upon them; all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away.*

When they hear of the great things that Jehovah has done for his people, they shall feel that the day of their doom is come. Who can stand against so mighty a God? Yet there are some, in our day, whose hearts are stouter and harder than the hearts of the dukes of Edom and the mighty men of Moab. They hear of God’s judgments upon the wicked, and of the terrible doom of the ungodly, and yet they dare to defy the Lord, and to continue in their evil ways.

[Exodus 15:16-18](#). *Fear and dread shall fall upon them; by the greatness of thine arm they shall be as still as a stone; till thy people pass over, O LORD, till the people pass over, which thou hast purchased. Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O LORD, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in, in the Sanctuary, O LORD, which thy hands have established. The LORD shall reign for ever and ever.*

How grandly that last note must have pealed forth from the hundreds of thousands of male voices! The women must also have sung it with the utmost conceivable joy as they struck their timbrels, and danced before the Lord.

[Exodus 15:19-22](#). *For the horse of Pharaoh went in with his chariots and with his horsemen into the sea, and the LORD brought again the waters of the sea upon them; but the children of Israel went on dry land in the midst of the sea. And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. So Moses brought Israel from the Red sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water.*

At first, they were afraid of too much water, from the waves of the sea; now they are afraid of too little. Will their songs be over in three days? Ah, yea! At the end of the third day they came to some springs of water, but they were brackish or bitter.

[Exodus 15:23-24](#). *And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah. And the people murmured —*

Ah, these singers had sadly changed their notes! Where are the timbrels now? “The people murmured”

[Exodus 15:24-27](#). *Against Moses, saying, What shall we drink? And he cried unto the LORD and the LORD shewed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet: there he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them, and said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the LORD that healeth thee. And they came to Elim,*

They did not stop long at Marah, probably only a few hours.

[Exodus 15:27](#). *Where were twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten palm trees and they encamped there by the waters.*

That Elim must have been prepared on purpose for Israel. Twelve springs of water — that was the number of the tribes. Threescore and ten palm trees that was the number of the elders. I do not wonder that Moses noted these numbers. It must have seemed remarkable that, long before they came there, there were the wells and there were the palm trees all ready for their encampment. It was most significant that these things should have

been prepared according to the number of the children of Israel; but everything else is arranged by the same rule. When the Lord divided the people, he set the bounds of the nations according to the number of the children of Israel. It is by this line that he builds his Church still. It is according to his thoughts of his own people that he rules everything in his providence. There are a few verses in the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah, at the seventh chapter, which we will read concerning this subject.

This exposition consisted of readings from Exodus 15; and [Jeremiah 7:21-26](#).

[EXODUS CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 16

Verses 1-36

[Exodus 16:1-2](#). *And they took their journey from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came unto the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departing out of the land of Egypt. And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness:*

They have been only about six weeks in the wilderness, and already they are up in arms against their leaders. Remember that we have the same kind of people to deal with as Moses and Aaron had. The children of Israel were no better than any other nation; and I do not think they were any worse. We may take them as a fair average of human nature, which is a discontented, rebellious thing in the best of circumstances.

[Exodus 16:3](#). *And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger.*

They forgot all about the brick-making, and the whips, and the iron bondage, and they recollected nothing but the fleshpots of Egypt. Ah, me! how soon, when we escape from a great trial, we forget it! The present much smaller one seems far heavier than that which is past.

[Exodus 16:4](#). *Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no.*

See God's answer to man's murmuring. They send up their complaint, and he promises to rain bread down from above. It is a blessed story on God's part all along; a rain of mercy for a smoke of complaining.

[Exodus 16:5](#). *And it shall come to pass, that on the sixth day they shall prepare that which they bring in; and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily.*

Now let us read at the eleventh verse.

[Exodus 16:11-12](#). *And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel:*

"I have heard them." God always does hear. Oh, his wonderful patience! If he took no notice of the murmurers, or punished them for their wickedness, we should have no cause for wonder; but he is longsuffering, even to those who do not deserve his pity.

[Exodus 16:12](#). *Speak unto them, saying, At even ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread; and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God.*

"There shall be no mistake about who I am. I will work this miracle in such a Godlike style, and on such a divine scale, that ye shall know that I am Jehovah your God."

[Exodus 16:13-16](#). *And it came to pass, that at even the quails came up, and covered the camp: and in the morning the dew lay round about the host. And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground. And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna: for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the LORD hath given you to eat. This is the thing which the LORD hath commanded, Gather of it every man according to his eating, an omer for every man,*

About two pints and a half, I think; according to some calculations, two quarts, or thereabouts. There would be more sustenance in it than in a half-quarter loaf of bread per diem: "An omer for every man."

[Exodus 16:16-18](#). *According to the number of your persons; take ye every man for them which are in his tents. And the children of Israel did so, and gathered, some more, some less. And when they did mete it with an*

omer, he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack; they gathered every man according to his eating.

God meant it to be so; not every man according to his avarice, that he might save any of it; but “every man according to his eating.” God took care that neither should feebleness be stinted, nor should greed have any excess.

[Exodus 16:19-22](#). *And Moses said, Let no man leave, of it till the morning. Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto Moses; but some of them left of it until the morning, and it bred worms, and stank: and Moses was wroth with them. And they gathered it every morning, every man according to his eating: and when the sun waxed hot, it melted. And it came to pass, that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one man: and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses.*

He had told them that it would be so, but they evidently did not accept the message that he had delivered to them as the very Word of Jehovah their God; so that, when it was fulfilled, it struck them with wonder, and they “came and told Moses.”

[Exodus 16:23](#). *And he said unto them, This is that which the LORD hath said. How often could that answer be made to us!*

God hears our prayer, and we run and say, “What a wonderful thing! God has heard my prayer.” “This is that which the Lord hath said.” Is it a strange thing that what Jehovah has said is proved to be true, and is it a subject for surprise that he should keep his promise? You dishonour God when you talk after this fashion.

[Exodus 16:23](#). *To morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the LORD:*

And yet the Sabbath had not been instituted according to law, which proves that its foundation lay deeper and earlier than the promulgation of the Ten Commandments; it is bound up with the essential arrangement of time since the creation: “This is that which the Lord hath said, Tomorrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the Lord.”

[Exodus 16:23-27](#). *Bake that which ye will bake to day, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning. And they laid it up till the morning, as Moses bade: and it did not stink, neither was there any worm therein. And Moses said, Eat that today; for today is a sabbath unto the LORD: to day ye shall not find it in the field. Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the*

sabbath, in it there shall be none. And it came to pass, that there went out some of the people on the seventh day for to gather, and they found none.

They might have expected it to be so; but they would not believe, and as they would not believe, they must needs put the Word of God to the test. But it endures the trial; it is always true. Oh, that men would, in a believing spirit, test the Word of God, instead of doing it after this skeptical fashion!

[Exodus 16:28-31](#). *And the LORD said unto Moses, How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws? See, for that the LORD hath given you the sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days; abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day. So the people rested on the seventh day. And the house of Israel called the name thereof Manna:*

Or, “What is it?” It was something too wonderful to be understood and they kept the expression of their wonderment as the name of their bread from heaven. When they first saw it, they exclaimed, “Man-hu?” “Man-hu?” “What is it?” “What is it?” Thus it received its Hebrew name, Manna; but God called it, “Bread from heaven.”

[Exodus 16:31-33](#). *And it was like coriander seed, white; and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey. And Moses said, This is the thing which the LORD commandeth, Fill an omer of it to be kept for your generations; that they may see the bread where with I have fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you forth from the land of Egypt. And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a pot, and put an omer full of manna therein, and lay it up before the LORD, to be kept for your generations.*

This production, which would not keep a single day under ordinary circumstances, would keep for two days to supply the needs of the Sabbath, and it would keep for generations as a memorial of God’s goodness to his chosen people during their forty years’ wanderings through the wilderness. We may be quite sure that Aaron would not have kept a stinking thing laid up before the Lord.

[Exodus 16:34-36](#). *As the LORD commanded Moses, so Aaron laid it up before the Testimony, to be kept. And the children of Israel did eat manna forty years, until they came to a land inhabited; they did eat manna, until they came unto the borders of the land of Canaan. Now an omer is the tenth part of an ephah.*

Now I want you to read in the Book of Numbers. Further on in the history of the children of Israel, when the people had been long in the

wilderness, the same kind of thing happened again.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Exodus 16:1-5](#); [Exodus 16:11-36](#); and [Numbers 11:1-10](#).

EXODUS CONTENTS

Exodus Chapter 17

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

Exodus Chapter 18

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

Exodus Chapter 19

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER 20

Verses 1-17

[Exodus 20:1-3](#). *And God spake all these words saying, I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.*

God is the only God, and no other object of worship is to be tolerated for a moment.

[Exodus 20:4-6](#). *Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.*

Here we are forbidden to worship God under any similitude whatever. The first command forbids the worship of another God: the second strictly forbids us to worship anything which our eyes can see, under the pretense that we are worshipping God thereby. This is another offense, and much more common than the first; and it is often pleaded — “Oh, we do not worship these things: we worship God whom these represent.” But here it is strictly forbidden to represent God under any form or substance whatsoever and to make that an object of worship.

[Exodus 20:7](#). *Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD shall not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.*

A reverence for the very name of God is demanded and all things that are connected with his worship are to be kept sacred.

[Exodus 20:8-11](#). *Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within the gates: for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.*

It is good for us that we make the Sabbath a day of rest — a day of holy worship — a day of drawing near unto God. Thus far, we have the first table, containing the duties towards God. The rest inscribed on the second table are our duties towards man.

[Exodus 20:12-14](#). *Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee. Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not commit adultery.*

These commandments take a far wider sweep than the mere words. “Thou shalt not kill” includes the doing of anything by which life may be shortened as well as taken away. It includes anger — every evil wish and every malicious passion. And “Thou shalt not commit adultery” includes every form of unchastity and impurity.

[Exodus 20:15-17](#). *Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s house, thou shalt not covet neighbour’s wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour’s.*

It was the tenth commandment that convicted the apostle Paul, for he says, “I had not known sin except the law had said “Thou shalt not covet.”

When men break the other commandments they often break this one first.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Exodus 20:1-17](#); and [2 Kings 17:23-41](#).

[EXODUS CONTENTS](#)

Exodus Chapter 21

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

Exodus Chapter 22

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

Exodus Chapter 23

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER 24

Verses 1-10

[Exodus 24:1-2](#). *And he said unto Moses, Come up unto the LORD, thou, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel; and worship ye afar off. And Moses alone shall come near the LORD: but they shall not come nigh; neither shall the people go up with him.*

Nearer to God than the people were allowed to come, but still at a distance from him. It was a covenant of distance, — bounds were set about the mount lest the people should come too near. Yet they were near unto God as compared with the heathen, but far off as compared with those who now, by the teaching of the Spirit of God, have been brought near to God through the precious blood of Jesus. Moses alone could come near to Jehovah on mount Sinai, the people could not go up with him, — nor even with the man who was their mediator with God, for such Moses was; but

you and I, beloved, can go up with him who is far greater than Moses, — with him who is the one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ at Jesus, for God “hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”

[Exodus 24:3-8](#). *And Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the LORD hath said will we do. And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto the LORD. And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basons; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words.*

There is a double power about the blood; — towards God an atonement, that is the blood sprinkled on the altar, — and towards ourselves a sense of reconciliation, thus must the blood be sprinkled upon us that we may prove its cleansing power.

[Exodus 24:9-10](#). *Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel: and they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness.*

This exposition consisted of readings from Hebrews 9, and [Exodus 24:1-10](#).

[EXODUS CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 25

Verses 10-22

[Exodus 25:10-11](#). *And they shall make an ark of shittim wood: two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof. And thou shalt*

overlay it with pure gold, within and without shalt thou overlay it, and shalt make upon it a crown of gold round about.

The ark of the covenant was the most sacred object in the tabernacle in the wilderness. It stood at the extreme end of the holy of holies. It was the place over which the bright shining light, called the Shekinah, which was the token of the presence of God, shone forth. The ark was, doubtless, typical of our Lord Jesus Christ. It was a sacred chest made to contain the law. Blessed are they who know the law in Christ. Out of Christ, the law condemns. In Christ, it becomes a blessed guide to us. This ark was made of wood, perhaps to typify the human nature of our blessed Lord; but it was of unrotting wood, acacia, which resists the worm; and, truly, in him there was no corruption in life by way of sin, and no corruption sullied him in death when he slept for a while in the grave. Wood is a thing that grows out of the earth, even as Jesus sprang up like a root out of a dry ground.

But the ark must be made of the best kind of wood, — unrotting and untainted. Yet the ark, though made of wood, did not appear to be so, for it was completely overlaid with pure gold, so, everywhere, the Deity, or, if you will, the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ could be seen. The ark was of shittim wood, yet it was an ark of gold; and he, who was truly man was just as truly God, blessed be his holy name. Round about the top of this ark there was a crown of gold. How glorious is Christ, in his mediation, as covering the law, and preserving it within himself! He is King, glorious in holiness, and honoured in the midst of his people.

[Exodus 25:12-14](#). *And thou shalt cast four rings of gold for it, and put them in the four corners thereof; and two rings shall be in the one side of it, and two rings in the other side of it, and thou shalt make staves of shittim wood, and overlay them with gold. And thou shalt put the staves into the ring by the sides of the ark, that the ark may be borne with them.*

The rings were, of course, for the staves to pass through, and the staves were for the priests to carry the ark as it moved from place to place. It went with the children of Israel in all their journeys; and our Lord Jesus is always with us. He goes with us wherever we go, and carries with us wherever we abide. Though his glorified person is in heaven, yet his presence is not restricted to any one place, as he said to his disciples, “Lo, I am with you away, even unto the end of the world.”

[Exodus 25:15](#). *The staves shall be in the rings of the ark: they shall not be taken from it.*

So that it was always ready to be moved.

[Exodus 25:16](#). *And thou shalt put into the ark the testimony which I shall give thee.*

That is to say, the two tables of stone were to be put into the ark of the covenant.

[Exodus 25:17](#). *And thou shalt make a mercy seat of pure gold: two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof.*

It exactly fitted upon the top of the ark, and so completely covered whatever was put within. It was of pure gold. This, perhaps, was the most important part of this very important article of the tabernacle furniture. It was the mercy-seat, the cover that hid the law, the place where God promised to meet with his people.

[Exodus 25:18-20](#). *And thou shalt make two cherubims of gold, of beaten work shalt thou make them, in the two ends of the mercy seat. And make one cherub on the one end, and the other cherub on the other end: even of the mercy seat shall ye make the cherubims on the two ends thereof, and the cherubims shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and their faces shall look one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubims be.*

They were part and parcel of the mercy-seat; they were made of the same precious metal, and all formed one piece. They may represent the angels, who stand desiring to look into the mysteries of God, and they may also represent the Church, which is all of a piece with Christ, for ever one with him.

[Exodus 25:21-22](#). *And thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee. And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel.*

It was the meeting place of God and men, where the law was covered with a solid plate of gold, so is Jesus the meeting place between God and sinners, where the law is covered with his perfect righteousness.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Exodus 25:10-22](#); and Psalms 32.

EXODUS CONTENTS

Exodus Chapter 26

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

Exodus Chapter 27

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

Exodus Chapter 28

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER 29

Verses 38-46

Exodus 29:38. *Now this is that which thou shalt offer upon the altar; two lambs of the first year day by day continually.*

Remember, as long as there was a Jewish state, the morning and the evening were to open and to close with the sacrifice of a lamb.

Exodus 29:39-42. *The one lamb thou shalt offer in the morning; and the other lamb thou shalt offer at even: And with the one lamb a tenth deal of flour mingled with the fourth part of an hin of beaten oil; and the fourth part of an hin of wine for a drink offering. And the other lamb thou shalt offer at even, and shalt do thereto according to the meat offering of the morning, and according to the drink offering thereof, for a sweet savour an offering made by fire unto the LORD. This shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the LORD: where I will meet you, to speak there unto thee.*

See, the lamb is the place of meeting; God comes to his people as his people come to him, with the morning and with the evening lamb.

[Exodus 29:43](#). *And there I will meet with the children of Israel, and the tabernacle shall be sanctified by my glory.*

God's glory is in the lamb: it is there he is pleased to manifest himself in the glory of his infinite grace to his people.

[Exodus 29:44-45](#). *And I will sanctify the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar: I will sanctify also both Aaron and his sons, to minister to me in the priest's office. And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God.*

Not without the lamb, you see; that morning and evening sacrifice must be the token and the way of God's dealing with his people.

[Exodus 29:46](#). *And they shall know that I am the LORD their God, that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them: I am the LORD their God.*

Now concerning this same lamb, we will read in: —

This exposition consisted of readings from [Exodus 29:38-46](#); Isaiah 53.

[EXODUS CONTENTS](#)

Exodus Chapter 30

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

Exodus Chapter 31

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER 32

Verses 1-29

[Exodus 32:1](#). *And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us, for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.*

They wanted something to look at, — something visible that they could adore. It was not that they meant to cease to worship Jehovah, but they intended to worship him under some tangible symbol. That is the great fault of Ritualists and Romanists, they aim at worshipping God, but they must do so through some sign, some symbol, some cross, some crucifix, or something or other that they can see.

[Exodus 32:2-3](#). *And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me. And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron.*

People are often very generous in their support of a false religion; and, to make idol gods, they will sacrifice their most precious treasures, as these idolaters willingly gave their golden earrings.

[Exodus 32:4](#). *And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.*

No doubt they copied the Egyptian God, which was in the form of a bull, which the Holy Spirit, by the pen of Moses, here calls a calf. The psalmist probably also alludes to it when he speaks of “an ox or a bullock that hath horns and hoofs.” It seems strange that these people should have thought of worshipping the living God under such a symbol as that.

[Exodus 32:5](#). *And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, Tomorrow is a feast to the LORD.*

“To Jehovah.” They intended to worship Jehovah under the form of a bull — the image of strength. Other idolaters go further, and worship Baal and various false gods, but, between the worship of a golden calf and the worship of false gods, there is very little choice; and, between the idolatry of the heathen and Popery, there is about as much difference as there is between six and half a dozen.

[Exodus 32:6](#). *And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.*

It was usual to worship false gods with music and dancing and with orgies of drunkenness and obscene rites, and the Israelites fell into the same evils as they had seen among their neighbours.

[Exodus 32:7](#). *And the LORD said unto Moses,*

Just in the midst of his hallowed communion, the Lord said to him: —

[Exodus 32:7](#). *Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves:*

God would not own them as his people. He called them Moses' people: "thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves."

[Exodus 32:8-10](#). *They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, these are thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And the LORD said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people: now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation.*

For Moses began at once to pray for the people, — to interpose between God and the execution of his righteous wrath; and, therefore, the Lord said to him, "Let me alone,... that I may consume them."

[Exodus 32:11](#). *And Moses besought the LORD his God, and said, LORD, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, —*

See how he dares even to say to God, "They are thy people, though they have acted so wickedly. 'Why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people,'"

—
[Exodus 32:11-13](#). *Which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever.*

Moses pleaded the covenant which the Lord had made with Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, and there is no plea like that. Although it might have been to his own personal interest that the people should be destroyed, Moses would not have it so; and he pleaded with God, for the sake of his own honour, his faithfulness, and his truth, not to run back from the word which he had spoken.

[Exodus 32:14-15](#). *And the LORD repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people. And Moses turned, and went down from the mount,*

Does it not seem sad for Moses to have to go down from the immediate presence of God, and to stand among the idolatrous and rebellious people in the camp? Yet that is often the lot of those whom God employs as his servants. They have, as it were, to come down from heaven to fight with hell upon earth.

[Exodus 32:15-17](#). *And the two tables of the testimony were in his hand: the tables were written on both their sides, on the one side and on the other were they written. And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables. And when Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said unto Moses, There is a noise of war in the camp.*

For Joshua was a younger man than Moses, and also a soldier, so his ear was quicker to hear what he took to be “a noise of war in the camp.”

[Exodus 32:18](#). *And he said, It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome: but the noise of them that sing do I hear.*

Moses knew that it was not a battle cry either of the victors or the vanquished; but the song of idolatrous worshippers.

[Exodus 32:19](#). *And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount.*

In righteous indignation, preserving those sacred tablets from the profane touch of the polluted people, by dashing them to fragments in his holy anger

[Exodus 32:20](#). *And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and strawed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it.*

Think of the courage of this one man, to go single handed right into the middle of the idolaters' camp, and deal thus with their precious god!

[Exodus 32:21-24](#). *And Moses said unto Aaron, What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them? And Aaron said, Let not the anger of my lord wax hot: thou knowest the people, that they are set on mischief. For they said unto me, Make us gods, which shall go before us: for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. And I said unto them, Whosoever*

hath any gold, let them break it off. So they gave it me: then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf.

Which was a lie. Aaron was a poor weak-minded creature, easily persuaded to do wrong; and when his stronger-minded and more gracious brother was absent, he became the willing tool of the idolatrous people; and yet Aaron is called, by the psalmist, “the saint of the Lord,” and so he was, taking him as a whole. One black spot, on the face of a fair man, does not prove him to be a negro; and so, one sin, in the life of a man who is usually holy, does not put him among the ungodly.

[Exodus 32:25-28](#). *And when Moses saw that the people were naked, (for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies) then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the LORD’S side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him. And he said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour. And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses:*

The rebellious, the idolatrous, the men who had defied the authority of God, were to be summarily executed on the spot.

[Exodus 32:28-29](#). *And there fell of the people that day about three thousand men. For Moses had said, Consecrate yourselves to day to the LORD, even every man upon his son, and upon his brother; that he may bestow upon you a blessing this day.*

Such a colossal crime as that must be expiated before the Lord could again bless the chosen race.

Verses 1-35

[Exodus 32:1](#). *And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.*

What a terrible speech to be made by the people whom God had chosen to be his own! “Make us gods. Make our Creator.” How could that be?

[Exodus 32:2](#). *And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me.*

Poor Aaron! He never had the backbone of his brother Moses. He was a better speaker; but oh, the poverty of his heart! He yields to the will of these idolatrous people, and bows to their wicked behests at once.

[Exodus 32:3](#). *And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron.*

Idolaters spare no expense; there is many a worshipper of a god of wood or mud who gives more to that idol than professing Christians give to the cause of the one living and true God. It is sad that it should be so.

[Exodus 32:4](#). *And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.*

This was an Egyptian idolatry, the worship of God under the fashion of an ox, the emblem of strength; but God is not to be worshipped under emblems at all. What a poor representation of God any emblem must be!

[Exodus 32:5](#). *And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, To morrow is a feast to the LORD.*

They were going to worship Jehovah under the emblem of an ox. This is what you will hear idolaters say; they do not worship the image, they say, but the true God under that image. Yet that is expressly forbidden under the second commandment.

[Exodus 32:6](#). *And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.*

Lascivious games were sure to accompany idolatrous worship, for idolatry always leads to filthiness in some form or other, as if it were inevitable.

[Exodus 32:7](#). *And the LORD said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves:*

How startled Moses must have been when Jehovah said this to him!

[Exodus 32:8-9](#). *They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And the LORD said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people.*

Moses perhaps begins to lift his voice in prayer, and God says:-

[Exodus 32:10](#). *Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation.*

“I will keep my promise to Abraham by destroying these rebels, and taking thee, his true descendant, and fulfilling the covenant in thee.”

[Exodus 32:11-13](#). *And Moses besought the LORD his God, and said, LORD, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shalt inherit it for ever.*

What a brave prayer this was! Here is a wrestling Moses, true son of wrestling Israel; and he brings his arguments to bear upon Jehovah when he is angry, and he succeeds in turning aside the Lord's wrath.

[Exodus 32:14-15](#). *And the LORD repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people. And Moses turned, and went down from the mount,*

An unhappy, broken-hearted man, going from the closest communion with God, down into the midst of a wicked people.

[Exodus 32:15-17](#). *And the two tables of the testimony were in his hand: the tables were written on both their sides; on the one side and on the other were they written. And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables. And when Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said unto Moses, There is a noise of war in the camp.*

Joshua had probably waited lower down, and he met Moses in his descent. He heard with the quick ears of a soldier, and his thoughts went that way.

[Exodus 32:18-19](#). *And he said, It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome: but the noise of them that sing do I hear. And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount.*

This is he who had been praying to God, and saying, “Why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people?” Now he is in deep sympathy with God, and he is himself angry with the idolaters. He cannot help it when he begins to see their sin. Before, he had only thought of the people; but now he looks at their sin. When you see sin, if you are a man of God, your wrath waxes hot, and you get into sympathy with that holy God who cannot be otherwise than indignant at iniquity wherever it may be.

[Exodus 32:20](#). *And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and strawed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it.*

See the power of this one man who has God at his back, and God in him. While the people are dancing around their idol, he tears it down, grinds it to powder, and says, “You shall drink it every one of you.” Why, there are millions to one; but what cares he about their millions? God is with him, and he is God’s servant; and, therefore, they all tremble before him.

[Exodus 32:21-24](#). *And Moses said unto Aaron, What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them? And Aaron said, Let not the anger of my Lord wax hot: thou knowest the people, that they are set on mischief. For they said unto me, Make us gods, which shall go before us: for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. And I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off so they gave it me: then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf.*

That was a lie, for he had made the calf, and shaped it himself. Aaron had not any backbone, nor any principle, he could not be stout-hearted for God. What a poor little man he seems by the side of his great brother! How he shrivels up under the rebuke of Moses!

[Exodus 32:25](#). *And when Moses saw that the people were naked; (for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies:)*

Moses does not spare Aaron, he lays at his door the guilt of the great sin he had committed: “Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies.

[Exodus 32:26-27](#). *Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the LORD’S side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him. And he said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and*

out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour.

This is the man who pleaded for them on the top of the mount. See how he acts in the sight of their sin; by divine authority, he smites them right and left. Possibly, those who were slain were the men who refused to drink the water on which the powder had been sprinkled, or those who continued in rebellion against the Lord.

[Exodus 32:28-30](#). *And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men. For Moses had said, Consecrate yourselves to day to the LORD, even every man upon his son, and upon his brother; that he may bestow upon you a blessing this day. And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses said unto the people, Ye have sinned a great sin; and now I will go up unto the LORD peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin.*

I will be bound to say that this was said after a sleepless night. The people's sin is now so vividly before him that he begins to feel that God will be just if he punishes them, and does not grant them any forgiveness, so he goes once more up that steep climb to the top of Sinai with a trembling heart, and with only a "peradventure" on his lip.

[Exodus 32:31-32](#). *And Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin-*,

There he broke down, he could not finish that sentence.

[Exodus 32:32](#). *And if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.*

"Let me die in their stead!" But God could not accept one man in the stead of another; there is a great Substitute, ordained of old, but he is more than man, and therefore he can stand in the sinner's stead.

[Exodus 32:33-35](#). *And the LORD said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book. Therefore now go, lead the people unto the place of which I have spoken unto thee: behold, mine Angel shall go before thee: nevertheless in the day when I visit I will visit their sin upon them. And the LORD plagued the people, because they made the calf, which Aaron made.*

Moses had only half success in pleading for the people; they were not to die as yet, but God declared that he would visit their sin upon them.

Verses 7-14

[Exodus 32:7](#). *And the LORD said unto Moses, Go get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves:*

See how Jehovah will not own these idolaters as his people. He says to Moses, “Thy people which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves.”

[Exodus 32:8-10](#). *They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And the LORD said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people: now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation.*

What a great future was thus opened up before Moses! He might become another Abraham, and in him should all the nations of the earth be blessed. But Moses loves the people, even the people who have vexed and provoked him so many years. He still loves them so much that, even before he begins to pray for them, God says, “Let me alone,” as if he felt the force of Moses’ coming prayer, and would not have him offer it. O wondrous power of intercession, that by it even God’s right hand is held back when it is lifted up to smite!

[Exodus 32:11](#). *And Moses besought the LORD his God, and said, LORD, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand?*

Moses will not have it that they are his people, nor that he brought them out of the land of Egypt; but he declares that they are God’s people, and that He brought them forth “with great power, and with a mighty hand.”

[Exodus 32:12-14](#). *Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed so the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever. And the LORD repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people.*

So a second time the mighty power of prayer was proven, and the Lord hearkened to the voice of a man. In the seventh chapter of the Gospel according to Mark, beginning at the twenty-fourth verse, is another story which you know well, which tells how the Lord Jesus was overcome by a woman's mighty faith.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Genesis 32:22-30](#); [Exodus 32:7-14](#); and [Mark 7:24-30](#).

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CHAPTER THREE

Leviticus

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CHAPTER 16

Verses 1-31

[Leviticus 16:1-2](#). *And the LORD spake unto Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they offered before the LORD, and died; and the LORD said unto Moses, Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy place within the vail before the mercy seat, which is upon the ark; that he die not: for I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat.*

The way into the heavenly places was not yet made manifest; the inner shrine, called the holy of holies, was specially guarded from human access. No one could have said in those days, "Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace," for only the high priest could approach the mercy seat at all, and he must go within the vail strictly in accordance with the instructions given to Moses by the Lord. Nadab and Abihu appear to have entered into the presence of God wrongfully. They had probably been drinking, for there was a command afterwards given that no priest should drink wine or strong drink when he went into the house of the Lord. God in his righteous anger slew these young men at once, and now, lest any others should intrude into the secret place of communion, a law was given to tell when and how man might approach his God.

[Leviticus 16:3](#). *Thus shall Aaron come into the holy place: with a young bullock for a sin offering, and a ram for a burnt offering.*

There is no access to God except by sacrifice; there never was, and there never can be, any way to God for sinful man except by sacrifice.

[Leviticus 16:4](#). *He shall put on the holy linen coat, and he shall have the linen breeches upon his flesh, and shall be girded with a linen girdle, and with the linen mitre shall he be attired: these are holy garments; therefore shall he wash his flesh in water, and so put them on.*

Our great High Priest offered himself without spot to God, and he is himself without sin; but the Jewish high priest must make himself typically pure by putting on the snow white garments of holy service, and before doing so he must wash himself with water, that he might come before God acceptably. None might approach the Holy God with impurities upon them.

[Leviticus 16:5-6](#). *And he shall take of the congregation of the children of Israel two kids of the goats for a sin offering, and one ram for a burnt offering. And Aaron shall offer his bullock of the sin offering, which is for himself, and make an atonement for himself, and for his house.*

These priests were sinful, and therefore they must first themselves be purged from guilt before they could come nigh to God; but the true High Priest of God, our Lord Jesus, needed to offer no sacrifice for himself, for he was pure and without blemish or stain of sin.

[Leviticus 16:7](#). *And he shall take the two goats, and present them before the LORD at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.*

These two goats were not for himself, but for the people. You must regard them as if they were but one offering, for it needed both of them to set forth the divine plan by which sin is put away; one was to die, and the other was typically to bear away the sin of the people.

[Leviticus 16:8](#). *And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the LORD, and the other lot for the scapegoat.*

One goat was to show how sin is put away in reference to God by sacrifice, and the other goat was to show how it is put away in reference to us, God's people, by being carried into oblivion.

[Leviticus 16:9-14](#). *And Aaron shall bring the goat upon which the LORD's lot fell, and offer him for a sin offering. But the goat, on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat, shall be presented alive before the LORD, to make an atonement with him, and to let him go for a scapegoat into the wilderness. And Aaron shall bring the bullock of the sin offering, which is for himself, and shall make an atonement for himself, and for his house, and shall kill the bullock of the sin offering which is for himself: and he shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the LORD, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring it within the vail: and he shall put the incense upon the fire before the LORD, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that is upon the testimony, that he die not: and he shall take of the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it with his finger upon the mercy seat eastward; and before the mercy seat shall he sprinkle of the blood with his finger seven times.*

This was his first entrance within the vail, with holy incense to denote the acceptance which Christ has with God, though he is always well-beloved, and dear, and precious to his Father. This incense sent up a cloud that veiled the glory of the Shekinah which shone between the two wings of

the cherubim, and so the high priest was better able to bear the wondrous brilliance by which God revealed his presence. When Aaron had thus filled the place with the sweetly perfumed smoke, he took the blood of the bullock of the sin offering, and carefully sprinkled it seven times on the mercy seat, and on the ground around the mercy seat. What a mercy it is for you and me that the spot where we meet with God is a place where the blood of the great sacrifice has been sprinkled, ay, and that the ground of our meeting with God, the place on which the mercy seat rests, has also the blood mark upon it!

[Leviticus 16:15](#). *Then shall he kill the goat of the sin offering, that is for the people, and bring his blood within the vail, and do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it upon the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat:*

Twice, you see, is the holy place thus besprinkled, first with the blood of the bullock, and then with that of the goat.

[Leviticus 16:16](#). *And he shall make an atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins: and so shall he do for the tabernacle of the congregation, that remaineth among them in the midst of their uncleanness.*

If God is to dwell in the midst of sinful men, it can only be through the blood of the atonement. Twice seven times were the holy place and the tabernacle to be sprinkled with blood, as though to indicate a double perfectness of efficacy of the preparation for God's dwelling among sinful men.

[Leviticus 16:17-19](#) *And there shall be no man in the tabernacle of the congregation when he goeth in to make an atonement in the holy place, until he come out, and have made an atonement for himself, and for his household, and for all the congregation of Israel. And he shall go out unto the altar that is before the LORD, and make an atonement for it; and shall take of the blood of the bullock, and of the blood of the goat, and put it upon the horns of the altar round about. And he shall sprinkle of the blood upon it with his finger seven times, and cleanse it, and hallow it from the uncleanness of the children of Israel.*

Even this altar, to which we bring our prayers and our thankofferings, has sin upon it. There is some defilement even in the saltwater of our penitent tears; there is some unbelief even in our most acceptable faith; there is some want of holiness about our holiest things. We are unclean by

nature, and by practice, too, what could we do without the sprinkling of the blood? See how the Lord insisted upon it in the case of his ancient people, yet there are some in these modern times who deride it. God forgive their blasphemy!

[Leviticus 16:20-21](#). *And when he hath made an end of reconciling the holy place, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar, he shall bring the live goat: and Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness:*

Notice the “all” in this twenty-first verse: “Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness.” This was the second part of the atonement showing, not sacrifice, but the effect of sacrifice, and explaining what becomes of sin after the sacrifice has been accepted, and the blood has been presented within the veil.

[Leviticus 16:22-25](#). *And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness. And Aaron shall come into the tabernacle of the congregation, and shall put off the linen garments, which he put on when he went into the holy place, and shall leave them there: and he shall wash his flesh with water in the holy place, and put on his garments, and come forth, and offer his burnt offering, and the burnt offering of the people, and make an atonement for himself, and for the people. And the fat of the sin offering shall he burn upon the altar.*

Only the fat of it, the best of it, was burnt upon the altar, for sin offerings were not acceptable to God. They were regarded as being filled with impurity by reason of the sin which they brought to mind; for this reason the bullock and the goat of the sin offering had to be burnt without the camp: “Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate,” as our sin offering. Yet, inasmuch as the fat was accepted upon the altar, so is Christ, even as our sin offering, acceptable before God.

[Leviticus 16:26-27](#). *And he that let go the goat for the scapegoat shall wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in water, and afterward come into the camp. And the bullock for the sin offering and the goat for the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the holy place, shall one carry forth without the camp; and they shall burn in the fire their skins, and their flesh, and their dung.*

All must be burnt; and the last is mentioned because it more strikingly sets forth the impurity of the sin connected with the sin offering. All must be burnt right up; there must not be a particle of the sin offering left unconsumed.

[Leviticus 16:28](#). *And he that burneth them shall wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp.*

Everything that has to do with God's service must be clean and purified by fire, and purified by water. An atonement cannot be made by that which is itself defiled; it must be without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing before it can put sin away; this is the virtue of Christ's atonement, for he was altogether without sin of any kind.

[Leviticus 16:29-31](#) *And this shall be a statute for ever unto you: that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, ye shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, whether it be one of your own country, or a stranger that sojourneth among you: for on that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from all your sins before the LORD. It shall be a sabbath of rest unto you, and ye shall afflict your souls, by a statute for ever.*

This shows what sacredness the Lord attached to the great day of atonement, and gives us more than a hint of the preciousness of our Lord's atoning work for us. Now let us turn to the Epistle to the Hebrews, and see how the apostle spiritualizes the services of the Mosaic dispensation.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Leviticus 16:1-31](#); And [Hebrews 9:1-22](#).

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CHAPTER 25

Verses 1-22

Leviticus 25:1-2. *And the LORD spake unto Moses in mount Sinai, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye come into the land which I give you, then shall the land keep a sabbath unto the LORD.*

The Jews had much rest provided for them. If they had had faith enough to obey God's commands, they might have been the most favored of people; but they were not a spiritual people, and the Lord often had to lament their disobedience as in the words recorded by Isaiah, "O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea."

Leviticus 25:3-4. *Six years thou shalt sow thy field, and six years thou shalt prune thy vineyard, and gather in the fruit thereof; but in the seventh year shall be a sabbath of rest unto the land, a sabbath for the LORD:*

Think of a Sabbath a year long, in which nothing was to be done but to worship God, and so to rest!

Leviticus 25:4-5. *Thou shalt neither sow thy field, nor prune thy vineyard. That which groweth of its own accord of thy harvest thou shalt not reap, neither gather the grapes of thy vine undressed: for it is a year of rest unto the land.*

A restful period in a restful land; all land to have rest, and yet to have fruitfulness in that rest; the rest of a garden, not the rest of a task. Thus is it oftentimes with God's people, when they rest most, they work best; and while they are resting, they are bearing fruit unto God.

Leviticus 25:6-7. *And the sabbath of the land shall be meat for you; for thee, and for thy servant, and for thy maid, and for thy hired servant, and for thy stranger that sojourneth with thee, and for thy cattle, and for the beast that are in thy land, shall all the increase thereof be meat.*

There was to be no private property in the spontaneous produce of that year. It was free to everybody; free even to the cattle, which might go and eat what they would, and where they would.

Leviticus 25:17-21. *Ye shall not therefore oppress one another; but thou shalt fear thy God: for I am the LORD your God. Wherefore ye shall do my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them; and ye shall dwell in the land in safety. And the land shall yield her fruit, and ye shall eat your fill, and dwell therein in safety. And if ye shall say, What shall we eat the*

seventh year? behold, we shall not sow, nor gather in our increase: then I will command my blessing upon you in the sixth year, and it shall bring forth fruit for three years.

Not merely for the one year of rest, but fruit for three years.

Leviticus 25:22. *And ye shall sow the eighth year, and eat yet of old fruit until the ninth year; until her fruits come in ye shall eat of the old store.*

They were to have enough for the year of rest, and for the next year in which the harvest was growing, and still to have something over for the ninth year. They scarcely could want as much as that; but God would give them more than they actually needed, exceeding abundantly above what they asked or even thought. That Sabbatical year had other blessings connected with it. Let us read about them in the Book of Deuteronomy, chapter fifteen.

THIS EXPOSITION CONSISTED OF READINGS FROM Leviticus 25:1-7; Leviticus 25:17-22, **and** Deuteronomy 15:1-18.

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CHAPTER 4

Verses 1-33

[Numbers 4:1-2](#). *And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, Take the sum of the sons of Kohath from among the sons of Levi, after their families, by the house of their fathers,—*

There were three families, those of Kohath, Gershon, and Merari, and to each of these families a different service was allotted. First, they were to be numbered. “The Lord knoweth them that are his,” and he takes count of all his people.

[Numbers 4:3](#). *From thirty years old and upward even unto fifty years old, all that enter into the host, to do the work in the tabernacle of the*

congregation.

They were to take up this work as a warfare; for, though it was a peaceful work, yet it is described as being a warfare: and he who serves the Lord, though that service be perfect peace, will not serve him without finding it to be also a warfare.

[Numbers 4:4](#). *This shall be the service of the sons of Kohath in the tabernacle of the congregation, about the most holy things:*

They were to have to do with the most holy place, to carry it, and to carry the vessels of it, a very honourable position.

[Numbers 4:5-6](#). *And when the camp setteth forward, Aaron shall come, and his sons, and they shall take down the covering vail, and cover the ark of testimony with it: and shall put thereon the covering of badgers' skins, and shall spread over it a cloth wholly of blue, and shall put in the staves thereof.*

These Kohathites might not so take the ark as to handle it, much less might they ever look at it. But the priests, and the sons of Aaron, went in first, and after carefully covering the holy place, they covered up the sacred ark with a cloth of blue. Blue was the token of holiness, — of separation. Hence, every Israelite wore a border of blue upon his garment, but this, which was the symbol of the divine presence, was “all of blue.” It is all holiness. We wear, alas! but a border of blue, but this holy thing was “all of blue.”

[Numbers 4:7](#). *And upon the table of shewbread they shall spread a cloth of blue, and put thereon the dishes, and the spoons, and the bowls, and covers to cover withal: and the continual bread shall be thereon:*

When they moved the sacred table, the bread was always there; twelve cakes for the twelve tribes, for the bread of God's house is never lacking.

[Numbers 4:8-10](#). *And they shall spread upon them a cloth of scarlet, and cover the same with a covering of badgers' skins, and shall put in the staves thereof. And they shall take a cloth of blue, and cover the candlestick of the light, and his lamps, and his tongs, and his snuff dishes, and all the oil vessels thereof, wherewith they minister unto it: and they shall put it and all the vessels thereof within a covering of badgers' skins and shall put it upon a bar.*

There were means for handling these vessels without touching them. I mean, the ark had staves, and the vessels were put upon a bar for carrying them.

[Numbers 4:11](#). *And upon the golden altar they shall spread a cloth of blue, and cover it with a covering of badgers' skins, and shall put to the staves thereof:*

A type of the holiness veiled in our Lord's humanity, the badger skin made apparent the simplicity, the poverty, the humility of our Lord, covering evermore that wondrous cloth of blue.

[Numbers 4:12-13](#). *And they shall take all the instruments of ministry, wherewith they minister in the sanctuary, and put them in a cloth of blue, and cover them with a covering of badgers' skins and shall put them on a bar: and they shall take away the ashes from the altar, and spread a purple cloth thereon:*

A royal altar is this, always grand and glorious in our eyes, covered with a purple cloth.

[Numbers 4:14-20](#). *And they shall put upon it all the vessels thereof, wherewith they minister about it, even the censers, the fleshhooks, and the shovels, and the basons, all the vessels of the altar; and they shall spread upon it a covering of badgers' skins, and put to the staves of it. And when Aaron and his sons have made an end of covering the sanctuary, and all the vessels of the sanctuary, as the camp is to set forward; after that, the sons of Kohath shall come to bear it: but they shall not touch any holy thing, lest they die. These things are the burden of the sons of Kohath in the tabernacle of the congregation, and to the office of Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest pertaineth the oil for the light, and the sweet incense, and the daily meat offering, and the anointing oil, and the oversight of all the tabernacle, and of all that therein is, in the sanctuary, and in the vessels thereof. And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, Cut ye not off the tribe of the families of the Kohathites from among the Levites: but thus do unto them, that they may live, and not die, when they approach unto the most holy things: Aaron and his sons shall go in, and anoint them every one to his service and to his burden: but they shall not go in to see when the holy things are covered, lest they die.*

This is a very awful thing; I mean, something which should produce a great awe and solemnity in our hearts. These men were chosen to carry the vessels of the most holy place, yet they must never see them. They must be covered up by the hands of the priest, and they must never touch them. They must bear them by their staves, or upon the bar upon which they were placed. Oh, how terrible a thing it is to draw near to God. The Lord our God

is a jealous God. He will be served with holy reverence; or not at all. Hence he says to Moses and Aaron, "Take care that you do not lead these men into any mistake. You go in first, and point out to each man what he is to carry. See that all is covered up, for if you do not, they may die in their work. Do not be accessories to their act, and bring upon them this terrible judgment." I often wish that God's people would be careful not to cause sin in any of his servants when they are engaged in the divine ministry. Perhaps in preaching, or otherwise, there may be something done which vexes the Holy Spirit, and causes trouble and sin. And, oh! he who stands in the holy place, and bears the holiest of the vessels, needs to fear and tremble before God; and he needs to ask his brethren to see that they do nothing which might inadvertently cause him to sin.

[Numbers 4:21-24](#). *And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Take also the sum of the sons of Gershon, throughout the houses of their fathers, by their families, from thirty years old and upward until fifty years old shalt thou number them; all that enter in to perform the service, to do the work in the tabernacle of the congregation. This is the service of the families of the Gershonites, to serve, and for burdens:*

They were to bear the external coverings of the holy place. The most holy place was in the custody of the Kohathites; but the Gershonites were to carry as follows,

[Numbers 4:25-28](#). *And they shall bear the curtains of the tabernacle, and the tabernacle of the congregation, his covering, and the covering of the badgers' skins that is above upon it, and the hanging for the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and the hangings of the court, and the hanging for the door of the gate of the court, which is by the tabernacle and by the altar round about, and their cords, and all the instruments of their service, and all that is made for them: so shall they serve. At the appointment of Aaron and his sons shall be all the service of the sons of the Gershonites, in all their burdens, and in all their service: and ye shall appoint unto them in charge all their burdens. This is the service of the families of the sons of Gershon in the tabernacle of the congregation: and their charge shall be under the hand of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest.*

There was a wise decision of labour. I wish we had the same kind of thing in every church, and that every member occupied himself in that to which God has appointed him. But there are some who want to do what they cannot do, and who do not care to do what they can do.

[Numbers 4:29-32](#). *As for the sons of Merari, thou shalt number them after their families, by the house of their fathers; from thirty years old and upward even unto fifty years old shalt thou number them, every one that entereth into the service, to do the work of the tabernacle of the congregation. And this is the charge of their burden, according to all their service in the tabernacle of the congregation, the boards of the tabernacle, and the bars thereof, and the pillars thereof, and sockets thereof, and the pillars of the court round about, and their sockets, and their pins, and their cords, with all their instruments, and with all their service: and by name ye shall reckon the instruments of the charge of their burden.*

They had the heaviest load to carry, but they were the more numerous. They carried the solid columns upon which the covering of the tabernacle rested. And notice that they had also to carry the pins. Sometimes, God's servants dislike carrying pins. They feel themselves too big, but blessed is that servant who, in his place, can be content to carry "their sockets, and their pins, and their cords, with all their instruments."

[Numbers 4:33](#). *This is the service of the families of the sons of Merari, according to all their service, in the tabernacle of the congregation, under the hand of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest.*

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Numbers Chapter 5

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

Numbers Chapter 6

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Numbers Chapter 7

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER 8

Verses 5-22

[Numbers 8:5-6](#). *And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Take the Levites from among the children of Israel, and cleanse them.*

These men were to be the servants of God; they are the type of God's elect, — a people set apart unto divine service, to be zealous for good works. "Take the Levites from among the children of Israel, and cleanse them." That is just the way that God the Holy Ghost takes Christians out of the main of mankind, and cleanses them.

[Numbers 8:7-8](#). *And thus shalt thou do unto them, to cleanse them: Sprinkle water of purifying upon them, and let them shave all their flesh, and let them wash their clothes, and so make themselves clean. Then let them take a young bullock with his meat of offering, even fine flour mingled with oil, and another young bullock shalt thou take for a sin offering.*

There are still, typically, these three things in the cleansing of God's people, — the blood, the water, and the razor. There is blood, the emblem of the putting away of sin by Christ's atoning sacrifice; the water, typical of the Holy Ghost, by whom the power of sin is overcome; and then that razor, cutting off that which grows of the flesh; that which was their beauty and their glory is all taken away from them. There are some of God's people who have not felt much of that razor; but if they are to serve God perfectly, it must be used. "Let them shave all their flesh."

[Numbers 8:9-12](#). *And thou shalt bring the Levites before the tabernacle of the congregation and thou shalt gather the whole assembly of the children of Israel together: and thou shalt bring the Levites before the LORD: and the children of Israel shall put their hands upon the Levites: and Aaron shall offer the Levites before the LORD for an offering of the children of Israel, that they may execute the service of the LORD. And the Levites shall lay their hands upon the heads of the bullocks: and thou shalt offer the one for a sin offering, and the other for a burnt offering, unto the LORD, to make an atonement for the Levites.*

There is no true way of serving God without the atonement. Leave that out, and you have left out the vital part of the whole. What service can we render to the Most High if we begin by disloyalty to him whom God has set forth to be the propitiation for sin, even his dear Son?

[Numbers 8:13-14](#). *And thou shalt let the Levites before Aaron, and before his sons, and offer them for an offering unto the LORD. Thus shalt thou separate the Levites from among the children of Israel: and the Levites shall be mine.*

We are to offer up to God our spirit, soul and body, which is our reasonable service; and if we be indeed God's children, we are to feel that, henceforth, we are not our own, for we are bought with a price. We belong wholly to God; all that we are, and all that we have, is to be his through life, and in death, and throughout eternity.

[Numbers 8:15](#). *And after that shall the Levites go in to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation: and thou shalt cleanse them, and offer them for an offering.*

An offering must be presented for us before we can offer ourselves as an offering unto God.

[Numbers 8:16](#). *For they are wholly given unto me from among the children of Israel;*

Listen to this, you who trust that you are made like unto the elder Brother, and the firstborn from among the creatures of God:

[Numbers 8:16-18](#). *Instead of such as open every womb, even instead of the firstborn of all the children of Israel, have I taken them unto me. For all the firstborn of the children of Israel are mine, both man and beast: on the day that I smote every firstborn in the land of Egypt I sanctified them for myself. And I have taken the Levites for all the firstborn of the children of Israel.*

God's people are the elect; they have escaped from death. In that day when the sword of the Lord was drawn, they were shielded by the blood of the lamb sprinkled on the lintel and on the two side posts; and, henceforth, because they have been thus preserved, they belong unto the Lord.

[Numbers 8:19-22](#). *And I have given the Levites as a gift to Aaron and to his sons from among the children of Israel, to do the service of the children of Israel in the tabernacle of the congregation, and to make an atonement for the children of Israel: that there be no plague among the children of Israel, when the children of Israel come nigh unto the sanctuary. And Moses, and Aaron, and all the congregation of the children of Israel, did to the Levites according unto all that the LORD commanded Moses concerning the Levites, so did the children of Israel unto them. And the Levites were purified, and they washed their clothes; and Aaron offered*

them as an offering before the LORD, and Aaron made an atonement for them to cleanse them. And after that went the Levites in to do their service in the tabernacle of the congregation before Aaron, and before His sons: as the LORD had commanded Moses concerning the Levites, so did they unto them.

How instructive all this is to us! We are not to begin blunderingly to serve God while we are yet in our sins, — before we have been sprinkled with the blood, — before we have been washed in the water which flowed with the blood, — before we have felt that razor that takes away from us all our own pride and glory. No; but when all that is done, then there is to be no delay: “After that went the Levites in to do their service.”

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CHAPTER 9

Verses 1-23

[Numbers 9:1-2](#). *And the LORD spake unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the first month of the second year after they were come out of the land of Egypt, saying, Let the children of Israel also keep the passover at his appointed season.*

I should almost fear that they had omitted the keeping of the passover for a year. There was a first celebration of it when they came out of Egypt; but then it was not so much a type as a matter of fact; it was the thing itself, not the remembrance of the coming out of Egypt, but the actual coming out, the exodus. One would gather from this command of the Lord that, on the first anniversary of that memorable season, the children of Israel had omitted its observance, and hence Jehovah said to Moses, “Let the children of Israel also keep the passover at his appointed season.” If this conjecture is correct, it is very significant that a rite which belonged to the law, and was therefore to pass away, was so soon neglected,—and certainly it was afterwards neglected for many, many years; whereas, the great memorial ordinance of the Christian dispensation,—the Lord’s supper,—was not neglected even when Christians were under fierce persecution from the Jews or other nations. When the observance of that rite among the heathen was pretty sure to bring death, yet Christians met together on the first day of the week, and continually broke bread in remembrance of their Lord’s

death, even as we do to this day. I suppose that the supper, which is the memorial of Christ our Passover, has never been altogether neglected throughout the world; but has been a matter of constant observation in the Church of Christ, and shall be “till he come.”

[Numbers 9:3-7](#). *In the fourteenth day of this month, at even, ye shall keep it in his appointed season: according to all the rites of it, and according to all the ceremonies thereof, shall ye keep it. And Moses spake unto the children of Israel, that they should keep the passover. And they kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the first month at even in the wilderness of Sinai: according to all that the LORD commanded Moses, so did the children of Israel. And there were certain men, who were defiled by the dead body of a man, that they could not keep the passover on that day: and they came before Moses and before Aaron on that day: and those men said unto him, We are defiled by the dead body of a man: wherefore are we kept back, that we may not offer an offering of the LORD in his appointed season among the children of Israel?*

They were in a great difficulty. They were commanded to come to the passover, they sinned if they did not come; but they had defiled themselves, either through accident or of necessity and if they came thus to the passover they would be committing sin, so that either way they were in an ill case. There must be somebody to bury the dead. I suppose that these persons had fulfilled that necessary office, and there had not been time for them to purge themselves from the ceremonial defilement involved in the touching of the dead; so what were they to do?

[Numbers 9:8](#). *And Moses said unto them, Stand still, and I will hear what the LORD will command concerning you.*

Oh, how wisely we should give advice if we would never decide till we had prayed about the matter! Possibly, we think ourselves so experienced, and so well acquainted with the mind of God, that we can answer offhand; or, peradventure, we think that we need not consult the Lord at all, but that our own opinion will be sufficient guide. Moses was greater and wiser than we are, yet he said to these men, “Stand still, and I will hear what Jehovah will command concerning you.”

[Numbers 9:9-12](#). *And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If any man of you or your posterity shall be unclean by reason of a dead body, or be in a journey afar off, yet he shall keep the passover unto the LORD. The fourteenth day of the second month*

at even they shall keep it, and eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. They shall leave none of it unto the morning, nor break any bone of it: according to all the ordinances of the passover they shall keep it.

So that, provision was made for the holding of a second passover, that persons who were defiled at the first observance might have the opportunity to keep the feast a month afterwards.

[Numbers 9:13](#). *But the man that is clean, and is not in a journey, and forbeareth to keep the passover, even the same soul shall be cut off from among his people: because he brought not the offering of the LORD in his appointed season, that man shall bear his sin.*

What a solemn sentence that is! Let me read it apart from its connection: “Because he brought not the offering of the Lord in his appointed season, that man shall bear his sin.” You see, the great offering of the Lord, the atoning sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ, is the only way by which sin can be put away; and if any man will not bring that, in other words, if he will not believe in Jesus, then here is his certain doom, “that man shall bear his sin.” No more terrible judgment can be pronounced upon any one of us than this, “that man shall bear his sin.” “If ye believe not that I am he,” said Christ, “ye shall die in your sins.”

[Numbers 9:14](#). *And if a stranger shall sojourn among you, and will keep the passover unto the LORD according to the ordinance of the passover, and according to the manner thereof, so shall he do: ye shall have one ordinance, both for the stranger, and for him that was born in the land.*

Now comes another subject: -

[Numbers 9:15-16](#). *And on the day that the tabernacle was reared up the cloud covered the tabernacle, namely, the tent of the testimony; and at even there was upon the tabernacle as it were the appearance of fire, until the morning. So it was always: the cloud covered it by day, and the appearance of fire by night.*

This was the sign of the presence of God in the midst of that vast canvas city. I suppose that the great cloud rose up from the most holy place, and probably covered the whole camp of the tribes, so that it shielded them from the fierceness of the sun, while at night the entire region was lit up by this marvelous illumination. The chosen nation had the pillar of cloud by day for a shelter, and the pillar of fire by night for a light. God’s presence acts upon us in much the same way as the cloudy fiery pillar acted upon Israel.

“He hath been my joy in woe,
Cheer’d my heart when it was low,
And, with warnings softly sad,
Calm’d my heart when it was glad.”

We get shelter from the fierce heat of the world’s day and deliverance also from the darkness of the world’s night through our Lord’s gracious presence.

[Numbers 9:17-20](#). *And when the cloud was taken up from the tabernacle, then after that the children of Israel journeyed: and in the place where the cloud abode, there the children of Israel pitched their tents. At the commandment of the LORD the children of Israel journeyed, and at the commandment of the LORD they pitched: as long as the cloud abode upon the tabernacle they rested in their tents. And when the cloud tarried long upon the tabernacle many days, then the children of Israel kept the charge of the LORD, and journeyed not. And so it was, when the cloud was a few days upon the tabernacle; according to the commandment of the LORD they abode in their tents, and according to the commandment of the LORD they journeyed.*

Happy people to be thus divinely guided! They could never tell when they would have to be on the move; they had no abiding city. When their tents were pitched, and they were just getting comfortably settled, perhaps that very morning the pillar of cloud moved; and, at other times, when they desired to be marching, it stood still. They could never be certain of staying long in any one place. It is just so with you and with me; our Lord intends to keep us with a loose hold on all things here below. We cannot tell what changes may come to any one of us; therefore, reckon on nothing that God has not plainly promised. Be certain of nothing but uncertainty; and always expect the unexpected. You cannot tell between here and heaven where your Guide may take you; happy will you be if you can truly say that you desire ever to follow where the Lord leads.

[Numbers 9:21-23](#). *And so it was, when the cloud abode from even unto the morning, and that the cloud was taken up in the morning, then they journeyed: whether it was by day or by night that the cloud was taken up, they journeyed. Or whether it were two days, or a month, or a year, that the cloud tarried upon the tabernacle, remaining thereon, the children of Israel abode in their tents, and journeyed not: but when it was taken up, they journeyed. At the commandment of the LORD they rested in the tents, and*

at the commandment of the LORD they journeyed: they kept the charge of the LORD, at the commandment of the LORD by the hand of Moses.

So may each one of us ever be divinely guided! “Let the fiery cloudy pillar Lead me all my journey thru.”

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Numbers Chapter 10

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER 11

Verses 1-10

Numbers 11:1. *And when the people complained, it displeased the LORD:*

Interpreters cannot make out what they had to complain of. The curse of labour had been removed; they did not earn their bread with the sweat of their face, for it fell from heaven every day. They were at no expense for clothing; and though they journeyed, their feet did not swell. I suppose that they complained of the weather. It was too cold; it was too hot; it was too wet; it was too dry. They complained when they stood still; they were much too long in a place. They complained when they marched; they moved too often. In fact, they were very like ourselves; they often complained most when they had least to complain of. Discontent is chronic to our humanity; and I do not believe that the poorest are the most discontented. It is often the very reverse. When a man is put in a place where he has nothing to complain of, especially if he is an Englishman, he feels quite out of place. He must have something to grumble at, something or other to be a grievance, or else he is not happy. “When the people complained, it displeased the Lord.”

Numbers 11:1. *And the LORD heard it; and his anger was kindled; and the fire of the LORD burnt among them, and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp.*

He could hear their first murmurings, as they were new to the wilderness, they were hungry, they were thirsty, and the Lord pitied them.

But now, when there was no reason for their complaining, his fire in terrible judgment visited his people, on account of their rebellion and murmuring against the goodness of God.

[Numbers 11:2-4](#). *And the people cried unto Moses; and when Moses prayed unto the LORD, the fire was quenched. And he called the name of the place Taberah: because the fire of the LORD burnt among them. And the mixt multitude that was among them fell a lusting:*

All evil seems to begin there, among “the mixt multitude”, as it does among those church members who are unconverted, and among those people who try to hold with the hare and run with the hounds, those who want to be Christians and worldlings, too.

[Numbers 11:4](#). *And the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat?*

Even the true people of God caught the infection of the scum that was mixed with them, and they fell weeping, and said, —

[Numbers 11:5](#). *We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick:*

Fine stuff that to recollect! “Why!” say you, “you have read before something very much like that.” I am reading another record; but there is no originality in grumbling; it is always the same old thing over again. You might well suppose that I was reading in the Book of Exodus, but I am not; there are many years in between. He who sitteth down with a discontented hand to paint a picture will paint the same picture that he painted before. There is no originality in the murmuring, although they put in a few new touches. Before, it was the flesh pots that they remembered; now, in addition to the flesh, there are these savoury vegetables, “the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick.”

[Numbers 11:6](#). *But now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes.*

Here they pour contempt upon the bread of angels, upon the food of heaven, upon the benison of God. Oh, what will men not complain of?

[Numbers 11:7](#). *And the manna was as coriander seed, and the colour thereof as the colour of bdellium.*

A fine white colour, like a pearl.

[Numbers 11:8](#). *And the people went about, and gathered it, and ground it in mills, or beat it in a mortar, and baked it in pans, and made cakes of it:*

and the taste of it was as the taste of fresh oil.

At first they thought it was like wafers made with honey. Getting more used to it, they, perhaps, described it quite as accurately, but not quite so sweetly; they said it was like fresh oil, and there is no better taste than that. Oil, by the time it comes to us, has usually a rank and rancid taste; but in the oil countries it is delicious; and he who has bread and a drop or two of oil, will find himself not ill supplied with a dinner. “The taste of it was as the taste of fresh oil.”

[Numbers 11:9](#). *And when the dew fell upon the camp in the night, the manna fell upon it.*

God took care to preserve his precious gift, encasing each single particle of it within a drop of dew, which gave it freshness. And when truth comes to us encased in the dew of the Spirit, how sweet is its taste! May it be so to us whenever we feed on Christ!

[Numbers 11:10](#). *Then Moses heard the people weep throughout their families, every man in the door of his tent: and the anger of the LORD was kindled greatly; Moses also was displeased.*

And no wonder; meek man as he was, they vexed his gracious spirit by their perpetual murmurings. As we read this sad story, let us, as in a glass, see ourselves; and let us deeply repent of our murmuring and complaining, and henceforth sing —

“I will praise thee every day!

Now thine anger’s turn’d away.”

Perhaps our next hymn (Number **697**) will help us that way.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Exodus 16:1-5](#); [Exodus 16:11-36](#); and [Numbers 11:1-10](#).

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Numbers Chapter 12

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CHAPTER 19

Verses 1-22

[Numbers 19:1](#). *And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, —*

This ordinance was not given to Moses on Mount Sinai, but in the wilderness of Paran, after the people had broken their covenant with God, and were condemned to die. You know that the 90th Psalm — that dolorous dirge which we read at funerals, — called, “a prayer of Moses the man of

God.” Well might he write that Psalm, for he lived among a generation of people who were all doomed to die within a short time, and to die in the wilderness. This ordinance was especially appointed to meet the cases of those who were rendered unclean by the frequent deaths which occurred. There was to be a simple and easy way of purification for them; and the teaching of this chapter to us is that, inasmuch as we dwell in a sinful world, there needs to be some simple and ready method of cleansing us, that we may be able to draw near to God.

[Numbers 19:2-3](#). *This is the ordinance of the law which the LORD hath commanded, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring thee a red heifer without spot, wherein is no blemish, and upon which never came yoke: and ye shall give her unto Eleazar the priest, that he may bring her forth without the camp, and one shall slay her before his face:*

This was not a usual sacrifice, for the beasts offered were as a rule males; but this was to be a special sacrifice. It was not to be killed by the priest, as other sacrificial offerings were; but the Lord said, “One shall slay her before his face.”

[Numbers 19:4](#). *And Eleazar the priest shall take of her blood with his finger, and sprinkle of her blood directly before the tabernacle of the congregation seven times:*

This makes it a sacrifice; otherwise, it scarcely deserves the name.

[Numbers 19:5-6](#). *And one shall burn the heifer in his sight; her skin, and her flesh, and her blood, with her dung, shall he burn: and the priest shall take cedar wood, and hyssop, and scarlet, and cast it into the midst of the burning of the heifer.*

All was to be burnt, and then the ashes, the essence and product of it, were to be preserved to make the water of purification needed to remove those constant defilements which fell upon the people of the camp. So, the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ, which are the very essence of him, are perpetually preserved for the removal of our daily pollution. There was also the essence of cedar wood; that is, the emblem of fragrant immortality, for cedar was an unrotting wood. “And hyssop, and scarlet.” There must be the humble hyssop used, yet there must be some degree of royalty about the sacrifice, as the scarlet colour imported; and all this is mixed with the blood and the flesh and the skin of the creature, to make the ashes of purification.

[Numbers 19:7](#). *Then the priest shall wash his clothes, and he shall bathe his flesh in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp, and the priest*

shall be unclean until the even.

What a strange sacrifice was this, for even when it was offered it seemed to make unclean all those who had anything to do with it!

[Numbers 19:8-9](#). *And he that burneth her shall wash his clothes in water, and bathe his flesh in water, and shall be unclean until the even. And a man that is clean-*

Now we come to the merit of Christ, for who is clean except Christ?

[Numbers 19:9](#). *Shall gather up the ashes of the heifer, and lay them up without the camp in a clean place, and it shall be kept for the congregation of the children of Israel for a water of separation: it is a purification for sin.*

This ceremonial does not represent the putting away of sin, that typified in the slaying of the victims; but it represents that daily cleansing which the children of God need, the perpetual efficacy of the merit of Christ; for this red heifer was probably killed only once in the wilderness. According to Jewish tradition, there never have been more than six killed. I cannot tell whether that is true or not; but certainly the ashes of one single beast would last for a long time if they were only to be mixed with water, and then the water to be sprinkled upon the unclean. So this ordinance is meant to represent the standing merit, the perpetual purifying of believers by the sacrifice of Christ enabling them to come to the worship of God, and to mingle with holy men, and even with holy angels, without defiling them. In the fullest sense, it may be said of our Lord's atoning sacrifice, "It is a purification for sin."

[Numbers 19:10](#). *And he that gathereth the ashes of the heifer shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the even: and it shall be unto the children of Israel, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among them, for a statute for ever.*

That was the remedy ordained by the Lord for purifying the defiled; now notice what made this remedy so necessary.

[Numbers 19:11-12](#). *He that toucheth the dead body of any man shall be unclean seven days. He shall purify himself with it on the third day, and on the seventh day he shall be clean: but if he purify not himself the third day, then the seventh day he shall not be clean.*

I wonder whether that is a revelation of our being justified through the resurrection of Christ, which took place on the third day after his death, and then our being brought into perfect rest, which represents the seventh day, through the wondrous purifying of our great Sacrifice, the Lamb of God.

[Numbers 19:13-14](#). *Whosoever toucheth the dead body of any man that is dead, and purifieth not himself, defileth the tabernacle of the LORD and that soul shall be cut off from Israel: because the water of separation was not sprinkled upon him, he shall be unclean; his uncleanness is yet upon him. This is the law, when a man dieth in a tent: all that come into the tent, and all that is in the tent, shall be unclean seven days.*

Think, dear friends, what a solemn and yet what an irksome ordinance this must have been! Why, according to this regulation, Joseph could not have gone to see his father Jacob, and to be present at his death, without being defiled. You could not have watched over your consumptive child, or have nursed your dying mother, without becoming defiled, if you had been subject to this law; and everything that was in the tent, or in the house, became defiled, too.

[Numbers 19:15-16](#). *And every open vessel, which hath no covering bound upon it, is unclean. And whosoever toucheth one that is slain with a sword in the open fields, or a dead body, or a bone of a man, or a grave, shall be unclean seven days.*

This law was indeed a yoke of bondage which our fathers were not able to bear. It was meant to teach us how easily we can be defiled. Anywhere they went, these people might touch a bone or touch a grave, and then they were defiled, and you and I, watch as carefully as we may, will find ourselves touching some of the dead works of sin, and becoming defiled. It is a happy circumstance for us that there is the means of purification always at hand; we may ever go to the precious blood of Jesus, and may once again be washed clean, and be made fit to go up to the house of the Lord.

[Numbers 19:17-22](#). *And for an unclean person they shall take of the ashes of the burnt heifer of purification for sin, and running water shall be put thereto in a vessel and a clean person shall take hyssop, and dip it in the water, and sprinkle it upon the tent, and upon all the vessels and upon the persons that were there, and upon him that touched a bone, or one slain, or one dead, or a grave: and the clean person shall sprinkle upon the unclean on the third day, and on the seventh day: and on the seventh day he shall purify himself and wash his clothes and bathe himself in water, and shall be clean at even. But the man that shall be unclean, and shall not purify himself, that soul shall be cut off from among the congregation, because he hath defiled the sanctuary of the LORD: the water of separation hath not been sprinkled upon him; he is unclean. And it shall be a perpetual*

statute unto them, that he that sprinkleth the water of separation shall wash his clothes and he that toucheth the water of separation shall be unclean until even. And whatsoever the unclean person toucheth shall be unclean; and the soul that toucheth it shall be unclean until even.

This ordinance was partly sanitary. The Egyptians were accustomed to keep their dead in their houses, preserved as mummies. No Jew could do that, for he would be defiled. Other nations were accustomed to bury their dead, as we once did, within the city walls, or round their own places of worship, as if to bring death as near as they could to themselves. No Jew could do this, for he was defiled if he even passed over a grave; so they were driven to what God intended they should have, — that is, extramural interments, and to keep the graveyard as far as they could away from the abodes of the living. The spiritual meaning of this regulation is that we must watch with great care against every occasion for sin; and, inasmuch as there will be these occasions and we shall be defiled, we must constantly go to the Lord with a prayer like that of David in the 51st Psalm, which we will now read.

This exposition consisted of readings from Numbers 19.; and Psalms 51.

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Numbers Chapter 20

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER 21

Verses 1-9

[Numbers 21:1-4](#). *And when king Arad the Canaanite, which dwelt in the south, heard tell that Israel came by the way of the spies; then he fought against Israel, and took some of them prisoners. And Israel vowed a vow unto the LORD, and said, If thou wilt indeed deliver this people into my hand, then I will utterly destroy their cities. And the LORD hearkened to the voice of Israel, and delivered up the Canaanites; and they utterly destroyed them and their cities: and he called the name of the place Hormah. And they journeyed from mount Hor by the way of the Red Sea, to compass the*

land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way.

They were not allowed to go through the land of Edom, they had therefore to turn round, and go right away from the land where they one day hoped to dwell, and the road was a particularly trying one, over hot and burning sand, “and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way.” Sometimes, God’s own people, when they find that they are not so far advanced in the divine life as they thought they were, when they find old sins reviving, and when troubles multiply upon them, get “discouraged because of the way.” If this is our experience, let us not fall into the sin into which these Israelites fell, but even in our discouragement let us turn to our God.

[Numbers 21:5](#). *And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread.*

One gets tired, in reading of the wanderings of Israel in the wilderness, of this parrot cry, “Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt?” For nearly forty years, this was their cry whenever they met with any sort of difficulty. How weary God must have been of their cry, and how weary of them too! And now it was raised because they had been fed with “angels’ food” which they called “light bread.” It was easy of digestion, healthful, and the very best kind of food for them in the wilderness; but they wanted something more substantial, something that had a coarser flavour about it, more of earth and less of heaven. There is no satisfying an unregenerate heart. If we had all the blessings of this life, we should still be vying for more.

[Numbers 21:6-7](#) *And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died. Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD, and against thee; pray unto the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people.*

Like a true mediator, he was always ready — even when they had most insulted him, and grieved his meek and quiet spirit, — still to bow the knee, and intercede with the Lord on their behalf. The people implored him to ask that the serpents might be taken away from them; but, apparently, they still continued to trouble them. However, if God does not answer prayer in one

way, he does in another. The fervent prayer of a righteous man may not prevail in the particular direction in which it is offered, but it “availeth much” in some direction or other. Just as when the mists ascend they may not fall upon the very spot from which they rose, but they fall somewhere, and true prayer is never lost, it cometh back in blessing, if not according to our mind, yet according to another mind that is kinder and wiser than our own.

[Numbers 21:8-9](#). *And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.*

This exposition consisted of readings from [Numbers 21:1-9](#); and [John 3:1-15](#).

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Numbers Chapter 22

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CHAPTER FIVE

Deuteronomy

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CHAPTER 6

Verses 1-23

[Deuteronomy 6:1-2](#). *Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go to possess it: That thou mightest fear the LORD thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged.*

Obedience to God should arise from the fear of him, or from a holy awe of God felt in the heart, for all true religion must be heart work. It is not the bare action alone at which God looks, but at the motive — at the spirit which dictates it. Hence it is always put, “That thou mightest fear the Lord thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments.” Neither are we to be content with keeping commands ourselves. It is the duty of parents to seek the good of their children — to seek that the son and the son's son should walk in the ways of God all their lives. May God grant us never to be partakers of the spirit of those who think that they have no need to look after the religion of their children — who seem as if they left it to a blind fate. May we care for them with this care that our son and our son's son should walk before the Lord all the days of their life.

[Deuteronomy 6:3](#). *Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may will be with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey.*

It seems, according to the old covenant, that temporal prosperity was appended as a blessing to the keeping of God's commandments. It has been sometimes said that while prosperity was the blessing of the old covenant, adversity is the blessing of the new, and there is some truth in that statement, for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and yet is it true that the best thing for a meal is that he should walk in the commands of God. There is a sense in which we do make the best of both worlds when we seek the love of God. When we seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, other things are added be us; so that it is not without meaning to us that the Lord here promises temporal blessings to his people.

[Deuteronomy 6:4](#). *Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD:*

This is the great doctrine that we learn, both from the Old and the New Testament there is one Lord. And this great truth has been burnt into the Jews by their long chastisement, and, whatever other mistakes they make, you never find them making a mistake about this. The Lord thy God is one

Lord. May we be kept always from all idolatry — from all worship of anything else, except the living God. The sacred unity of the Divine Trinity may we hold fast evermore.

[Deuteronomy 6:5](#). *And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.*

It is not a little love that God deserves, nor is it a little love that he will accept. He blesses us with all his heart and all his might, and after that fashion are we to love him.

[Deuteronomy 6:6-7](#). *And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.*

The Word of God is not for some particular place called a church or a meeting house. It is for all places, all times, and all occupations. I wish that we had more of this talking over of God's Word when we sit by the way, or when we walk.

[Deuteronomy 6:8](#). *And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes.*

With thee in all thine actions — with thee in all thy thoughts — conspicuously with thee — not out of ostentation, but through thine obedience to become apparent unto all men.

[Deuteronomy 6:9-12](#) *And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates. And it shall be, when the LORD thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not,*

And the houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged which though diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantest not when thou shalt have eaten and be full; Then beware lest thou forget the LORD, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. Pride in the peculiar sin of prosperity, and pride stands side by side with forgetfulness of God. Instead of remembering whence our mercies came, we begin to thank ourselves for these blessings, and God is forgotten. I remember one of whom it was said that he was a selfmade man, and he adored his Creator, and I may say that there are a great many persons who do just that. They believe that they have made themselves, and so they worship themselves. Be it ours to remember that it

is God who giveth us strength to get wealth or to get position, and, therefore, unto him be all the honour of it, and never let him be forgotten.

[Deuteronomy 6:13-15](#). *Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name. Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which are round about you: (For the LORD thy God is a jealous God among you)*

He will have the heart all to himself. Two Gods he cannot endure. Of false gods, there may be many: of the true God there can be but one, and he is a jealous God.

[Deuteronomy 6:15-19](#). *Lest the anger of the LORD thy God be kindled against thee, and destroy thee from off the face of the earth. Ye shall not tempt the LORD your God, as ye tempted him in Massah. Ye shall diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, and his testimonies, and his statutes, which he hath commanded thee. And thou shalt do that which is right and good in the sight of the LORD: that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest go in and possess the good land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, To cast out all thine enemies from before thee, as the LORD hath spoken.*

Now, this covenant of works they break, as we also have long ago broken ours. Blessed be God, our salvation now hangs on another covenant which cannot fail nor break down — the covenant of grace. Yet, still, now that we become the Lord's children, we are put under the discipline of the Lord's house, and these words might not unfitly set forth what is the discipline of the Lord's house towards his own children, namely, that he does bless us when we walk in his ways, and that he will walk contrary to us if we walk contrary to him. He keeps a rod in his house, and in love he uses that upon his best beloved ones. "You only have I known of all the nations of the earth; therefore, I will punish you for your iniquities." He will not kill his children, nor treat them as a judge treats a criminal, for they are not under the law, but under grace; but he will chasten them and treat them as a father chasteneth his child — out of love. Oh! that we might have grace to walk before him with a holy, childlike fear, that so we may walk always in the light of his countenance.

[Deuteronomy 6:20-23](#). *And when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What mean the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD our God hath commanded you? then thou shalt say unto thy son, We were Pharaoh's bondmen in Egypt; and the LORD brought us*

out of Egypt with a mighty hand: And the LORD shewed signs and wonders great and sore, upon Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his household, before our eyes: and he brought us out from thence, that he might bring us in, to give us the land which he sware unto our fathers.

And cannot we tell our children what God has done for us — how he brought us out of our spiritual captivity, and how in his almighty love, he has brought us into his Church and will surely bring us into the glory above? May God grant us grace to speak about these things without diffidence, With great confidence to tell our children of what he has done.

Verses 1-25

[Deuteronomy 6:1](#). *Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go to possess it:*

God's commandments are to be taught, but they are also to be practiced: "which the Lord your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them." And it is this doing of them that is the hard part of the work. It is not easy always to teach them; a man needs the Spirit of God if he is to teach them aright, but practice is harder than preaching. May God grant us grace, whenever we hear his Word, to do it!

[Deuteronomy 6:2](#). *That thou mightest fear the LORD thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged.*

The fear of God must always be a practical power in our lives: "that thou mightest fear the Lord thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments." And that practical fear should lead us into obedience in detail; we ought so to study God's Word that we endeavor "to keep all his statutes and his commandments." A slipshod obedience is disobedience. We must be careful and watchful to know the divine will, and in all respects to carry it out. You who are his children, dwelling in such a household, and with such a Father, it well becomes you to be obedient children. Nay, it is not only for us to obey the command of the Lord our God, but we should pray till the rest of the verse also comes true: "thou, and thy son, and thy sows son," our children and our children's children. I am sure that, if we love God, we shall long that our children and our children's children may love him, too. If your trade has supported you, and brought you in a competence, you will naturally wish to bring your son up to it. But, on a far

higher platform, if God has been a good God to you, your deepest desire will be that your son and your son's son should serve the same Divine Master through all the days of their life. "That thy days may be prolonged." God does not give long life to all his people; yet in obedience to God is the most probable way of securing long life. There are also many of God's saints who are spared in times of pestilence, or who are delivered by an act of faith out of great dangers. That ancient declaration of God often comes true in these later times, "As the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands." At any rate, you who love the Lord shall live out your days, whereas the wicked shall not live out half their days. You shall complete the circle of life, whether it be a great circle or a little one; with long life will God satisfy you, and show you his salvation. The passage which now follows is held in very great esteem by the Jewish people even down to this day. They repeat it frequently, for it forms part of their morning and evening services.

[Deuteronomy 6:3-4](#). *Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey. Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD:*

There is but one God. This is the very basis of our faith; we know nothing of "gods many and lords many." Yet it is the Triune God whom we worship; we are not less Unitarians in the highest meaning of that word because we are Trinitarians. We are not less believers in the one living and true God because we worship Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

[Deuteronomy 6:5](#). *And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.*

Does not this show what is the very nature of God? God is love, for he commands us to love him. There was never an earthly prince or king whom I have heard of in whose statute book it was written, "Thou shalt love the king." No; it is only in the statute book of him who is the Lord of life and love that we read such a command as this. To my mind it seems a very blessed privilege for us to be permitted to love One so great as God is. Here it is we find our heaven. It is a command, but we regard it rather as a loving, tender invitation to the highest bliss: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart," — that is, intensely; "and with all thy soul," — that is, most sincerely, most lovingly, "and with all thy might" with all thy energy, with every faculty, with every possibility of thy nature.

[Deuteronomy 6:6](#). *And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart:*

Oh, how blessed to have them written on the heart by the Holy Spirit. We can never get them there except he who made the heart anew shall engrave upon these fleshy tablets the divine precepts.

[Deuteronomy 6:7](#). *And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children,*

Christian parent, have you done this? “Thou shalt” not only teach them, but “teach them diligently unto thy children.”

[Deuteronomy 6:7](#). *And shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.*

Our common talk should be much more spiritual than it often is. There is no fear of degrading sacred subjects by the frequent use of them; the fear lies much the other way, lest by a disuse of them we come to forget them. This blessed Book, the Holy Word of God, is a fit companion for your leisure as well as for your labour, for the time of your sleeping and the time of your waking. It will bless you in your private meditations, and equally cheer the social hearth, and comfort you when in mutual friendship you speak the one with the other. Those who truly love God greatly love his holy Word.

[Deuteronomy 6:8](#). *And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, They shall be thy practical guide, at thy fingers’ ends, as it were.*

[Deuteronomy 6:8](#). *And they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes.*

Thou shalt see by them, thou shalt see with them, thou shalt see through them.

[Deuteronomy 6:9](#). *And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.*

I could almost wish that this were literally fulfilled much more often than it is. I was charmed, in many a Swiss village, to see a text of Scripture carved on the door post. A text hung up in your houses may often speak when you are silent. We cannot do anything that shall be superfluous in the way of making known the Word of God.

[Deuteronomy 6:10-12](#). *And it shall be, when the LORD thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not, and houses full of all good things, which thou filledst*

not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full; then beware lest thou forget the LORD, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.

Bread eaten is soon forgotten. How often we act like clogs that will take the bones from our hand, and then forget the hand that gave them! It should not be so with us. All our spiritual, mercies, and many of our temporal ones, are very much like the inheritance of Israel in the land of Canaan, wells that they did not dig, and vineyards which they did not plant. Our blessings come from sources that are beyond our own industry and skill; they are the fruits of the holy inventiveness of God, and the splendor and fullness of his thoughtfulness towards his poor children. Let us not forget him, since evidently he never forgets us.

[Deuteronomy 6:13-15](#). *Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name. Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which are round about you; (for the LORD thy God is a jealous God among you) lest the anger of the Lord thy God be kindled against thee, and destroy thee from off the face of the earth.*

Our God is a jealous God. One said to a Puritan, “Why be so precise?” and he replied, “Because I serve a precise God.” God has done so much for us, in order to win our hearts, that he ought to have them altogether for himself. When he has them all, it is all too little; but to divide our heart is to grieve his Spirit, and sorely to vex him.

[Deuteronomy 6:16-24](#). *Ye shall not tempt the LORD your God, as ye tempted him in Massah. Ye shall diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, and his testimonies, and his statutes, which he hath commanded thee. And thou shalt do that which is right and good in the sight of the LORD: that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest go in and possess the good land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, to cast out all thine enemies from before thee, as the Land hath spoken. And when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What mean the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments, which the Lord our God hath commanded you? Then thou shalt say unto thy son, We were Pharaoh’s bondmen in Egypt; and the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand: and the LORD showed signs and wonders, great and sore, upon Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his household, before our eyes: and he brought us out from thence, that he might bring us in, to give us the land which he*

sware unto our fathers. And the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as it is at this day.

Oh, friends, it will be well when our boys and girls ask us questions like this, and when we can give such answers! The great lack of the age in which we live is obedience to God. “Modern thought” has flung off obedience to Divine Revelation; and even in matters relating to social morality, many men reject all idea of anything being commanded of God; they only judge by what appears to them to be either pleasurable or profitable. What is most needed just now is that we ourselves, and those about us, become really conscious of the greatness and sovereignty of God, and yield ourselves to him to do as he bids us, when he bids us, where he bids us, and in all things to seek to follow his commandments that he may “preserve us alive, as it is at this day.”

[Deuteronomy 6:25](#). *And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the LORD our God, as he hath commanded us.*

That would have been Israel’s righteousness if the people had observed to do all these commandments before the Lord; but it was marred and spoilt by disobedience. We rejoice to know that we who believe in Jesus have a righteousness unto which Israel did not attain, for the Lord Jesus Christ himself is our righteousness.

[DEUTERONOMY CONTENTS](#)

Deuteronomy Chapter 7

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER 8

Verses 1-20

[Deuteronomy 8:1](#). *All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do, that ye may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the LORD sware unto your fathers.*

Observe, dear friends, that the Lord demands of his people universal obedience to his commands: “All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do.” Christians, although they are not under the law, are under the sweet constraints of love; and that love incites them to complete obedience, so that they desire to leave undone nothing which the Lord commands. And this obedience is to be careful as well as complete: “All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do;” not only do them, but do them with care. When the commandment applies to a certain duty, obey it in full, both in the letter and in the spirit, for there are numerous and weighty blessings attached to obedience, — not of merit, but of grace. If we walk carefully in the fear of God, we shall find that in keeping his commandments there is great reward.

[Deuteronomy 8:2](#). *And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no.*

It is well to have a good memory, and that is the best memory which remembers what is best worth remembering. There are many things which we would gladly forget, yet we find it hard to forget them; they often rise up at most inappropriate times, and we loathe ourselves to think that we should ever recollect them at all. But, whatever we forget, we ought always to remember what God has done for us. This should excite our gratitude, create deep humility, and foster our faith both for the present and the future: “Thou shalt remember all the way which Jehovah thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness” If forty years of the Lord’s leading should make some of us bless his holy name, what ought you to do, my brethren, who, perhaps, are getting near the fourscore years? What praise and gratitude should be rendered by you to him who has led you all your life long! See what God intends to accomplish by our wilderness experience. It is, first, to “humble” us. Has it had that effect? Then it is to “prove” us. Ah, I am afraid it has had that result, and has proved what poor wretched creatures we are! That has been proved in our experience again and again. It is, also that it may be known what is in our heart, whether we will keep God’s commandments, or not.

[Deuteronomy 8:3](#). *And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, —*

What a wonderful sequence there is in these short sentences! “He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger,” and one would think that the next sentence would be, “and allowed thee to starve.” No; it is, “and fed thee with manna.” They had the better appetite for the manna, and were the more ready to see the hand of God in sending the manna, because of that humbling and hunger which God had previously suffered them to endure. “Fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not.” The very name by which they called it was, “Manna,” or, “What is this?” “for they wist not what it was.” “And fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not.”

[Deuteronomy 8:3](#). *Neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live.*

God can make us live on bread, if it be sanctified by the Word of God and prayer; he does make our souls to live upon his Word. He could, if so it pleased him, make our bodies live by that Word without any outward sustenance whatever.

[Deuteronomy 8:4](#). *Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years.*

What a wonderful experience the Israelites had in the wilderness! They were always fed, though in a waste howling wilderness, dry and barren. They always had water following them from that stream which flowed out of the flinty rock, from Which you might sooner have expected to strike fire than to obtain water. And as for their garments, they did not wear out. They had no shops to go to, and they were unable to make new clothes in the wilderness, on account of their frequent moving to and fro; yet were they always clad; and, though they were a host of weary pilgrims, marching backwards and forwards for forty years, yet their feet did not swell. Oh, what a mercy that was! “He keepeth the feet of his saints.” Has it not been so with you also, dear friends? You have said, “What shall I do if I live so long, and if I have to bear so many troubles, and make so many marches through the very valley of the shadow of death?” What will you do? Why, you will do as you have done! Trust in God, and go on. You shall be fed, and you shall be upheld even unto the end.

[Deuteronomy 8:5](#). *Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, —*

Note that we are not only to remember God’s dealings with us, but we are to consider them, to ponder them, to weigh them. “Consider in thine heart,” —

[Deuteronomy 8:5](#). *That, as a man chasteneth his son, so the LORD thy God chasteneth thee.*

Do I speak to anyone who is just now under the rod? “Consider in thine heart” then, that God is dealing with you as a father deals with his sons, “for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?” How would you like to be dealt with? Would you rather be without the rod? Then remember that “if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.” Do you wish to be treated so? I am sure you do not; you wish to have the children’s portion; so you say, “Deal with me, Lord, as thou art wont to do with those that fear thy name. We are willing to have the rod of the covenant for the sake of the covenant to which it belongs.

[Deuteronomy 8:6-8](#). *Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to fear him. For the LORD thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey;*

This also is the experience of the child of God; in one sense, in heaven; but in another, and perhaps a truer sense, even here below. “We which have believed do enter into rest.” By faith, we take possession of the promised land; and when a Christian gets out of the wilderness experience of doubting and fearing, and comes into the Canaan experience of a simple faith and a fully assured trust, then he comes “into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey;” for God gives to his people not only all they need, but something more. He gives them, not only necessaries, but also luxuries, delights, and joys.

[Deuteronomy 8:9](#). *A land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack any thing in it;*

When you live in communion with God, and he brings you into the full enjoyment of the covenant blessings, then there is no scarceness with you, there is no lack of anything.

[Deuteronomy 8:9](#). *A land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass.*

Or, copper. Silver and gold they had none; but then the princes of Sheba and Seba were to offer them gifts, and bring them their gold and their silver. But if they had nothing for show, they had plenty for use, for iron is a great

deal more useful metal than gold; and the copper, which they hardened into brass, was of much more service to them than silver would have been. God will furnish you, dear brother, with all the weapons you need for the Holy War; there may be no gold and silver ornaments for your pride, but there shall be iron instruments to help you in your conflict with your adversaries.

[Deuteronomy 8:10](#). *When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the LORD thy God for the good land which he hath given thee.*

God permits his people to eat, and to be full; but, when they are so, they must take care that they do not become proud, and that they do not begin to ascribe their profiting to themselves.

[Deuteronomy 8:11](#). *Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day:*

Whenever we see the word “Beware” in the Bible, we may be sure that there is something to beware of. The point here to note is, that our times of prosperity are times of danger. I remember that Mr. Whitefield once asked the prayers of the congregation “for a young gentleman in very dangerous circumstances,” for he had just come into a fortune of £5,000. Then is the time when prayer is needed even more than in seasons of depression and of loss.

[Deuteronomy 8:12-16](#). *Lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein; and when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied; then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the LORD thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage; who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint; who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that he might humble thee, and that he might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end;*

Why do we get these passages repeated? Surely it is because we have such slippery memories, and the Lord has to tell his children the same thing over and over again: “precept upon precept: line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little;” because we so soon forget.

[Deuteronomy 8:17-20](#). *And thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth. But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may*

establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day. And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the LORD thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish. As the nations which the LORD destroyeth before your face, so shall ye perish;

“If you sin as they do, you shall fare as they do.”

[Deuteronomy 8:20](#). Because ye would not be obedient unto the voice of the LORD your God.

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CHAPTER 15

Verses 1-18

[Deuteronomy 15:1-2](#). *At the end of every seven years thou shalt make a release. And this is the manner of the release: Every creditor that lendeth aught unto his neighbour shall release it; he shall not exact it of his neighbour, or of his brother; because it is called the LORD'S release.*

What a wonderful title for it, “the LORD’S release”!

[Deuteronomy 15:3](#). *Of a foreigner thou mayest exact it again: but that which is thine with thy brother thine hand shall release;*

How was a man to pay when he did not sow or reap during the Sabbatical year? The foreigner did not observe the year of rest; consequently he was bound to pay, and it was only fair that he should do so; but for the Israelite, who carried out the divine law, there was provision made if he was in debt.

[Deuteronomy 15:4](#). *Save when there shall be no poor among you;*

If there were no poor, then there would be no need for this law.

[Deuteronomy 15:4-6](#). *For the LORD shall greatly bless thee in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it: only if thou carefully hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all these commandments which I command thee this day. For the LORD thy God blesseth thee, as he promised thee:*

That little clause, “as he promised thee,” is worth noticing. This is the rule of God; he deals with us” according to promise.”

[Deuteronomy 15:6](#). *And thou shalt lend unto many nations, but thou shalt not borrow; and thou shalt reign over many nations, but they shall not reign over thee.*

If God’s people had done his will, they would have been like their language; it is observed of the Hebrew by some, that it borrows nothing from other tongues, but lends many words to various languages.

[Deuteronomy 15:7-9](#). *If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor*

brother: but thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth. Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, the seventh year, the year of release, is at hand; and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought; and he cry unto the LORD against thee, and it be sin unto thee.

Moses, moved by the Spirit of God, anticipates what would very naturally occur to many: “Then I shall not lend anywhere near the seventh year; if I do, I shall lose it, for I must release my debtor then.” The hardhearted would be sure to make this their evil excuse for lending nothing. But here the Hebrew is warned against such wicked thoughts, lest, refusing to lend to his poor brother for this cause, the needy one should cry to God, and it should be accounted sin on the part of the merciless refuser.

[Deuteronomy 15:10-11](#). *Thou shalt surely give him, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him: because that for this thing the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou puttest thine hand unto. For the poor shall never cease out of the land:*

They would have done so, they might have done so, if the rule of God had been kept; but inasmuch as he foresaw that it never would be kept, he also declared, “the poor shall never cease out of the land.”

[Deuteronomy 15:11](#). *Therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land.*

See how God calls them, not “the poor,” but “thy poor” and “thy needy.” The Church of God should feel a peculiar property in the poor and needy, as if they were handed over, in the love of Christ to his people, that they might care for them.

[Deuteronomy 15:12](#). *And if thy brother, an Hebrew man, or an Hebrew woman, be sold unto thee, and serve thee six years; then in the seventh year thou shalt let him go free from thee.*

He might be under an apprenticeship of servitude for six years; but the seventh year was to be a year of rest to him, as it was a year of release to debtors, and of rest to the land.

[Deuteronomy 15:13](#). *And when thou sendest him out free from thee, thou shalt not let him go away empty:*

To begin life again with nothing at all in his pocket.

[Deuteronomy 15:14](#). *Thou shalt furnish him liberally out of thy flock, and out of thy floor, and out of thy winepress: of that wherewith the LORD*

thy God hath blessed thee thou shalt give unto him.

Who would think of finding such a law as that on the statute book? Where is there such a law under any governor but God? The Theocracy would have made a grand government for Israel if Israel had but been able to walk before God in faith and obedience.

[Deuteronomy 15:15](#). *And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the LORD thy God redeemed thee: therefore I command thee this thing to day.*

The remembrance of their own deliverance out of Egyptian bondage was to make them merciful and kind to their own bondservants.

[Deuteronomy 15:16-18](#). *And it shall be, if he say unto thee, I will not go away from thee; because he loveth thee and thine house, because he is well with thee; then thou shalt take an awl, and thrust it through his ear unto the door, and he shall be thy servant for ever. And also unto thy maidservant thou shalt do likewise. It shall not seem hard unto thee, when thou sendest him away free from thee; for he hath been worth a double hired servant to thee, in serving thee six years:*

He has had no pay; he has been always at his work; he has been worth two ordinary hired labourers; let him go, therefore, and let him not go away empty.

[Deuteronomy 15:18](#). *And the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all that thou doest.*

This exposition consisted of readings from [Leviticus 25:1-7](#); [Leviticus 25:17-22](#), and [Deuteronomy 15:1-18](#).

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CHAPTER 29

Verses 1-21

Deuteronomy 29:1. *These are the words of the covenant, which the LORD commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, beside the covenant which he made with them in Horeb.*

That is the preamble, just as in legal documents there is usually some statement of the purport and intent of the indenture before the matter is proceeded with. These covenants with God are solemn things, and therefore are they given in a formal manner to strike attention, and command our serious thoughts.

Deuteronomy 29:2-4. *And Moses called unto all Israel, and said unto them, Ye have seen all that the LORD did before your eyes in the land of Egypt unto Pharaoh, and unto all his servants, and unto all his land; the great temptations which thine eyes have seen, the signs, and those great miracles: yet the LORD hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day.*

You saw all that, and yet did not see it; you saw the external work, but the internal lesson you did not perceive. A very mournful statement to

make; but God's servants are not sent to flatter man but to speak the truth, however painful the speaking of it may be.

Deuteronomy 29:5-6. *And I have led you forty years in the wilderness: your clothes are not waxen old upon you, and thy shoe is not waxen old upon thy foot. Ye have not eaten bread, neither have ye drunk wine or strong drink: that ye might know that I am the LORD your God.*

Either there had been means of frequent renewal of their garments, or else by a miracle these garments had never worn out; and the very shoes that they put upon their feet on the Passover night were on their feet still; if not the same yet still they were shod, though they trod the weary wilderness which well might have worn them till they were bare. "Ye have not eaten bread, neither have ye drunk wine or strong drink:" — a nation of total abstainers for forty years. There was no bread in the wilderness for them, and there was no wine. It may have been obtained as a great luxury, as it probably was, for we have reason to believe that Nadab and Abihu were slain by fire before the Lord because they were drunken when they offered strange fire; but taking the whole people around, anything like wine had not crossed their lips for forty years, yet there they were, strong and healthy. "That ye may know that I am Jehovah your God."

Deuteronomy 29:7. *And when ye came unto this place, Sihon the king of Heshbon, and Og the king of Bashan, came out against us unto battle, and we smote them:*

People not used to war either, and feeble folk, yet they smote the great kings and slew mighty kings, for the Lord was with them.

Deuteronomy 29:8-9. *And we took their land, and gave it for an inheritance unto the Reubenites, and to the Gadites, and to the half tribe of Manasseh. Keep therefore the words of this covenant, and do them, that ye may prosper in all that ye do.*

This, then, was the covenant made with the nation, that God should be their God and he would prosper them: as he had done, so would he do: he would be their protector, defender, strength, and crown and joy.

Deuteronomy 29:10-11. *Ye stand this day all of you before the LORD your God; your captains of your tribes, your elders, and your officers, with all the men of Israel, your little ones, your wives, and thy stranger that is in thy camp, from the hewer of thy wood unto the drawer of thy water:*

This national covenant embraced all the great men, the captains, the wise men, all that were in authority, "your elders, and your officers." It took

in all their children, for it was a covenant according to the flesh, and their children according to the flesh are included. “Your wives,” too, for in this matter their was no sex. “The stranger also.” Here we poor Gentiles get a glimpse of comfort, even though from that old covenant we seem to be shut out. “Thy stranger that is in thy camp” is included. And the poorest, and those that performed the most menial service, were all to be made partakers of this covenant, “from the hewer of thy wood unto the drawer of thy water.”

Deuteronomy 29:12-15. *That thou shouldest enter into covenant with the LORD thy God, and into his oath, which the LORD thy God maketh with thee this day: that he may establish thee today for a people unto himself, and that he may be unto thee a God, as he hath said unto thee, and as he hath sworn unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. Neither with you only do I make this covenant and this oath; but with him that standeth here with us this day before the LORD our God, and also with him that is not here with us this day:*

With the sick that were at home, with the generations that were not yet born, for this was intended to be a national covenant in perpetuity to their children and their children’s children to the end of time. Had they kept it so would it have stood.

Deuteronomy 29:16-17. *(For ye know how we have dwelt in the land of Egypt; and how we came through the nations which ye passed by; and ye have seen their abominations, and their idols, wood and stone, silver and gold, which were among them:)*

Now you have seen how they worshipped idols; you have seen that you may avoid; you have beheld their folly that you may escape from it.

Deuteronomy 29:18. *Lest there should be among you man, or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turneth away this day from the LORD our God, to go and serve the gods of these nations; lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood;*

For the worship of false gods is the cause of untold mischief and evil: wherever it is found it is a root that beareth gall and wormwood, and God would not have it in a single individual, man nor woman, nay, not in a single family or tribe.

Deuteronomy 29:19. *And it come to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace,*

though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst:

For there were some who so hardened themselves against God that they said, “We shall have peace: let us do what we like: let us worship these idol gods more and more and more: let us add drunkenness and idolatry to our thirst.”

Deuteronomy 29:20. *The LORD will not spare him, but then the anger of the LORD and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him,*

Not light upon him, but lie upon him, rest there and stop there.

Deuteronomy 29:20-21. *And the LORD shall blot out his name from under heaven. And the LORD shall separate him unto evil out of all the tribes of Israel,*

As a huntsman separates a stag from the herd that he may hunt it all the day, so shall God with any idolater that should come amongst his people with whom he made a covenant that day. Oh, how God hates that anything should be worshipped by us but himself: how indignant is he if anywhere anything takes the supreme place in the human heart which ought to be occupied by God alone.

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CHAPTER 32

Verses 1-39

A very marvelous chapter it is — a song and a prophecy, in which the poet-seer seems to behold the whole future spread before him as in a map,

and it is so vivid to him that he describes it rather as a matter present or past, than as a thing which is yet to be. It is the story of God's dealing his chosen and peculiar people, Israel, from the beginning to the end. The commencement is exceedingly noble.

[Deuteronomy 32:1-3](#). *Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass" Because I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God.*

All through, the song is for the glorification of God; not a syllable, indeed, in which man is held up to honour, but the Lord alone is exalted in his dealings with his people. He is the rock. All other things are the mere cloud that hovers on the mountain's brow; but —

[Deuteronomy 32:4](#). *He is the rock,*
Immutable, eternal.

[Deuteronomy 32:4](#). *His work is perfect:*

Sometimes very terrible and very mysterious, but his work is perfect.

[Deuteronomy 32:4](#). *For all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.*

But as for his people, what a contrast between them and their God!

[Deuteronomy 32:5](#). *They have corrupted themselves, their spot is not the spot of his children: they are a perverse and crooked generation.*

What a stoop from the God of truth, without iniquity, to a people full of iniquity — a perverse and crooked generation. We never know so much of our own vileness as when we get a clear view of the excellency of God. What said Job? "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes."

[Deuteronomy 32:6](#). *Do ye thus requite the LORD, O foolish people and unwise? is not he thy father that hath bought thee? hath he not made thee, and established thee?*

Who made the Jews to be a people? Who set Israel apart to be a nation? Who, but God, who bought them with a price when they came out of Egypt, and, in his fatherly care, led them through the wilderness?

[Deuteronomy 32:7-8](#). *Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will shew thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee. When the Most High divided to the nations their*

inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel.

God's first point in the government of the world was his own people. Everything else was mapped out after he had set apart a place for them — a place sufficient, large, fruitful, and in an admirable position, that there they might multiply and enjoy all the good things which he so freely gave them; and to this day dynasties rise and fall, kings reign or are scattered by defeat, only with this one point in God's eye, and purpose in his mind — the upholding of the Church in the world — the spread of his glorious truth.

[Deuteronomy 32:9-12](#). *For the LORD'S portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance. He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: So the LORD alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him.*

This is the history of the tutoring of Israel in the wilderness. When they came out of Egypt they were a mere mob of slaves, degenerate by the debasing influence of long bondage. They had to be trained before they were lit to be a nation. Now in all this, let us try to see ourselves. What has God wrought for those of us who are his people in bringing us out from the bondage of sin? and how graciously does he this day preserve us as a man guards the apple of his eye! No sooner does anything come near the eye than up goes the hand instinctively to shield the eye. And let anything happen to the people of God, and the power of God is ready at once for their defense. An eagle has to teach her young eaglets to fly. She will take them on her wings, so they say; cast them off, and let them flutter, and then dash down and come reader them and bear them up again till she has taught them to use their wings. And the Lord has been doing this with many here — apparently casting them off, only that, when they fall, underneath them may be the everlasting arms. We have to be trained to faith. It is a difficult exercise for such poor creatures as we are. We are being trained for it at this day. After they had been thus tutored, they were brought into the promised land, which Moses never entered, but yet in his vision of prophecy he sees it all.

[Deuteronomy 32:13-14](#). *He made him ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields; and he made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock; Butter of kine, and milk*

of sheep, with fat of lambs, and rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats, with the fat of kidneys of wheat; and thou didst drink the pure blood of the grape.

It was a very fruitful land, abounding not merely in necessities, but in luxuries. Palestine bear to its inhabitants all that heart could wish, and for a long time, while they were faithful to God, they lived in the midst of plenty.

[Deuteronomy 32:15](#). *But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked:*

“The little holy nation” — for I suppose that is the meaning of “Jeshurun.” It is a diminutive word — “the little religious nation waxed fat. It abounded in prosperity. It grew stout and kicked.”

[Deuteronomy 32:15](#). *Thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation.*

Alas! alas! alas! they set up calves in Bethel. They turned aside to Ashtaroth, and worshipped the queen of heaven.

[Deuteronomy 32:16-17](#). *They provoked him to jealousy with strange gods, with abominations provoked they him to anger. They sacrificed unto devils,*

Demons — not to God.

[Deuteronomy 32:17](#). *Not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not.*

There is nothing new in religion that is true. The truth is always old. But only imagine a new God! And verily we have had lately some new fashions brought up — some new styles of worship. I think they call them mediaeval. They certainly are no older than that — “new gods that newly came up, whom your fathers feared not.”

[Deuteronomy 32:18](#). *Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee.*

Israel was nothing apart from God — a little tribe of people — nothing to be compared with the great nations of the earth. Its only reason for existence was its God. He was its center, its light, its glory, its power. They had got away from him that formed them.

[Deuteronomy 32:19-20](#). *And when the LORD saw it, he abhorred them, because of the provoking of his sons, and of his daughters. And he said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be: for they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith.*

There is the mischief — want of faith. Want of faith leads to all manner of sin. Oh! that we had a strong elastic faith to realize the unseen God, and keep to purely spiritual worship, not wanting symbols, signs, and outward tokens, all of which are abominable in his sight, but worshipping the unseen in spirit and in truth. But the Lord said: —

[Deuteronomy 32:21](#). *They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.*

And so the idolatrous nations came and conquered Judaea. One after another, they trampled down the holy city, and let them see that God could use the nations that they despised to be a scourge upon them.

[Deuteronomy 32:22-25](#). *For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains. I will heap mischiefs upon them; I will spend mine arrows upon them. They shall be burnt with hunger, and devoured with burning heat, and with bitter destruction: I will also send the teeth of beasts upon them, with the poison of serpents of the dust. The sword without, and terror within, shall destroy both the young man and the virgin, the suckling also with the man of gray hairs.*

Now read the story of the destruction of Israel and Judea the overthrow of these two kingdoms — and you will see how, word for word, all this came to pass.

[Deuteronomy 32:26-27](#). *I said, I would scatter them into corners, I would make the remembrance of them to cease from among men: Were it not that I feared the wrath of the enemy, lest their adversaries should behave themselves strangely, and lest they should say, Our hand is high, and the LORD hath not done all this.*

God always looks out for some reason for mercy when he is dealing with his people, and he found it here — that the heathen nations would not admit that God had thus been chastening his erring people, but would begin to ascribe their victories to their own demon gods; therefore, he said he would scatter them.

[Deuteronomy 32:28-30](#). *For they are a nation void of counsel, neither is there any understanding in them. O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end! How should one*

chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, except their Rock had sold them, and the LORD had shut them up?

That little people would have been victorious over all their enemies if God had still been with them, but they were defeated and scattered because they had grieved the Lord. Oh! what strength believers might have if they would but believe! If we could but cast ourselves upon God in simple, childlike faith, we might play the Samson over again and smite our thousands. But we, too, have little faith in God, even those who have most of it; and when the time of trial comes, we also are a stiff-necked and unbelieving generation, as our fathers were.

[Deuteronomy 32:31-34](#). *For their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges. For their vine is of the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah: their grapes are grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter: Their wine is the poison of dragons, and the cruel venom of asps. Is not this laid up in store with me, and sealed up among my treasures?*

What an awful text! God lays man's sins by — seals them up amongst their treasures, that they should not be forgotten, and he will bring them to account.

[Deuteronomy 32:35-36](#). *To me belongeth vengeance, and recompense; their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste. For the LORD shall judge his people,*

He will not always let his enemies triumph over them. He will come back to his people whom he seemed to cast away. "The Lord shall judge his people."

[Deuteronomy 32:36](#). *And repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left.*

He seemed very angry, but how soon he comes back in love and tries his people over again.

[Deuteronomy 32:37-39](#). *And he shall say, Where are their gods, their rock in whom they trusted, Which did eat the fat of their sacrifices, and drank the wine of their drink offerings? let them rise up and help you, and be your protection. See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me; I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand.*

Verses 1-43

[Deuteronomy 32:1](#). *Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth.*

Because men are so slow of hearing, Moses calls on the heavens and the earth to bear witness against them; and because of the sublimity of his subject, he calls upon the heavens and the earth to pay attention to it.

[Deuteronomy 32:2](#). *My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass:*

It is good preaching, and good hearing too, when the gospel comes like a gentle shower which saturates and soaks into the soil, and refreshes and makes it fruitful; may God the Holy Spirit make it to be so whenever we gather together for worship! The Word of the Lord may be as a driving hail, breaking everything upon which it falls, and so becoming the savour of death unto death. But may God make it to us as the dew and the small rain from heaven, that it may be a savour of life unto life!

[Deuteronomy 32:3-5](#). *Because I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he. They have corrupted themselves,*

What a contrast there is between the incorruptible and immutable God and corruptible man! “They have corrupted themselves,”—

[Deuteronomy 32:5](#). *Their spot is not the spot of his children: they are a perverse and crooked generation.*

God’s children have spots,—the spot caused, by sin, which are recognized, mourned over, and struggled against by them; the ungodly have the same sort of spots but they have no repentance concerning the sin which causes them.

[Deuteronomy 32:6](#). *Do ye thus requite the LORD, O foolish people and unwise? is not he thy father that hath bought thee? hath he not made thee, and established thee?*

Sin is the basest form of ingratitude. We owe everything to God, and we ought therefore to treat him as our Creator and Father should be treated. On the contrary, how often have we requited him evil for good, and acted as if we regarded him as our enemy rather than as our best Friend!

[Deuteronomy 32:7-8](#). *Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will shew thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee. When the Most High divided to the nations their*

inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel.

His first thought was concerning his own people. He provided Canaan for them; it was just the very land for them, with space enough, and yet with not too much room, so that they might cultivate it all, and prove it to be a land flowing with milk and honey. Yet these special thoughts of God, with regard to his own chosen people, did not exclude kind thoughts towards the rest of mankind, for “he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people,” that is, the people belonging to other nations; but, still, his deepest and his highest thoughts were concerning the children of Israel.

[Deuteronomy 32:9-10](#). *For the LORD’S portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance. He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye.*

And is not this also a true description of God’s love and kindness to you and to me, beloved in the Lord? Did he not find us in the wilderness? Has he not led us about, trod by our experience instructed us, and has he not guarded us with as much watchful care as a man bestows upon the apple of his eye? Oh, blessed be his holy name, we owe everything to him! He giveth us everything that we have.

[Deuteronomy 32:11-14](#). *As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: so the LORD alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him. He made him ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields; and he made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock; butter of kine, and milk of sheep, with fat of lambs, and rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats, with the fat of kidneys of wheat; and thou didst drink the pure blood of the grape.*

God fed his ancient people with the best of the best, and gave it to them with no stinted hand; and, oh! when I think of the spiritual food which God has prepared for his people, surely “butter of kine, and milk of sheep, with fat of lambs,” and all such carnal things are but poor in comparison with the provisions of his grace. In a spiritual sense, the Lord hath indeed given to us “a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of mallow, of wines on the lees well refined.” But now look again at the contrast between the Lord and his ancient people. God’s great goodness makes man’s sin appear all the blacker:—

[Deuteronomy 32:15](#). *But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked: thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation.*

Many can endure the trials of adversity who cannot escape the perils of prosperity. Solomon truly said, “As the fining pot for silver, and the furnace for gold; so is a man to his praise;” and many a man has failed in that time of testing. When you come to be wealthy, to be admired, to receive honour among men, then is the time of your severest trial.

[Deuteronomy 32:16-17](#). *They provoked him to jealousy with strange gods, with abominations provoked they him to anger. They sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not.*

Moses multiples expressions to show the folly of Israel’s idolatry. Only think of “new gods that came newly up,” as if that which is new could be a god! The same thing may be said of the “new truth” of which we hear so much nowadays. That which is new cannot be true. Certainly, there is nothing new in theology but that which is utterly false. The idols, which the Israelites worshipped, were not only new gods, but they were strange gods, which their fathers feared not. Worse than that, they were demons: “they sacrificed unto devils not to God.” How low had even the chosen people sunk!

[Deuteronomy 32:18-27](#). *Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee. And when the LORD saw it, he abhorred them, because of the provoking of his sons, and of his daughters. And he said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be: for they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith. They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation. For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains. I will heap mischiefs upon them, I will spend mine arrows upon them. They shall be burnt with hunger, and devoured with burning heat, and with bitter destruction: I will also send the teeth of beasts upon them, with the poison of serpents of the dust. The sword without and terror within, shall destroy both the young man and the virgin,*

the suckling also with the man of gray hairs. I said, I would scatter them into corners? I would make the remembrance of them to cease from among men: were it not—

Here is a sweet word of grace amid the just judgments of Jehovah: “Were it not” —

[Deuteronomy 32:27](#). *That I feared the wrath of the enemy, lest their adversaries should behave themselves strangely, and lest they should say, Our hand is high, and the LORD hath not done all this.*

So he spared them for his own name’s sake; and, to this day, when God can find no other reason for showing mercy to the guilty, he does it for his name’s sake; and this is a blessed plea, to be urged by a man who can see no reason why God should have mercy upon him. He may say, “Lord, do it for thy name’s sake, to make thy grace and thy mercy illustrious, in the salvation of such a poor, hopeless wretch as I am.”

[Deuteronomy 32:28-32](#). *For they are a nation void of counsel, neither is there any understanding in them. O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end! How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, except their Rock had sold them, and the LORD had shut them up? For their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges. For their vine—*

That is, the vine of God’s enemies,-

[Deuteronomy 32:32-34](#). *Is of the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah: their grapes are grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter: their wine is the poison of dragons, and the cruel venom of asps. Is not this laid up in store with me, and sealed up among my treasures?*

What a striking and startling question that is, as though God laid up the memory of man’s sin, sealed it up, and kept it in a secret place against the day when he shall call sinners to account, and visit them for their iniquities! What an awful thing it is to have the sins of one’s youth laid up, sealed up, and put away in God’s treasury; and the sins of middle life, and perhaps the sins of old age, too, to be brought out, by-and-by, and laid to our charge! Who shall be able to stand in that great day? Only those who are washed in the blood: and robed in the righteousness of Christ Jesus our Lord.

[Deuteronomy 32:35-38](#). *To me belongeth vengeance, and recompence; their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste. For the LORD shall judge his people and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that*

their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left. And he shall say, Where are their gods, their rock in whom they trusted, which did eat the fat of their sacrifices, and drank the wine of their drink offerings? let them rise up and help you, and be your protection.

To you who trust in anything except God, the day will come when you will hear such terrible words as these—“Now let your riches save you, let your pleasures and your vices cheer you; go ye now in your own wicked ways, and see if you can find any comfort in them!” What holy sarcasm there is in these words, which will cut to the quick the conscience when it is once fairly aroused!

[Deuteronomy 32:39-43](#). *See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand. For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever. If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgment; I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me. I will make mine arrows drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh; and that with the blood of the slain and of the captives, from the beginning of revenges upon the enemy. Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people: for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful unto his land, and to his people.*

It is only in mercy, you see, that the Lord deals with his people; they cannot stand before him on the ground of justice, but in his mercy is their place of refuge. May we all find that mercy by fleeing for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us in Christ Jesus and his glorious gospel! Amen.

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CHAPTER 33

Verses 1-29

[Deuteronomy 33:1](#). *And this is the blessing, wherewith Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death.*

A very beautiful thought, that he should conclude his life with a blessing. Though they had greatly grieved and provoked his spirit, he was always meek and tender, but he had very much to bear from them, and this is the end of it all, that he will dismiss them with his blessing.

[Deuteronomy 33:2-3](#). *And he said, The LORD came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints: from his right hand went a fiery law for them. Yea, he loved the people; all his saints are in thy hand: and they sat down at thy feet; every one shall receive of thy words.*

“Yea, he loved the people.” God’s appearance on Sinai was a token of his love to them, even though it amazed them and distressed many of them. Yet still it was a great thing that God should come so near to these people, and should reveal his will to them. Dear friends, if God should come to you with his fiery law; if he should humble you, and make you “exceeding fear and quake,” it would be a token of love. The ungodly are left to go in their sin, but as for you, if you are one whom he loves, he will rebuke you, and he will bring his law to do its work upon your heart and conscience. It seems strange to you, but so it is. “From his right hand went a fiery law for them. Yea, he loved the people.” Oh! it is so, because he loves them he reveals to them his fiery law. “All his saints are in thy hand.” A place of safety, a place of privilege, where they learn how precious they are to him, for he holds them so dear that he keeps them always in his hand. “All his saints are in thy hand, and they sat down at thy feet.” Another place for saints; they are always learning; they are disciples; they sit with meek humility at their Master’s feet, and drink in his words, “Everyone shall receive of thy words.” Those who know not God’s love, trifle with God’s words and reject them; those whom he loves receive his words and feed upon them.

[Deuteronomy 33:4-6](#). *Moses commanded us a law, even the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob. And he was king in Jeshurun, when the heads of the people and the tribes of Israel were gathered together. Let Reuben live, and not die; and let not his men be few.*

Here is his blessing, “Let Reuben live.” Reuben’s great sin had lost him his birthright, yet Moses gives him as much of his blessing as he can. If we are not allowed to draw the largest blessing, let us go as far as we can.

[Deuteronomy 33:7-9](#). *And this is the blessing of Judah: and he said, Hear, LORD, the voice of Judah, and bring him unto his people: let his hands be sufficient for him; and be thou an help to him from his enemies. And of Levi he said, Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy holy one, whom thou didst prove at Massah, and with whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah; Who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not*

seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children: for they have observed thy word, and kept thy covenant.

Judah was the royal tribe — had to do much with warfare. Lord give him power in prayer! This is the peculiar benediction of those who have to lead the way in the battles of God. In the service of God, Levi was impartial; he did not wink at sin in his dearest relatives. You remember how they took the sword, and went through the camp, and slew their own brothers when they found them guilty of idolatry, and because of this faithfulness we read, “They shall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law.” Above all things, a teacher of the truth of God must be fearless and impartial in the delivery of God’s Word; then God will bless him, and it shall be said of such, “They shall teach Jacob,” etc.

[Deuteronomy 33:10](#). *They shall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law: they shall put incense before thee, and whole burnt sacrifice upon thine altar.*

True hearts alone can be God’s priests; he will not accept sacrifices from those who will dally with his truth, and trifle with his Word.

[Deuteronomy 33:11-12](#). *Bless, LORD, his substance, and accept the work of his hands: smite through the loins of them that rise against him, and of them that hate him, that they rise not again. And of Benjamin he said, The beloved of the LORD shall dwell in safety by him; and the LORD shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between his shoulders.*

They that have God near them are safe indeed. There is no protection in such a world as this like constant communion with God. We have to go out into a world full of all manner of evil. Go not out into the world without thy God. Let him dwell with thee and cover thee all the day long, and so shalt thou be safe.

[Deuteronomy 33:13](#). *And of Joseph he said, Blessed of the LORD be his land, for the precious things of heaven,*

Oh! in a spiritual sense, what a rich blessing this is! and remember it came upon that tribe whose father was the most afflicted of all Jacob’s sons. If thou art, an afflicted Joseph rejoice, for one of these days thou shall have the capacity for receiving great blessings.

[Deuteronomy 33:13](#). *For the dew,*

The Lord send us that dew tonight to rest upon our branch.

[Deuteronomy 33:13](#). *And for the deep that coucheth beneath,*

These deep eternal springs out of which we drink the divine water springs.

[Deuteronomy 33:14](#). *And for the precious fruits brought forth by the sun, and for the precious things put forth by the moon,*

They shall have blessings both ways, in the day and in the night. Those whom God blesses, the sun doth not smite by day, nor the moon by night, but, on the contrary, they are blessed both in the one and in the other.

[Deuteronomy 33:15-16](#). *And for the chief things of the ancient mountains, and for the precious things of the lasting hills, And for the precious things of the earth and fulness thereof, and for the good will of him that dwelt in the bush:*

Oh! that we may enjoy ever the good will of God, who wills good to us, who in all his dealings with us has a good will towards us. Oh! that we may have the good will of him that dwelt in the bush!

[Deuteronomy 33:16-18](#). *Let the blessing come upon the head of Joseph, and upon the top of the head of him that was separated from his brethren. His glory is like the firstling of his bullock, and his horns are like the horns of unicorns: with them he shall push the people together to the ends of the earth: and they are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and they are the thousands of Manasseh. And of Zebulun he said, Rejoice, Zebulun, in thy going out; and, Issachar, in thy tents.*

You that go much abroad in the world, God give you to rejoice in your opportunities of doing good. You that never go abroad, but live at home in the kitchen and the parlor, learn to rejoice in your tents, for there, too, you have a sphere of holy service.

[Deuteronomy 33:19-22](#). *They shall call the people unto the mountain; there they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness: for they shall suck of the abundance of the seas, and of treasures hid in the sand. And of Gad he said, Blessed be he that enlargeth Gad: he dwelleth as a lion, and teareth the arm with the crown of the head. And he provided the first part for himself, because there, in a portion of the lawgiver, was he seated; and he came with the heads of the people, he executed the justice of the LORD, and his judgments with Israel. And of Dan he said, Dan is a lion's whelp: he shall leap from Bashan.*

“And of Gad, he said, Blessed be he that enlargeth Gad.” God knows how to enlarge his people, give them more grace, more gifts, more opportunities of usefulness. Which he did. His tribes enlarged their

boundaries by a sudden leap. God gives his people sometimes their leaping times; they leap from Bashan: some great purpose is accomplished, some great feat is done.

[Deuteronomy 33:23](#). *And of Naphtali he said, O Naphtali, satisfied with favour, and full with the blessing of the LORD: possess thou the west and the south.*

What a condition of heart to be in! “Satisfied with favor; full of the blessing of the Lord.” Beloved, may you enjoy that tonight!

[Deuteronomy 33:24](#). *And of Asher he said, Let Asher be blessed with children; let him be acceptable to his brethren, and let him dip his foot in oil.*

Then will he leave a mark wherever he goes of holy unction. He possesses it himself, and he will impart it to others.

[Deuteronomy 33:25](#). *Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be.*

Will not some believer grip that promise tonight and find it true?

[Deuteronomy 33:26-28](#). *There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky. The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy them. Israel then shall dwell in safety alone: the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine; also his heavens shall drop down dew.*

“Israel then shall dwell in safety alone.” There is no place for God’s people like a separated place; they must get without the camp; they must not be numbered among the people. Notice, there is none like unto the God of Israel, and there is none like to Israel.

[Deuteronomy 33:29](#). *Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the LORD, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places.*

As God is by himself, so all his people are favored beyond all others.

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CHAPTER 7

Verses 19-25

[Judges 7:19-21](#). *So Gideon, and the hundred men that were with him, came unto the outside of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch; and they had but newly set the watch: and they blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers that were in their hands. And the three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, and held the lamps in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands to blow withal: and they cried, The sword of the LORD and of Gideon. And they stood every man in his place round about the camp: and all the host ran, and cried, and fled.*

This was at the dead of night, when the hosts of Midian were fast asleep. They were startled from their slumbers by the blast of three hundred trumpets, and the flaming of three hundred torches. They gathered that these were only the bugles and the lamps at the head of vast regiments of Israelites, and they hardly dared to calculate how great the whole host must be. Filled with fear, astonished at the sound of the trumpets, and the shouting of Gideon's band all round their camp, they took to their heels: "all the host ran, and cried, and fled."

[Judges 7:22](#). *And the three hundred blew the trumpets, and the LORD set every man's sword against his fellow, even throughout all the host:*

They were a motley company, every man afraid of his fellow. They had gathered together to share the spoil, and now, when fear demoralized them, the hordes of wild warriors began to destroy one another.

[Judges 7:22-23](#). *And the host fled to Bethshittah in Zererath, and to the border of Abelmeholah, unto Tabbath. And the men of Israel gathered themselves together out of Naphtali, and out of Asher, and out of all Manasseh, and pursued after the Midianites.*

If some have the courage to strike the enemy, there are others who will come out of their hiding places to hunt the beaten foe. When you really want help, often you cannot get it; but when you can afford to do without assistance, you will sometimes be embarrassed by it.

[Judges 7:24](#). *And Gideon sent messengers throughout all mount Ephraim, saying, Come down against the Midianites, and take before them the waters —*

"Secure the fords in the streams which flow into the Jordan from the mountainous region of Ephraim, so that the refugees cannot get away."

[Judges 7:24-25](#). *Unto Bethbarah and Jordan. Then all the men of Ephraim gathered themselves together, and took the waters unto Bethbarah and Jordan. And they took two princes of the Midianites, Oreb and Zeeb; and they slew Oreb upon the rock Oreb, and Zeeb they slew at the winepress of Zeeb, and pursued Midian, and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon on the other side Jordan.*

So that, though they had been very backward at the first, yet, when they were once aroused, these men of Ephraim did their part in ridding the land of the common foe, and among the trophies of war, the heads of two of the princes of the Midianites fell into their hands.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Judges 7:19-25](#); [Judges 8:1-27](#).

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CHAPTER 8

Verses 1-27

[Judges 8:1](#). *And the men of Ephraim said unto him, Why hast thou served us thus, that thou calledst us not, when thou wentest to fight with the Midianites? And they did chide with him sharply.*

We have some friends, like these men of Ephraim, who do not like being left out of the battle for the Lord. They say, “Why are we not asked for our help? Why are we not allowed to take our share?” These are very good people; but we have known some of them who have made these enquiries rather late in the day. These Ephraimites knew all about the war, and they might have volunteered to help Gideon, and we should have been glad of the earlier help of some who tarried till the victory was won.

[Judges 8:2](#). *And he said unto them, What have I done now in comparison of you?*

Gideon answered them very kindly and very wisely. He flattered them he attached great importance to what they had done, and took little credit to himself for his valiant service. In this he showed his self-command and his discretion. When persons chide sharply, it is a pity to chide back again; the best way of dealing with them is with a soft answer to turn away their wrath.

[Judges 8:2-5](#). *Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer? God hath delivered into your hands the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb: and what was I able to do in comparison of you? Then their anger was abated toward him, when he had said that. And Gideon came to Jordan, and passed over, he, and the three hundred men that were with him, faint, yet pursuing them. And he said unto the men of Succoth, Give, I pray you, loaves of bread unto the people that follow me; for they be faint, and I am pursuing after Zebah and Zalmunna, kings of Midian.*

This was a very natural and a very reasonable request. Gideon did not ask the men of Succoth to come with him, nor even to give a lodging to his

soldiers. The fear of Midian was upon Israel, and the people were afraid to do anything against their oppressor, but surely they might have relieved the hunger of their fellow countrymen. Instead of doing so, they answered Gideon with arrogant and cruel words.

[Judges 8:6](#). *And the princes of Succoth said, Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in thine hand, that we should give bread unto thine army?*

As much as to say, “What have you done, after all? There are fifteen thousand men with Zebah and Zalmunna, and there are only three hundred of you. You have not even captured the leaders yet.” They forgot that Gideon’s band had slain a hundred and twenty thousand already; they underrated and mocked him, and would not give him the help he asked.

[Judges 8:7](#). *And Gideon said, Therefore when the LORD hath delivered Zebah and Zalmunna into mine hand, then I will tear your flesh with the thorns of the wilderness and with briers.*

Some have said that this showed resentment and harshness, but when a man is at war, he is not in the habit of sprinkling his adversaries with rosewater. War is in itself so great an evil that there are many other evils necessarily connected with it. It seems to me that if, when Gideon was trying to deliver his own countrymen, they scoffed at him, and refused him bread for his soldiers in the day of their hunger, they deserved to be punished with great severity.

[Judges 8:8-9](#). *And he went up thence to Penuel, and spake unto them likewise: and the men of Penuel answered him as the men of Succoth had answered him. And he spake also unto the men of Penuel, saying, When I come again in peace, I will break down this tower.*

They took liberty to speak rudely because theirs was a fortified city, guarded by a strong tower, and Gideon, nothing doubting that he would come back that way, God having given him the victory, said, “When I come again in peace, I will break down this tower.”

[Judges 8:10-11](#). *Now Zebah and Zalmunna were in Karkor, and their hosts with them, about fifteen thousand men, all that were left of all the hosts of the children of the east: for there fell an hundred and twenty thousand men that drew sword. And Gideon went up by the way of them that dwelt in tents on the east of Nobah and Jogbehah, and smote the host: for the host was secure.*

He went by an unusual route, and took them at night again unawares when they felt perfectly safe, and were sound asleep: “for the host was

secure.” As I read these words, I think, what a pity it is ever to fancy ourselves secure while we are really in peril! Carnal security is a great danger. To be “safe in the arms of Jesus,” is a most blessed condition; but to be secure in self-confidence, is a thing that hath a curse upon it.

[Judges 8:12](#). *And when Zebah and Zalmunna fled, he pursued after them, and took the two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, and discomfited all the host.*

There was an end of the tyranny of the Midianites. Gideon slew great numbers of them, and drove away such as yet remained alive.

[Judges 8:13-17](#). *And Gideon the son of Joash returned from battle before the sun was up, and caught a young man of the men of Succoth, and enquired of him: and he described unto him the princes of Succoth, and the elders thereof even threescore and seventeen men. And he came unto the men of Succoth, and said, Behold Zebah and Zalmunna, with whom ye did upbraid me, saying, Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in thine hand, that we should give bread unto thy men that are weary? And he took the elders of the city, and thorns of the wilderness and briers, and with them he taught the men of Succoth. And he beat down the tower of Penuel, and slew the men of the city.*

He probably slew the most public revilers, the leading men of Penuel, even as he had chastised the princes and elders of Succoth with thorns and briers. I have often observed that you and I have been taught a great many things “with the thorns of the wilderness and with briers.” If we refuse to help God’s weary and tried people, it is highly probable that, one of these days, we may have to learn a great deal from the thorns of the wilderness and from the briers. Do we ever learn much apart from the thorns of the wilderness? Surely, trials and troubles have been our great instructors from the first day even until now.

[Judges 8:18-19](#). *Then said he unto Zebah and Zalmunna, What manner of men were they whom ye slew at Tabor? And they answered, As thou art, so were they; each one resembled the children of a king. And he said, they were my brethren, even the sons of my mother:*

In the East, there is much greater affection between those who are the sons of one mother than between those who are only sons of one father.

[Judges 8:19](#). *As the Lord liveth, if ye had saved them alive, I would not slay you.*

But now it devolved upon him to be an avenger of blood according to Oriental law, and to put to death those who had slain his brothers.

[Judges 8:20-22](#). *And he said unto Jether his firstborn, Up, and slay them. But the youth drew not his sword: for he feared, because he was yet a youth. Then Zebah and Zalmunna said, Rise thou, and fall upon us: for as the man is, so is his strength. And Gideon arose, and slew Zebah and Zalmunna, and took away the ornaments that were on their camels' necks. Then the men of Israel said unto Gideon, Rule thou over us, both thou, and thy son, and thy son's son also: for thou hast delivered us from the hand of Midian.*

There was always an itching among the Israelites to have a king, an earthly monarch to rule over them; but God did not so design it. It was want of loyalty and love to God that led them to make this request.

[Judges 8:23-27](#). *And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: the LORD shall rule over you. And Gideon said unto them, I would desire a request of you, that ye would give me every man the earrings of his prey. (For they had golden earrings, because they were Ishmaelites.) And they answered, We will willingly give them. And they spread a garment, and did cast therein every man the earrings of his prey. And the weight of the golden earrings that he requested was a thousand and seven hundred shekels of gold; beside ornaments, and collars, and purple raiment that was on the kings of Midian, and beside the chains that were about their camels' necks. And Gideon made an ephod thereof, and put it in his city, even in Ophrah: and all Israel went thither a whoring after it: which thing became a snare unto Gideon, and to his house.*

He did not set up an idol, but he made an ephod, an imitation of that wonderful vestment worn by the high priest. Perhaps he made it of solid gold, not to be worn, but to be looked at, simply to remind the people of the worship of God, and not to be itself worshipped. But ah, dear friends, you see here that, if we go half an inch beyond what God's Word warrants we always get into mischief! You hear people say, "We have such and such symbols, not to worship, but to help us in worship." Ah, yes; but the tendency of the symbol is to act as a dam to the stream of devotion, and to make it end there! God forbid that we should ever violate the rules that Christ has laid down for us! The slightest deviation from the simplicity of the gospel may lead us away into sheer apostasy? Whence have come all

the errors of Rome but from little accretions and alterations? A little ornament here, a little symbol there, and a little variation of truth yonder and the gigantic system of Romanism has thus been created. Gideon probably meant well, and we may do wrong even though we mean well. May the Lord preserve us from the smallest departure from the way that he has marked out for us in his Holy Word! Amen.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Judges 7:19-25](#); [Judges 8:1-27](#).

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CHAPTER

CHAPTER EIGHT

Ruth

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CHAPTER 1

Verses 1-22

[Ruth 1:1](#). *Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehemjudah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons.*

That was a bad move on their part; Better poverty with the people of God, than plenty outside of the covenanted land.

[Ruth 1:2](#). *And the name of the man was Elimelech,—*

“Elimelech? means, “my God is King.” A man with such a name as that ought not to have left the kingdom where his God was King; but some people are not worthy of the names they bear.

[Ruth 1:2](#). *And the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Beth-lehem-judah. And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there.*

That is generally what happens; those who go into the country of Moab continue there. If Christians go away from their separated life, they are very apt to continue in that condition. It may be easy to say, “I will step aside from the Christian path for just a little while;” but it is not so easy to return to it. Usually something or other hampers; the birdlime catches the birds of Paradise, and holds them fast.

[Ruth 1:3-4](#). *And Elimelech Naomi's husband died; and she was left, and her two sons. And they took them wives of the women of Moab; the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth: and they dwelled there about ten years.*

Which was about ten years too long. Probably they did not intend to remain so long when they went there, they only meant to be in Moab for a little while, just as Christian people, when they fall into worldly conformity, only purpose to do it once, “just for the sake of the girls, to bring them out a little.” But it happens to them as it is written here: “and they dwelled there about ten years.”

[Ruth 1:5](#). *And Mahlon and Chilion died also both of them; and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband.*

That seemed to be her great grief—that she was left. She would have been content to go with them, but she was left to mourn their loss.

[Ruth 1:6](#). *Then she arose with her daughters in law, that she might return from the country of Moab:*

It is often the case that, when our idols are broken, we turn back to our God. It is frequently the case that the loss of earthly good leads us to return to our first Husband, for we feel that then it was better with us than it is now. Naomi had also another inducement to return:—

[Ruth 1:6](#). *For she had heard in the country of Moab how that the LORD had visited his people in giving them bread.*

Have any of you professors gone a long way off from God? I wish you knew what plenty there is in the Great Father's house, and what a blessed feast there is for these who live with him. There is no famine in that land; there is plenty of gladness, plenty of comfort, plenty of everything that is joyful, to be found there. You need not go to Moab, and to her false gods, to find pleasure and satisfaction.

[Ruth 1:7-9](#). *Wherefore she went forth out of the place where she was, and her two daughters in law with her; and they went on the way to return unto the land of Judah. And Naomi said unto her two daughters-in-law, Go, return each to her mother's house: the Lord deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me. The LORD grant you that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them; and they lifted up their voice, and wept.*

Separation was painful to them, for they loved their mother-in-law, a most unselfish person who, even though it was a comfort to her to enjoy

their company, thought it would be for their good, in a temporal sense, that they should abide in their own country.

[Ruth 1:10-14](#). *And they said unto her, Surely we will return with thee unto thy people. And Naomi said, Turn again, my daughters: why will ye go with me? are there yet any more sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? Turn again, my daughters, go your way; for I am too old to have an husband. If I should say, I have hope, if I should have an husband also tonight, and should also bear sons; Would ye tarry for them till they were grown? would ye stay for them from having husbands? nay, my daughters; for it grieveth me much for your sakes that the hand of the Lord is gone out against me. And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law; but Ruth clave unto her.*

What a difference there often is between two persons who are under religious impressions at the same time! The one would like to follow Jesus, but the price is too much to pay; so there is a kiss somewhat like that of Judas, and Orpah goes back to her people, and to her idols. But how different was the other case! Ruth was, as it were, glued to Naomi; she “clave unto her,” stuck to her, and could not be made to go back with her sister.

[Ruth 1:15-17](#). *And she said, Behold, thy sister in law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister in law. And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me.*

That was bravely spoken, and she meant it, too.

[Ruth 1:18](#). *When she saw that she was stedfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her.*

That is a striking expression, “When she saw that she was stedfastly minded to go with her.” O you dear young friends who want to be Christians, how glad we are when we see that you are stedfastly minded to go with the people of God! There are so many who are quickly hot and quickly cold,—soon excited towards good things, and almost as speedily their ardor cools, and they go back into the world. Do ask the Lord to make you stedfastly minded. This is one of the best frames of mind for any of us to be in.

[Ruth 1:19](#). *So they two went until they came to Bethlehem. And it came to pass, when they were come to Bethlehem, that all the city was moved about them, and they said, Is this Naomi?*

They seemed all to turn out of doors to have a look at these two strangers, and especially at Naomi, for she was so different from what she had been when she went away. “And they said, Is this Naomi? Some said, “Is this Naomi?” questioning. Others said it with surprise as a thing incredible, “This Naomi! How can she be the same woman?” It was very rude of them to turn out, just like people, without sympathy, do on Ramsgate pier, to see the sick passengers land. Nobody seems to have said, “Come into our house to lodge,” but all questioned, “Is this Naomi?”

[Ruth 1:20](#). *And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi,—*
“Call me not pleasant.”

[Ruth 1:20](#). *Call me Mara:*
That is, “bitter.”

[Ruth 1:20](#). *For the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me.*

It was a pity for Naomi to say that; yet I fear that many of us have done the same; We have not borne such sweet testimony to the Lord as we might have done, but have sorrowfully moaned, as this poor woman did:—

[Ruth 1:21](#). *I went out full,—*
Why, then, did you go out?

[Ruth 1:21](#). *And the LORD hath brought me home again empty:*

Ah! but he has brought you home again. Oh, if she would but have noticed the mercy there was in it all, she might still have spoken like Naomi; but now she speaks like Mara,—bitterness. Her husband and her two boys—all her heart’s delight—were with her when she went out; and now that they are gone, she says:—

[Ruth 1:21](#). *Why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the LORD hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?*

Yet it is a sweet thing to be able to trace the hand of God in our affliction, for nothing can come from that hand towards one of his children but that which is good and right. If you will think of those hands of which the Lord says, “I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands,” you may rest assured that nothing can come from those hands but what infinite wisdom directs, and infinite love has ordained.

[Ruth 1:22](#). *So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, with her, which returned out of the country of Moab: and they came to*

Bethlehem in the beginning of barley harvest.

That is, at the time of the passover; let us hope that they received a blessing in observing the ordinances of that time, and that they were thus helped to get back to the only right and happy state of heart.

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CHAPTER 2

Verses 1-10

We shall read two portions of Holy Scripture, and may God the Holy Spirit bless us in the reading of his own Words. We shall first read, in the first Book of Samuel, the second chapter, the song of Hannah. You remember that Hannah was a woman of a sorrowful spirit. A womanly sorrow preyed upon her heart, and brought her very low; not so low, however, as to prevent her from constantly praying to God. Her prayers were heard, and when she came up to the Lord's house, the joyful mother of son, he took care to remember her former supplication, and to offer unto God thanksgiving. Hannah was a woman of great ability, perhaps the chief poetess of either the Old or the New Testament. I expect that Mary borrowed not of her Magnificat from the song of Hannah, at least, the recollection of that song must have been strong upon her when she sang what we shall presently read.

2:1. *And Hannah prayed, and said, My heart rejoiceth in the LORD mine horn is exalted in the LORD: my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in thy salvation.*

Her deliverance seemed to her to be a type and symbol of the way in which God delivers all his people, so she rejoiced in that great salvation which he works out for his people as a whole.

1 Samuel 2:2-7. *There is none holy as the LORD: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God. Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed. The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength.*

They that were full have hired out themselves for bread; and they that were hungry ceased: so that the barren hath born seven; and she that hath many children is waxed feeble. The LORD killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up.

With what jubilation she sings of the way in which God deals with men, putting down the mighty, and lifting up the lowly!

[1 Samuel 2:8](#). *He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the LORD'S, and he hath set the world upon them.*

Whatever solid thing it is that bears up the frame of this natural world, it is God's power that doth support it. He hath made all things that are, and he upholds them with the world of his power.

[1 Samuel 2:9](#). *He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness;*

What an awful picture that is of the doom of the wicked, "Silent in darkness." We read of the one, in the parable of our Lord, who had not on the wedding garment, that he was speechless; and, at the last the wicked will have nothing to say, nothing with which to excuse themselves, nothing with which to comfort themselves, and all around them will be—"Darkness, death, and long despair." Vanquished in their fight with God, conquered for ever, "the wicked shall be silent in darkness." I hardly know of a more dreadful picture than that of a spirit sitting amidst the clammy damps of the thick darkness of desolation, for ever silent.

[1 Samuel 2:9-10](#). *For by strength shall no man prevail. The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces; out of heaven shall he thunder upon them: the LORD shall judge the ends of the earth; and he shall give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed.*

That is the song of this happy woman; and if we read the last three verses of Psalms 113, we shall see that the writer seems to have studied Hannah's song, and to have molded his Psalm upon it: "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill, that he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people. He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children. Praise ye the Lord." Now let us read Mary's song in the first chapter of the Gospel according to Luke. You remember, dear friends, how the Lord Jesus said, "I

thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hath revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight.” The Saviour’s heart found a sacred satisfaction in the execution of his Father’s sovereign will in revealing to babes what he had hid from the wise and prudent; and it is remarkable that both Hannah and Mary sang upon that very theme which made the heart of the Saviour leap for joy. We might have expected to find an abundance of affection in a woman’s song rather than a depth of doctrine, but both Hannah and Mary make the sovereignty of God the strain of their songs.

This exposition consisted of readings from [1 Samuel 2:1-10](#); and [Luke 1:46-55](#).

Verses 1-36

[1 Samuel 2:1-3](#). *And Hannah prayed, and said, My heart rejoiceth in the LORD, mine horn is exalted in the LORD: my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in thy salvation. There is none holy as the LORD: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God. Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed.*

This is a very suggestive and forcible expression. God does not judge our actions by their appearance, but puts them into the scales of the sanctuary, and weighs them as carefully as bankers weigh gold.

[1 Samuel 2:4-8](#). *The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength. They that were full have hired out themselves for bread; and they that were hungry ceased: so that the barren hath born seven; and she that hath many children is waxed feeble. The LORD killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the LORD’S, and he hath set the world upon them.*

What a clear view Hannah had of the sovereignty of God, and how plainly she perceived that God overrules all mortal things, and doeth as he wills! How she seemed to glory in the power of that almighty hand whose

working unbelievers cannot discern, but which, to this gracious woman's opened eye, was so conspicuous everywhere!

[1 Samuel 2:9-12](#). *He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail. The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces; out of heaven shall he thunder upon them: the LORD shall judge the ends of the earth; and he shall give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed. And Elkanah went to Ramah to his house. And the child did minister unto the LORD before Eli the priest. Now the sons of Eli were one of Belial; they knew not the LORD.*

Yet they were priests, and when a man stands up to minister in holy things, and by virtue of his office is supposed to know the Lord, yet really does not, he stands, not only in a position of the utmost guilt, but also in a position in which he is never likely to get a blessing. He seems to be beyond the reach of the ordinary agencies of mercy, because he has assumed a position to which he has no right.

[1 Samuel 2:13-14](#). *And the priests' custom with the people was, that, when any man offered sacrifice, the priest's servant came, while the flesh was in seething, with a fleshhook of three teeth in his hand; and he struck it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; all that the fleshhook brought up the priest took for himself. So they did in Shiloh unto all the Israelites that came thither.*

There was no such rule or regulation given by God; but these sons of Eli had made rules for themselves. It is always wrong to alter the regulations of the Lord's house. Even the least of them should be obeyed exactly as it stands.

[1 Samuel 2:15-16](#). *Also before they burnt the fat, the priest's servant came, and said to the man that sacrificed, Give flesh to roast for the priest; for he will not have sodden flesh of thee, but raw. And if any man said unto him, Let them not fail to burn the fat presently, and then take as much as thy soul desireth; then he would answer him, Nay; but thou shalt give it me now: and if not, I will take it by force.*

There were sacrifices in which God had his portion in the burning of the fat upon the altar, and the priest had a portion allotted to him; and the offerer himself had a portion upon which he fed, in token of his communion and fellowship with God. The priest ought to have been content with what was an ample portion for him; but the greed of these young men prostituted holy things, and defiled the house of the Lord.

[1 Samuel 2:17](#). *Wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD: for men abhorred the offering of the LORD.*

They not only grieved God, but they also grieved his people so much that they ceased to come where their consciences were wounded, and where their tenderest sensibilities were perpetually shocked.

[1 Samuel 2:18](#). *But Samuel ministered before the LORD, being a child, girded with a linen ephod.*

What a contrast there was between little Samuel and the sons of Eli! He was not led astray by the evil example of those who were older than himself, and to whom he would naturally look up because of their high office. This dear child escaped contamination because God's grace preserved him and also because his mother's prayers, like a wall of fire, were round about him.

[1 Samuel 2:19-21](#). *Moreover his mother made him a little coat, and brought it to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. And Eli blessed Elkanah and his wife, and said, The LORD give thee seed of this woman for the loan which is lent to the LORD. And they went unto their own home. And the LORD visited Hannah, so that she conceived and bare three sons and two daughters. And the child Samuel grew before the LORD.*

She lent one child to the Lord, and she had five others given to her. God always pays good interest on all his loans. "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord." It would be well if more would see how much per cent they could get from such a loan as that.

[1 Samuel 2:22-25](#). *Now Eli was very old, and heard as his sons did unto all Israel and how they lay with the women that assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And he said unto them, Why do ye such things? for I hear of your evil doings by all this people, Nay my sons; for it is no good report that I hear: ye make the LORD'S people to transgress. If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him: but if a man sin against the LORD, who shall entreat for him?*

That is the way Eli rebuked his sons. "And very gently he did it, dear old man," says someone. Yes, but don't you imitate him; for, if you do, you may also inherit the curse that came upon his house. There are other virtues in this world besides gentleness. There is sometimes needed the power to speak sternly, — to rebuke with firmness and severity; and Eli had not this. He was an easy-going old soul. Ah! but when the honour of God is at stake,

such action as his is out of place. It is all very well to have everybody saying, “Mr. So-and-so is such an amiable man; there is no sectarianism and no bigotry about him; he never says a word to offend anybody.” Just so, but Martin Luther was not at all that kind of man, and where should we have been without such protests as his?

[1 Samuel 2:25](#). *Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the LORD would slay them.*

They had gone so far in their sin that the Lord permitted them to go further still, and to bring punishment upon themselves for their evil deeds.

[1 Samuel 2:26](#). *And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with the LORD, and also with men.*

How vividly the Holy Spirit brings out the contrast between Samuel and these two wicked young men! They grew on in sin, but the child Samuel grew on in favor both with God and with men. The Lord loves to watch his lilies growing among the sharp thorns, and to see how brightly his stars are shining in the blackest night.

[1 Samuel 2:27-28](#). *And there came a man of God unto Eli, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Did I plainly appear unto the house of thy father, when they were in Egypt in Pharaoh’s house? And did I choose him —*

That is, Aaron, —

[1 Samuel 2:28-30](#). *Out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to offer upon mine altar, to burn incense, to wear an ephod before me? and did I give unto the house of thy father all the offerings made by fire of the children of Israel? Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice and at mine offering, which I have commanded in my habitation; and honourest thy sons above me, to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel my people? Wherefore the Lord God of Israel saith, I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever:*

There was a condition attached to that promise, — a condition implied, if not expressly stated.

[1 Samuel 2:30-31](#). *But now the Lord saith, Be it far from me; for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed. Behold, the days come, that I will cut off thine arm, —*

That is, “the strength of thy family shall be taken away,” —

[1 Samuel 2:31-33](#). *And the arm of thy father’s house, that there shall not be an old man in thine house. And thou shalt see an enemy in my habitation, in all the wealth which God shall give Israel: and there shall not be an old*

man in thine house for ever. And the man of thine, whom I shall not cut off from mine altar, shall be to consume thine eyes, and to grieve thine heart: and all the increase of thine house shall die in the flower of their age.

God does not think little of sin in his ministers, and in his sanctuary. There is a difference between sin and sin. The place where it is committed may make a difference, and the office of the man who commits it may make a difference. Sin makes its culmination when the sinner is highly favored, and brought into close relationship with God by office.

[1 Samuel 2:34-35](#). *And this shall be a sign unto thee, that shall come upon thy two sons, on Hophni and Phinehas; in one day they shall die both of them. And I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in mine heart and in my mind: and I will build him a sure house; and he shall walk before mine anointed for ever.*

No doubt first referring to Zadok, who succeeded afterwards to the priests office; but looking further forward still to our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the ever-faithful High Priest who always does according to that which is in the mind and heart of the Father.

[1 Samuel 2:36](#). *And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left in thine house shall come and crouch to him for a piece of silver and a morsel of bread, and shall say, Put me, I pray thee, into one of the priests' offices, that I may eat a piece of bread.*

Or, rather, as the margin has it, "Put me, I pray thee, into somewhat about the priesthood." "Put me into something that has to do with the priesthood." So the house of Eli passed from its honourable elevation into degradation and poverty. However highly favored any of us may have been, let us never presume upon that, and turn aside to sin. If we do not know the Lord, and do not honour him in all the acts that we perform in his name, it may be that a like degradation to that of Eli's house may come upon us because we have despised the will and the words of the Most High.

Verses 12-36

[1 Samuel 2:12](#). *Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the LORD.*

What a very dreadful thing it was that these sons of a man of God, the sons of God's high priest, were not themselves sons of God, but sons of Belial, foul-hearted, foul-mouthed, foul-living men, who knew not the very God at whose altar they served, and in whose house they lived!

[1 Samuel 2:13-14](#) *And the priests' custom with the people was, that, when any man offered sacrifice, the priest's servant came, while the flesh was in seething, with a fleshhook of three teeth in his hand; and he struck it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; all that the fleshhook brought up the priest took for himself. So they did in Shiloh unto all the Israelites that came thither.*

God had appointed a proper portion for his priests so that they who ministered at the altar might live of the altar. But these wicked men were not content with the divine allowance, so they must needs rob the altars of God, and show such greed as to make the appointed sacrifices to be obnoxious to the people.

[1 Samuel 2:15-16](#). *Also before they burnt the fat, the priest's servant came, and said to the man that sacrificed, Give flesh to roast for the priest; for he will not have sodden flesh of thee, but raw. And if any man said unto him, Let them not fail to burn the fat presently, and then take as much as thy soul desireth; then he would answer him, Nay; but thou shalt give it me now: and if not, I will take it by force.*

It is a terrible thing when God's servants are domineering and oppressive towards the people of God. They who should be the gentlest of all, and the most self-denying of all must not talk as this priest's servant did, and he no doubt talked as the young men whom he served bade him talk.

[1 Samuel 2:17](#). *Wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD: for men abhorred the offering of the LORD.*

It is horrible when those who should make God great among men cause his service to be despised and abhorred. When those who should be the friends and servants of God act like his enemies, it is indeed terrible.

[1 Samuel 2:18-24](#). *But Samuel ministered before the LORD, being a child, girded with a linen ephod. Moreover his mother made him a little coat, and brought it to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. And Eli blessed Elkanah and his wife, and said, The LORD give thee seed of this woman for the loan which is lent to the LORD. And they went unto their own home. And the LORD visited Hannah, so that she conceived, and bare three sons and two daughters. And the child Samuel grew before the LORD. Now Eli was very old, and heard all that his sons did unto all Israel; and how they lay with the women that assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And he said unto them, Why do ye such things? for I hear of your evil dealings by all*

this people. Nay, my sons; for it is no good report that I hear: ye make the LORD'S people to transgress.

That is all that the godly old man said to his wicked sons. He was far too gentle in his way of reproofing them. He was evidently afraid of his own sons, not the only man who has been in the same predicament.

[1 Samuel 2:25](#). *If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him: but if a man sin against the LORD, who shall entreat for him? Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the LORD would slay them.*

They had gone so far in vice and gin that the Lord did not mean to forgive them. They had transgressed so foully that he would permit them to go on in sin until they perished in it.

[1 Samuel 2:26-30](#). *And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with the LORD, and also with men. And there came a man of God unto Eli, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Did I plainly appear unto the house of thy father, when they were in Egypt in Pharaoh's house? And did I choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to offer upon mine altar, to burn incense, to wear an ephod before me? and did I give unto the house of thy father all the offerings made by fire of the children of Israel? Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice and at mine offering, which I have commanded in my habitation; and honourest thy sons above me, to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel my people? Wherefore the LORD God of Israel saith, I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever:*

“But I said it conditionally upon thy good behavior. I installed thee into the priest's office for life, and thy sons might have continued in it after thee if they had kept my commandment.”

[1 Samuel 2:30-36](#). *But now the LORD saith, Be it far from me; for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed. Behold, the days come, that I will cut off thine arm, and the arm of thy father's house, that there shall not be an old man in thine house. And thou shalt see an enemy in my habitation, in all the wealth which God shall give Israel: and there shall not be an old man in thine house for ever. And the man of thine, whom I shall not cut off from mine altar, shall be to consume thine eyes, and to grieve thine heart: and all the increase of thine house shall die in the flower of their age. And this shall be a sign unto thee, that shall come upon thy two sons, on Hophni and Phinehas; in one day*

they shall die both of them. And I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in mine heart and in my mind: and I will build him a sure house; and he shall walk before mine anointed for ever. And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left in thine house shall come and crouch to him for a piece of silver and a morsel of bread, and shall say, Put me, I pray thee, into one of the priests' offices, that I may eat a piece of bread.

The same sad prophecy that the Lord communicated to old Eli was also revealed in a very special manner to young Samuel.

This exposition consisted of readings from [1 Samuel 2:12-36](#); and [1 Samuel 3:1-13](#).

[1 SAMUEL CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 3

Verses 1-13

[1 Samuel 3:1-13](#). *And the child Samuel ministered unto the LORD before Eli. And the word of the LORD was precious in those days; there was no open vision. And it came to pass at that time, when Eli was laid down in his place, and his eyes began to wax dim, that he could not see; and ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was, and Samuel was laid down to sleep; that the LORD called Samuel: and he answered, Here am I. And he ran unto Eli, and said, Here am I for thou calledst me. And he said, I called not; lie down again. And he went and lay down. And the LORD called yet again, Samuel. And Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I for thou didst call me. And he answered, I called not, my son; lie down again. Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, neither was the word of the LORD yet revealed unto him. And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I for thou didst call me. And Eli perceived that the LORD had called the child. Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, LORD for thy servant heareth. So Samuel went and lay down in his place. And the LORD came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth. And the LORD said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it*

shall tingle. In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house: when I begin, I will also make an end. For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.

Take warning, fathers and mothers, by this experience of old Eli.

This exposition consisted of readings from [1 Samuel 2:12-36](#); and [1 Samuel 3:1-13](#).

Verses 1-21

[1 Samuel 3:1](#). *And the child Samuel ministered unto the LORD before Eli.*

Samuel was but a child, yet he was a faithful servant of God up to the light he had received. The grown-up sons of Eli were rebelling against God, but “the child Samuel ministered unto the Lord.” It is a great aggravation of sin for ungodly men to persist in it when even little children rebuke them by their careful walk and conversation; it made the sin of Eli’s sons all the worse because “the child Samuel ministered unto the Lord before ELI”

[1 Samuel 3:1](#). *And the word of the Lord was precious in those days; there was no open vision.*

God spoke with very few, and his speech to them was private: “There was no open vision.” What was spoken was very rich and rare, but there was little of it. The Lord, in anger at the sin of Eli’s sons, took away the spirit of prophecy from the land.

[1 Samuel 3:2](#). *And it came to pass at that time, when Eli was laid down in his place, and his eyes began to wax dim, that he could not see;*

He was a good old man, but he was almost worn out, and he had been unfaithful to God in not keeping his family right. He must have found some comfort in having such a sweet and dear companion and servant as little Samuel was.

[1 Samuel 3:3-5](#). *And ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was, and Samuel was laid down to sleep; that the LORD called Samuel: and he answered, Here am I. And he ran unto Eli, and said, Here am I for thou calledst me. And he said, I called not; lie down again. And he went and lay down.*

Servants and children are to be attentive and obedient to the calls they hear, but masters must also be gentle, and kind, and considerate to them. Eli did not call the child a fool, or speak harshly to him; he knew that Samuel

had a good intention, and even if he had been mistaken, and no one had called him, yet it was a good thing on the part of the child to act as if he had been spoken to; and Eli quietly and gently said, “I called not; lie down again. And he went and lay down.”

[1 Samuel 3:6](#). *And the LORD called yet again, Samuel. And Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I for thou didst call me.*

He felt sure of it, confident that he had not been mistaken.

[1 Samuel 3:6-7](#). *And he answered, I called not, my son; lie down again. Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord.*

There was the Beginning of the work of grace in his heart, he was well-intentioned; but as yet God had not revealed himself to him: “Samuel did not yet know the Lord,” —

[1 Samuel 3:7-8](#). *Neither was the word of the LORD yet revealed unto him. And the LORD called Samuel again the third time.*

We do not blame Samuel, for he was but a child, and spiritual understanding had not yet fully come to him; but what shall I say of some to whom God has spoken for years till their hair is gray, and yet they have not understood the voice of the Lord even to this hour? I pray God that he may call them yet again The Lord did not disdain to call Samuel four times, for when he means effectually to call, if one call is not sufficient, he will call again and again and again: “The Lord called Samuel again the third time.”

[1 Samuel 3:8-9](#). *And he arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I for thou didst call me. And Eli perceived that the LORD had called the child. Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, LORD for thy servant heareth. So Samuel went and lay down in his place.*

It was a chastisement to Eli that God did not speak directly to him, but sent him a message by another; and it must have been very humiliating to the aged man of God that God should select a little child to be his messenger to him. Yet, as Eli had not been faithful, it was great mercy on God’s part to speak to him at all; and no doubt the old man did not resent the fact that God, instead of speaking to one of his sons, or to himself, spoke by this little child. Eli loved Samuel, and finding that the Lord intended to use this child, he did not grow jealous and angry, and begin to damp the child’s spirit; but he gave him wise directions how to act in case God should speak to him again.

[1 Samuel 3:10](#). *And the LORD came, and stood,-*

From which we learn that there was some kind of appearance to Samuel such as that which was manifested to others. Some spiritual being was before him, though he could not make out the form thereof: “Jehovah came, and stood,” —

[1 Samuel 3:10](#). *And called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel.*

This time the child’s name was spoken twice, as though God would say to him, “I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine? It was no doubt to make a deeper impression upon the child’s mind that his name was twice called by the Lord.

[1 Samuel 3:10](#). *Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth.*

You observe that he did not say, “Lord;” perhaps he hardly dared to take that sacred name upon his lips. He was impressed with such solemn awe at the name of God, that he said, “Speak; for thy servant heareth.” I wish that some Christian men of my acquaintance would leave out the Lord’s name a little in their prayers, for we may take the name of the Lord in vain even in our supplications. When the heathen are addressing their gods, they are accustomed to repeat their names over and over again. “O Baal, hear us! O Baal, hear us!” or, as the Hindus do when they cry, “Ram! Ram! Ram! Ram!” “repeating the name of their god; but as for us, when we think of the infinitely-glorious One, we dare not needlessly repeat his name.

[1 Samuel 3:11-13](#). *And the LORD said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle. In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house: when I begin, I will also make an end. For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth;-*

What a striking expression, “ the iniquity which he knoweth.” There is a good deal of iniquity about us which we do not know; that is a sin of ignorance. But deep down in his heart Eli knew that he had been afraid to speak to his sons about their sins, and that, when he had spoken, it had been in such lenient terms that they made light of them. Possibly, he had never chastened them when they were young, and he had not spoken to them sharply when they were older. Remember that he was a judge, and he ought not to have allowed his sons to remain priests if they were behaving themselves filthily at the door of the tabernacle. He ought to have dealt with them as he would have dealt with anybody else; he did not, so God said, “I

have told him, that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth;”-

[1 Samuel 3:13](#). *Because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.*

A man said to me, one day, “I never laid my hand upon my children;” and I answered, “Then I think it is very likely that God will lay his hand upon you.” “Oh!” he said, “I have not even spoken sharply to them.” “Then,” I replied, “it is highly probable that God will speak very sharply to you; for it is not God’s will that parents should leave their children unrestrained in their sin.”

[1 Samuel 3:14-15](#). *And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli’s house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever. And Samuel lay until the morning, —*

I wonder whether he went to sleep; I should think not. After such visitation and revelation, it is a marvel that the child could lie still. One wonders that he did not go at once to Eli, but then the message was so heavy that he could not be in a hurry to deliver it: “And Samuel lay until the morning,” —

[1 Samuel 3:15](#). *And opened the doors of the house of the Lord.*

Dear child! There are some of us who, if God had spoken to us as he had spoken to Samuel, would feel a deal too big to go and open doors any more. If God were to come, and speak to some who are poor, they would run away from their trade. If God were to speak to some who are young, they would give themselves mighty sirs. But Samuel meekly accepted the high honour God had conferred upon him; and when he rose in the morning, he went about his usual duties: “He opened the doors of the house of the Lord.”

[1 Samuel 3:15](#). *And Samuel feared to show Eli the vision.*

The old man must have felt that it was nothing very pleasant; still, he wanted to know the Lord’s messages. I hope he was in such a frame of mind that he could say, “Lord, show me the worst of my case! Let me know all thy mind about it, and let me not go on with my eyes bandaged, in ignorance of thy will concerning me.”

[1 Samuel 3:16-18](#). *Then Eli called Samuel, and said, Samuel, my son. And he answered, Here am I. And he said, What is the thing that the LORD hath said unto thee? I pray thee hide it not from me: God do so to thee, and more also, if thou hide any thing from me of all the things that he said unto thee. And Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him.*

Samuel was obeying the divine command which had not then been given: “He that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully.”

[1 Samuel 3:18](#). *And he said, It is the LORD: let him do what seemeth him good.*

This was a grand speech of old Eli. Terrible as it might be, he bowed his head to the divine sentence, and owned that it was just.

[1 Samuel 3:19-21](#). *And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the LORD. And the LORD appeared again in Shiloh: for the LORD revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the LORD.*

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SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

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CHAPTER 9

Verses 1-27

[1 Samuel 9:1-2](#). *Now there was a man of Benjamin, whose name was Kish, the son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Bechorath, the son of Aphiah, a Benjamite, a mighty man of power. And he had a son, whose name was Saul, a choice young man, and a goodly: and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people.*

Here we have the pedigree of the great king of Israel, Saul, the son of Kish. He was descended from a noble tribe, though not a very large one, and he appears to have been endowed with a very notable personal appearance: "There was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people;" and to the Israelites of that day, who had got away from looking up to God, and to the more valuable accomplishments of the mind and the heart, the striking personal appearance of Saul would be a great attraction and recommendation.

[1 Samuel 9:3-4](#). *And the asses of Kish Saul's father were lost. And Kish said to Saul his son, Take now one of the servants with thee, and arise, go seek the asses. And he passed through mount Ephraim, and passed through the land of Shalisha, but they found them not: then they passed through the land of Shalim, and there they were not: and he passed through the land of the Benjamites, but they found them not.*

He was diligent in his father's service, even though that service meant a fruitless journey in search of some straying asses. As he was then faithfully discharging the duties of his station in life; he was the man who was likely to rise to some higher position. He was the son of "a mighty man of power" or substance, and yet, so simple were the manners of the time that he was sent, with one of the servants, to look for the lost donkeys, and he appears to have started at once to carry out the commission which had been entrusted to him. Learn from Saul's obedience, dear young people, never to despise any duty which falls to your lot in the ordinary avocations of daily

life; you will be preparing yourselves for some higher position by doing well what you are called to do now.

[1 Samuel 9:5](#). *And when they were come to the land of Zuph, Saul said to his servant that was with him, Come, and let us return; lest my father leave caring for the asses, and take thought for us.*

There was evidently in Saul, at that time, a great considerateness of spirit; he wished to save his father from having any painful anxiety concerning his son and his servant, for Saul put both together when he said “us.” It is most desirable that young men, in the present day, should have a tender regard for those to whom they owe their being, and who have done so much for them in the years of their tender infancy; and that all young people should be careful never needlessly to give their parents one anxious thought on their account.

[1 Samuel 9:6](#). *And he said unto him, Behold now, there is in this city a man of God, and he is an honourable man; all that he saith cometh surely to pass: now let us go thither; peradventure he can show us our way that we should go.*

In this case, as in so many others, the servant seems to have had more grace than his young master had, for the name of Samuel the prophet was not unknown to him, and he knew where the “man of God” lived, and told Saul a good deal about him, and gave him some good advice as to what they should do. In any case where the servant, and not the master, knows the Lord, it is well, when occasion offers, and it can be done prudently and discreetly, for the servant to speak up, and give a good word for the cause of God and truth.

[1 Samuel 9:7](#). *Then said Saul to his servant, But, behold, if we go, what shall we bring the man? for the bread is spent in our vessels, and there is not a present to bring to the man of God: what have we?*

He says nothing about any money that he may have had in his own pocket, and again his servant has to lead the way.

[1 Samuel 9:8-9](#). *And the servant answered Saul again, and said, Behold, I have here at hand the fourth part of a shekel of silver: that will I give to the man of God to tell us our way. (Beforetime in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, thus he spake, Come, and let us go to the seer: for he that is now called a Prophet was beforetime called a Seer.)*

He was a man who looked further ahead than others could; for, under divine inspiration, he could see into futurity.

[1 Samuel 9:10](#). *Then said Saul to his servant, Well said; come, let us go.*

Saul was willing to be liberal at his servant's expense, and to let him give "the fourth part of a shekel of silver" to the prophet for him, and we have known some other folk who have been very generous in giving away the money of other people rather than their own.

[1 Samuel 9:10-12](#). *So they went unto the city where the man of God was. And as they went up the hill to the city, they found young maidens going out to draw water, and said unto them, Is the seer here? And they answered them, and said, He is; behold, he is before you: make haste now, for he came today to the city; for there is a sacrifice of the people today in the high place:*

These young maidens were evidently well informed, they knew where the man of God was, they knew what he was going to do, and they knew the time of the sacrifice or feast. Let us hope that they not only knew all this, but that they entered into the true spirit of it.

[1 Samuel 9:13-19](#). *As soon as ye be come into the city, ye shall straightway find him, before he go up to the high place to eat: for the people will not eat until he come, because he doth bless the sacrifice; and afterwards they eat that be bidden. Now therefore get you up; for about this time ye shall find him. And they went up into the city: and when they were come into the city, behold, Samuel came out against them, for to go up to the high place. Now the LORD had told Samuel in his ear a day before Saul came, saying, Tomorrow about this time I will send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin, and thou shalt anoint him to be captain over my people Israel, that he may save my people out of the hand of the Philistines: for I have looked upon my people, because their cry is come unto me. And when Samuel saw Saul, the LORD said unto him, Behold the man whom I spake to thee of! this same shall reign over my people. Then Saul drew near to Samuel in the gate, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, where the seer's house is. And Samuel answered Saul, and said, I am the seer:*

Saul evidently did not know Samuel, and it appears from this fact that he was not a gracious, religious man. He had the charm of a fine outward appearance, and he probably had many of the domestic virtues, but he was not one who lived in the fear of God.

[1 Samuel 9:19-21](#). *Go up before me unto the high place; for ye shall eat with me today, and tomorrow I will let thee go, and will tell thee all that is in thine heart. And as for thine asses that were lost three days ago, set not*

thy mind on them; for they are found. And on whom is all the desire of Israel? Is it not on thee, and on all thy father's house? And Saul answered and said, Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? wherefore then speakest thou so to me?

There was a very becoming modesty about him, he was really surprised and startled that such an honour should be in store for him; he had many natural virtues; but, alas the grace of God was not upon him.

[1 Samuel 9:22-24](#). *And Samuel took Saul and his servant, and brought them into the parlour, and made them sit in the chiefest place among them that were bidden, which were about thirty persons. And Samuel said unto the cook, Bring the portion which I gave thee, of which I said unto thee, Set it by thee. And the cook took up the shoulder, and that which was upon it, and set it before Saul.*

The right shoulder of the animal that was offered in sacrifice was part of the priest's portion, and this shoulder Samuel now ordered the cook to set before Saul as he sat in the place of honour.

[1 Samuel 9:24-25](#). *And Samuel said, Behold that which is left! set it before thee: and eat; for unto this time hath it been kept for thee since I said, I have invited the people. So Saul did eat with Samuel that day. And when they were come down from the high place into the city, Samuel communed with Saul upon the top of the house.*

For quietness and seclusion, Samuel took the young man upstairs to the flat roof of the house, and they walked to and fro, in the cool of the evening, talking about the high destiny to which Saul was, called, and Samuel doubtless giving him valuable instructions concerning his new and important duties.

[1 Samuel 9:26-27](#). [1 Samuel 10:1-2](#). *And they arose early: and it came to pass about the spring of the day, that Samuel called Saul to the top of the house, saying, Up, that I may send thee away. And Saul arose, and they went out both of them, he and Samuel, abroad. And as they were going down to the end of the city, Samuel said to Saul, Bid the servant pass on before us, (and he passed on,) but stand thou still a while, that I may shew thee the word of God.*

This exposition consisted of readings from 1 Samuel 9, and [1 Samuel 10:1-8](#).

1 SAMUEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 10

Verses 1-8

1 Samuel 10:1-2. *Then Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said, is it not because the LORD hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance? When thou art departed from me to day, —*

He gave Saul some signs by which he could confirm the truth of all that he had spoken to him: “When thou art departed from me today,” —

1 Samuel 10:2. *Then thou shalt find two men by Rachel’s sepulcher in the border of Benjamin at Zelzah;*

It was well for Samuel to send Saul, with brilliant prospects opening before him, to the sepulcher of the mother of his tribe. Oh, that we were all wise enough to think often of our last hours! Communion with the grave might even help us to communion with heaven. Samuel said to Saul, “Thou shalt find two men by Rachel’s sepulcher,” —

1 Samuel 10:2-3. *And they will say unto thee, The asses which thou wentest to seek are found: and, lo, thy father hath left the care of the asses, and sorroweth for you, saying, What shall I do for my son? Then shalt thou go on forward from thence, and thou shalt come to the plain of Tabor, and there shall meet thee three men going up to God to Bethel, one carrying three kids, and another carrying three loaves of bread, and another carrying a bottle of wine:*

Going to offer to God a meat offering and a thank offering. How could Samuel have known all this if God had not anointed his eyes, and made him a seer who could see what others saw not?

1 Samuel 10:4. *And they will salute thee, and give thee two loaves of bread; which thou shalt receive of their hand.*

“Thou shalt take from them thy first tribute as a king. They shall give thee two loaves of bread, to teach thee to avoid all luxury, and not to be a king who delighteth in delicate and dainty fare. Thou shalt fare as the people do.”

1 Samuel 10:5-6. *After that thou shalt come to the hill of God, where is the garrison of the Philistines: and it shall come to pass, when thou art come thither to the city, that thou shalt meet a company of prophets coming*

down from the high place with a psaltery, and a tabret, and a pipe, and a harp, before them, and they shall prophesy: and the Spirit of the LORD will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them,

“Thou shalt speak with enthusiasm about God; moved with a holy passion, thou shalt speak like a man inspired.”

[1 Samuel 10:6](#). *And shalt be turned into another man.*

Note that Samuel did not say to Saul, “Thou shalt be turned into a new man,” for that is what he never was. He became, for awhile, another man, a different man from what he had been before, but he never became a gracious man.

[1 Samuel 10:7-8](#). *And let it be, when these signs are come unto thee, that thou do as occasion serve thee; for God is with thee. And thou shalt go down before me to Gilgal; and, behold, I will come down unto thee, to offer burnt offerings, and to sacrifice sacrifices of peace offerings: seven days shalt thou tarry, till I come to thee, and shew thee what thou shalt do.*

This exposition consisted of readings from 1 Samuel 9, and [1 Samuel 10:1-8](#).

[1 SAMUEL CONTENTS](#)

1 Samuel Chapter 11

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER 12

Verses 1-25

In Samuel’s old age, the people desired to have a king; and though it went much against the grain, yet, by the Lord’s advice, Samuel consented to it.

Here he makes his last protest.

[1 Samuel 12:1](#). *And Samuel said unto all Israel, Behold, I have hearkened unto your voice in all that ye said unto me, and have made a king over you.*

“I have not stood in your way. I have not sought mine own honour. I have at once frankly resigned my office among you.”

1 Samuel 12:2. *And now, behold, the king walketh before you: and I am old and grayheaded; and behold, my sons are with you and I have walked before you from my childhood unto this day.*

“My sons come here today, not as my successors, but as fellow-subjects with you of your newly-chosen king; they are not in opposition to him any more than I am.” Like an old servant who is about to be dismissed, Samuel asks them to bear witness to his character; and this he does, partly as a lesson to the king who had taken his place, and partly as a clearance of himself in rendering up his charge.

1 Samuel 12:3. *Behold, here I am: witness against me before the LORD, and before his anointed: whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it you.*

It is so usual a thing, among Oriental judges and rulers, to expect bribes, that you cannot, in those countries, take a single step in a court of law without bribery. It was therefore a very unusual circumstance that Samuel should be able to challenge anybody to say that he had ever wrongfully taken so much as a single farthing. And the great rulers, in those countries, are accustomed to enrich themselves by levying heavy taxes upon the people. But Samuel affirmed that his services had been perfectly gratuitous, so that all he had done for the people had cost them nothing. If they had any fault to find with his government, it could only be because it had been so just and also so cheap; his yoke had indeed been easy to their necks. What a fine sight it is to see an old man able thus to challenge all who had known him, throughout a long life, to testify that he had not led a selfish life, or studied his own interests even in the least degree!

1 Samuel 12:4-5. *And they said, Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken ought of any man's hand. And he said unto them, The LORD is witness against you, and his anointed is witness this day, that ye have not found ought in my hand. And they answered, He is witness.*

In the most solemn way, they cleared him; when he rendered to them the account of his stewardship, they all bore witness that everything had been done, not merely according to strict rectitude, but in the most generous spirit of self-consecration. May all of us be enabled so to live that, when our sun goes down, it shall be as cloudless a sunset as was that of Samuel!

[1 Samuel 12:6-8](#). *And Samuel said unto the people, It is the LORD that advanced Moses and Aaron, and that brought your Fathers up out of the land of Egypt. Now therefore stand still, that I may reason with you before the Lord of all the righteous acts of the LORD, which he did to you and to your fathers. When Jacob was come into Egypt, and your fathers cried unto the LORD, then the LORD sent Moses and Aaron, which brought forth your fathers out of Egypt, and made them dwell in this place.*

A remembrance of past mercies is very profitable to us. National mercies ought not to be forgotten, and personal favors should always be fresh in our memory. Alas! the old proverb is only too true, "Bread that is eaten is soon forgotten." So is it even with the bread which God gives us; we eat it, yet soon forget the hand that fed us. Let it not be so with us.

[1 Samuel 12:9-11](#). *And when they forgat the LORD their God, he sold them into the hand of Sisera, captain of the host of Hazor, and into the hand of the Philistines, and into the hand of the king of Moab, and they fought against them. And they cried unto the Lord, and said, We have sinned, because we have forsaken the LORD, and have served Baalim and Ashtaroth: but now deliver us out of the hand of our enemies, and we will serve thee. And the LORD sent Jerubbaal, and Bedan, and Jephtah, and Samuel, and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side, and ye dwelled safe.*

They oft transgressed, and were as often afflicted; but whenever they returned to the Lord with their confession of sin, and again sought his mercy, he was always quick to deliver them. Let us profit by their experience. Have we brought ourselves into trouble through sin? Have we wandered and backslidden, and are our hearts therefore heavy? Let us return unto the Lord, and confess our sin, for he hath not cast us away, He will not turn against the voice of our cry; he will forgive us, and graciously receive us unto himself again.

[1 Samuel 12:12-13](#). *And when ye saw that Nahash the king of the children of Ammon came against you, ye said unto me, Nay; but a king shall reign over us: when the LORD your God was your king. Now therefore behold the king whom ye have chosen, and whom ye have desired! and, behold, the LORD hath set a king over you.*

"He has consented to your request, though it was a foolish one." Remember, brethren, it is not every answer to prayer that is a token of God's favor. If our prayers are very foolish, and even if there is sin in them,

God may sometimes give us what we ask in order to show us our folly, and make us smart for having offered such a prayer. Though, under God's government, they had been most highly privileged, they must needs have a king, like the nations which were not so favored. "So now," says Samuel, "God has given you this king, so do your best with him." Samuel had a hopeful spirit; and he hoped that, though the circumstances were not as he would have wished them to be, yet that the people might do well after all.

[1 Samuel 12:14-17](#). *If ye will fear the LORD, and serve him, and obey his voice, and not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then shall both ye and also the king that reigneth over you continue following the LORD your God: But if ye will not obey the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then shall the hand of the LORD be against you, as it was against your fathers. Now therefore stand and see this great thing, which the LORD will do before your eyes. Is it not wheat harvest today? I will call unto the LORD, and he shall send thunder and rain; that ye may perceive and see that your wickedness is great, which ye have done in the sight of the LORD, in asking you a king.*

This was to be a token to them that Samuel was God's prophet. On a previous occasion, in answer to his prayer, God had thundered against the Philistines but, this time, his thunder was his voice against Israel. In reading the Bible, we must always remember that it was not written in England but in Palestine. Wheat harvest there takes place about the month of May, when the weather is usually settled, and such things as thunder and rain are almost unknown. It was extraordinary, therefore, as we speak of "a bolt out of the blue."

[1 Samuel 12:18-19](#). *So Samuel called unto the LORD and the LORD sent thunder and rain that day: and all the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel. And all the people said unto Samuel, Pray for thy servants unto the LORD thy God, that we die not: for we have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king.*

That thunderstorm was a powerful preacher to them, and the rain drops, that fell so copiously, brought the tear drops into their eyes. The phenomena of nature frequently impress men with a sense of God's power, and prostrate them before him.

[1 Samuel 12:20-22](#). *And Samuel said unto the people, Fear not: ye have done all this wickedness: yet turn not aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart; And turn ye not aside: for then should*

ye go after vain things, which cannot profit nor deliver; for they are vain. For the LORD will not forsake his people for his great name's sake: because it hath pleased the LORD to make you his people.

How gently the old prophet speaks! What a change from the pealing thunder to this gracious voice! It seems like the clear shining after rain.

[1 Samuel 12:23-25](#). *Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way: Only fear the LORD, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things he hath done for you. But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed both ye and your king.*

[1 SAMUEL CONTENTS](#)

1 Samuel Chapter 13

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

1 Samuel Chapter 14

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

1 Samuel Chapter 15

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1 Samuel Chapter 16

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

1 Samuel Chapter 17

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER 18

Verses 1-16

[1 Samuel 18:1](#). *And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.*

Jonathan, the brave young soldier who had himself done great exploits, naturally admired the youthful warrior who had slain the Philistine giant, and also admired the modesty of his speech when he returned with the head of Goliath in his hand: “The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.”

[1 Samuel 18:2-4](#). *And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father’s house. Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him,*

No doubt, one suitable to his rank as the heir apparent to the throne of Israel.

[1 Samuel 18:4-5](#). *And gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle. And David went out whithersoever Saul sent him, and behaved himself wisely: and Saul set him over the men of war,*

Probably, Jonathan had previously occupied that position; but now that David is called to supplant him, Jonathan is not jealous of him, but he loves him as he loves his own soul.

[1 Samuel 18:5-7](#). *And he was accepted in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul’s servants. And it came to pass as they came, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of musick. And the women answered one another as they played, and said,-*

Singing in chorus, with answering refrains,-

[1 Samuel 18:7-9](#). *Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands. And Saul was very wroth, and the saying displeased him; and he said, They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands: and what can he have more but the kingdom? And Saul eyed David from that day and forward.*

This shows how envy will destroy a man's own peace of mind, as well as make him plot against the one of whom he is envious. Instead of being thankful to God for sending him such a valiant champion as David to deliver both himself and his people, Saul is full of malice towards the young hero simply because he receives his due need of praise for his victory over the giant. "Saul eyed David" with an evil and envious eye; looked askance upon him, and determined to do him mischief whenever he could.

[1 Samuel 18:10](#). *And it came to pass on the morrow, that the evil spirit from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied in the midst of the house:*

Probably, talking wildly and foolishly,-

[1 Samuel 18:10](#). *And David played with his hand, as at other times:*

That is, as he had, at other times, played upon the harp to chase away the evil spirit.

[1 Samuel 18:10-12](#). *And there was a javelin in Saul's hand. And Saul cast the javelin; for he said, I will smite David even to the wall with it. And David avoided out of his presence twice. And Saul was afraid of David,-*

David was not afraid of Saul, although Saul was the man with the javelin, and with the murderous, malicious spirit, which prompted him to hurl it at the young harpist. David, guileless, brave, honest, trustful, was not afraid of Saul, but "Saul was afraid of David,"-

[1 Samuel 18:12-14](#). *Because the LORD was with him, and was departed from Saul. Therefore Saul removed him from him, and made him his captain over a thousand; and he went out and came in before the people. And David behaved himself wisely in all his ways; and the LORD was with him.*

And, young man, you also will be wise if God is with you, and you will be able to behave yourself wisely, discreetly, prosperously, as the word seems to mean. Even when malicious eyes are fixed upon you, they will not be able to find any fault in you if the Lord is with you. You will win favor where you least expect it, if you do but so live that God can be with you, if you keep the vessel of your nature so pure that the Master can use it. May it be your portion and mine to have it said of each of us, "The Lord was with him"!

[1 Samuel 18:15-16](#). *Wherefore when Saul saw that he behaved himself very wisely, he was afraid of him. But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he went out and came in before them.*

This love of the people only caused Saul's hatred of David to be carried to a still greater excess; but Jonathan still loved David, and promised to

cleave to him whatever might happen. In the 20th chapter, we can read still more concerning this faithful friendship.

This exposition consisted of readings from [1 Samuel 18:1-16](#); [1 Samuel 20:1-17](#).

[1 SAMUEL CONTENTS](#)

1 Samuel Chapter 19

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER 20

Verses 1-17

[1 Samuel 20:1-2](#). *And David fled from Naioth in Ramah, and came and said before Jonathan, What have I done? what is mine iniquity? and what is my sin before thy father, that he seeketh my life?*

And he said unto him, God forbid; thou shalt not die: He could not think that his father really intended to take the life of his friend.

[1 Samuel 20:2-3](#). *Behold, my father will do nothing either great or small, but that he will shew it me; and why should my father hide this thing from me? it is not so. And David sware moreover, and said, Thy father certainly knoweth that I have found grace in thine eyes: and he saith, Let not Jonathan know this, lest he be grieved: but truly as the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, there is but a step between me and death.*

He had so often escaped, as it were by the skin of his teeth, from his cruel persecutor, that he knew himself to be in a position of extreme peril.

[1 Samuel 20:4](#). *Then said Jonathan unto David, Whatsoever thy soul desireth, I will even do it for thee.*

Such was his love for David that he would make no exception; whatever there was that David wished him to do, he would do it for him.

[1 Samuel 20:5-10](#). *And David said unto Jonathan, Behold, to morrow is the new moon, and I should not fail to sit with the king at meat: but let me go, that I may hide myself in the field unto the third day at even. If thy father at all miss me, then say, David earnestly asked leave of me that he might run to Bethlehem his city: for there is a yearly sacrifice there for all the*

family. If he say thus, It is well; thy servant shall have peace: but if he be very wroth, then be sure that evil is determined by him. Therefore thou shalt deal kindly with thy servant; for thou hast brought thy servant into a covenant of the LORD with thee: notwithstanding, if there be in me iniquity, slay me thyself; for why shouldest thou bring me to thy father? And Jonathan said, Far be it from thee: for if I knew certainly that evil were determined by my father to come upon thee, then would not I tell it thee. Then said David to Jonathan, Who shall tell me? or what if thy father answer thee roughly!

What am I to do in such a case as that? If thy father should turn against thee as well as against me, what is to be done then?

[1 Samuel 20:11](#). *And Jonathan said unto David, Come, and let us go out into the field. And they went out both of them into the field.*

To get quite alone, that they might express to one another the feelings of their inmost hearts, and also might consult together without any risk of being overheard.

[1 Samuel 20:12-17](#). *And Jonathan said unto David, O LORD God of Israel, when I have sounded my father about to morrow any time, or the third day, and, behold, if there be good toward David, and I then send not unto thee, and shew it thee; the LORD do so and much more to Jonathan: but if it please my father to do thee evil, then I will shew it thee, and send thee away, that thou mayest go in peace: and the LORD be with thee, as he hath been with my father. And thou shalt not only while yet I live shew me the kindness of the LORD, that I die not: but also thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my house for ever: no, not when the LORD hath cut off the enemies of David every one from the face of the earth. So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, Let the LORD even require it at the hand of David's enemies. And Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul.*

Thus were these two men bound together by ties of mutual love; may we be thus bound to Jesus! Oh, that there may be such love between us and our Lord as shall even excel the love of Jonathan and David!

This exposition consisted of readings from [1 Samuel 18:1-16](#); [1 Samuel 20:1-17](#).

Verses 1-42

[1 Samuel 20:1](#). *And David fled from Natioth in Ramah, and came and said before Jonathan, What have I done? what is mine iniquity? and what is*

my sin before thy father, that he seeketh my life?

David had an enemy upon the throne; and God gave him a friend in the heir to the throne. If thou hast an enemy, thou hast also a friend; God sets the one over against the other in his providence, do thou set the one over against the other in thy thoughts, and be thou comforted thereby. David might have been very heavy at heart about Saul, and so he was; but Jonathan came in to be the makeweight on the other side, and turn the scale in favor of the son of Jesse. Of him David enquired, "What is mine iniquity? and what is my sin before thy father, that he seeketh my life?"

[1 Samuel 20:2](#). *And he said unto him, God forbid; thou shalt not die: behold, my father will do nothing either great or small, but that he will shew it me: and why should my father hide this thing from me? it is not so.*

One admires Jonathan for defending Saul; he will not believe anything bad of his father. Children should never believe anything evil of their parents unless it is forced upon them; this rule is a part of the command, "Honour thy father and thy mother."

[1 Samuel 20:3](#). *And David sware moreover, and said, Thy father certainly knoweth that I have found grace in thine eyes; and he saith, Let not Jonathan know this, lest he be grieved: but truly as the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, there is but a step between me and death.*

He wanted Jonathan to believe the truth, namely, that Saul was seeking to kill him, and that he was in great danger from the wrath of the king; therefore he took a double oath that it was even so. It is not for Christians to imitate David in this respect, for our Lord's command to his disciples is, "Swear not at all; but let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil."

[1 Samuel 20:4](#). *Then said Jonathan unto David, Whatsoever thy soul desireth, I will even do it for thee.*

Love promises large things. One is reminded here of the love of Christ, and of how he says, "Ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

[1 Samuel 20:5-6](#). *And David said unto Jonathan, Behold, tomorrow is the new moon, and I should not fail to sit with the king at meat: but let me go, that I may hide myself in the field unto the third day at even. If thy father at all miss me, then say, David earnestly asked leave of me that he might run to Bethlehem his city: for there is a yearly sacrifice there for all the family.*

The family of David was a godly household, and they had a meeting, not for pleasure-making, but for sacrifice; a special family gathering for worship, and David must needs be there. He spake no untruth; he did desire to go to Bethlehem.

[1 Samuel 20:7-8](#). *If he say thus, It is well; thy servant shall have peace: but if he be very wroth, then be sure that evil is determined by him. Therefore thou shalt deal kindly with thy servant; for thou hast brought thy servant into a covenant of the LORD with thee: notwithstanding, if there be in me iniquity, slay me thyself; for why shouldst thou bring me to thy father?*

These two men had entered into a solemn covenant before God that they would be friends for life, so David pleaded with Jonathan. He was innocent, he knew that he had done no ill, and therefore he put it to Jonathan, “If I am what thy father thinks me to be, slay me thyself.”

[1 Samuel 20:9-11](#). *And Jonathan said, Far be it from thee: for if I knew certainly that evil were determined by my father to come upon thee, then would not I tell it thee? Then said David to Jonathan, Who shall tell me? or what if thy father answer thee roughly? And Jonathan said unto David, Come, and let us go out into the field. And they went out both of them into the field.*

Quite alone, away from their troops, where they could talk together without being overheard. These two good men sought private fellowship; and do you not think that, if we love Christ, we shall want to get alone with him? Shall we not say to him, “Let us go out into the field”? Where there is no private devotion, there is no devotion at all. If we never get alone with Christ, we are altogether strangers both to himself and also to his love.

[1 Samuel 20:12-15](#). *And Jonathan said unto David, O LORD God of Israel, when I have sounded my father about to morrow any time, or the third day, and, behold, if there be good toward David, and I then send not into thee, and shew it thee; the LORD do so and much more to Jonathan: but if it please my father to do thee evil, then I will shew it thee, and send thee away, that thou mayest go in peace: and the LORD be with thee, as he hath been with my father. And thou, shalt not only while yet I live shew me the kindness of the LORD, that I die not: But also thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my house for ever: no, not when the LORD hath cut off the enemies of David every one from the face of the earth.*

In Jonathan's great love, he wished not only to be David's friend himself, but that all his children should be in love with the same valiant hero. Brethren, our love to Christ makes us long to see our children love him, too. I will not believe that you have any love to Christ unless you pray that your boys and your girls may also love him. Dear children of godly parents, our heart's desire and prayer to God for you is, that you may love your mother's God, and trust your father's Saviour.

[1 Samuel 20:16-18](#). *So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, Let the LORD even require it at the hand of David's enemies. And Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul. Then Jonathan said to David, To morrow is the new moon: and thou shalt be missed, because thy seat will be empty.*

David was not a nobody; if he was away, he was missed. I wish that all attendants at the house of prayer would remember that, when they are away, they are missed. Perhaps some of you have come tonight from some little chapel where you will be greatly missed; I am not going to thank you for coming here, because I am possibly unconsciously causing pain to your pastor, and I do not want to rob him of one of his sheep. David's seat is empty tonight, and he will be missed.

[1 Samuel 20:19-23](#). *And when thou hast stayed three days, then thou shalt go down quickly, and come to the place where thou didst hide thyself when the business was in hand, and shalt remain by the stone Ezel. And I will shoot three arrows on the side thereof, as though I shot at a mark. And, behold, I will send a lad, saying, Go, find out the arrows. If I expressly say unto the lad, Behold, the arrows are on this side of thee, take them; then come thou: for there is peace to thee, and no hurt; as the LORD liveth. But if I say thus unto the young man, Behold, the arrows are beyond thee; go thy way: for the LORD hath sent thee away. And as touching the matter which thou and I have spoken of, behold, the LORD be between thee and me for ever.*

Thus be arranged how to let David know in case he was in danger. Love is thoughtful, love would keep its object out of harm's way; therefore, as we love any, let us try to preserve them from sin, let us endeavor to warn them when temptation is near, that they may not fall by the hand of the enemy.

[1 Samuel 20:24-27](#). *So David hid himself in the field: and when the new moon was come, the king sat him down to eat meat. And the king sat upon*

his seat, as at other times, even upon a seat by the wall: and Jonathan arose, and Abner sat by Saul's side, and David's place was empty. Nevertheless Saul spake not any thing that day: for he thought, Something hath befallen him, he is not clean; surely he is not clean. And it came to pass on the morrow, which was the second day of the month, that David's place was empty: and Saul said unto Jonathan his son, Wherefore cometh not the son of Jesse to meat, neither yesterday, nor to day?

David was the son of Jesse, but he was Saul's own son-in-law; yet, out of contempt, the angry king calls him "the son of Jesse."

[1 Samuel 20:28-30](#). *And Jonathan answered Saul, David earnestly asked leave of me to go to Beth-lehem: and he said, Let me go, I pray thee; for our family hath a sacrifice in the city; and my brother, he hath commanded me to be there: and now, if I have found favour in thine eyes, let me get away, I pray thee, and see my brethren. Therefore he cometh not unto the king's table.*

Then Saul's anger was kindled against Jonathan, and he said unto him, Thou son of the perverse rebellious woman, do not I know that thou hast chosen the son of Jesse to thine own confusion, and unto the confusion of thy mother's nakedness? He was in such a passion that he began to abuse his own wife, the mother of his own son. In the East, if you want to sting a man most severely, give ill names to his mother; and surely, in the West as well, if anyone has anything to say against a man's mother, it cuts her son to his heart if he is what he ought to be.

[1 Samuel 20:31](#). *For as long as the son of Jesse liveth upon the ground, thou shalt not be established, nor thy kingdom. Wherefore now send and fetch him unto me, for he shall surely die.*

Saul knew that David, and not Jonathan, was to succeed him on the throne.

He gives Jonathan warning of that fact, yet seeks his rival's life.

[1 Samuel 20:32](#). *And Jonathan answered Saul his father, and said unto him, Wherefore shall he be slain? what hath he done?*

Very reasonable questions, very properly put.

[1 Samuel 20:33-42](#). *And Saul cast a javelin at him to smite him: whereby Jonathan knew that it was determined of his father to slay David. So Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger, and did eat no meat the second day of the month: for he was grieved for David, because his father had done him shame. And it came to pass in the morning, that Jonathan*

went out into the field at the time appointed with David, and a little lad with him. And he said unto his lad, Run, find out now the arrows which I shoot. And as the lad ran, he shot an arrow beyond him. And when the lad was come to the place of the arrow which Jonathan had shot, Jonathan cried after the lad, and said, Is not the arrow beyond thee? And Jonathan cried after the lad, Make speed, haste, stay not. And Jonathan's lad gathered up the arrows, and came to his master. But the lad knew not anything: only Jonathan and David knew the matter. And Jonathan gave his artillery unto his lad, and said unto him, Go, carry them to the city. And as soon as the lad was gone, David arose out of a place toward the south, and fell on his face to the ground, and bowed himself three times: and they kissed one another, and wept one with another, until David exceeded. And Jonathan said to David, Go in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of the LORD, saying, The LORD be between me and thee, and between my seed and thy seed for ever. And he arose and departed: and Jonathan went into the city.

Behold the love of Jonathan and David! Here was a brother born for adversity, who clung to his friend in the day of danger, and even jeopardized his own life that he might defend David. Let us see here a faint emblem of what our great Friend, the Lord Jesus, has done for us.

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CHAPTER 40

Verses 1-13

1 Samuel 30:1-2. *And it came to pass, when David and his men were come to Ziklag on the third day, that the Amalekites had invaded the south, and Ziklag, and smitten Ziklag, and burned it with fire; And had taken the*

women captives, that were therein: they slew not any, either great or small, but carried them away, and went on their way.

What a singular providence! There was a blood-feud between Amalek and Israel since Israel endeavored to exterminate the Amalekites, and it is written, “The Lord shall have war with Amalek for ever and ever”; yet God holds in these tigers, and will not let the lions devour their prey.

1 Samuel 30:3-4. *So David and his men came to the city, and, behold, it was burned with fire; and their wives, and their sons, And their daughters, were taken captives. Then David and the people that were with him lifted up their voice and wept, until they had no more power to weep.*

They were tired and weary after a long march with Achish, and then another long march home. Oh! how they longed for their couches! How they desired to sit down and converse with their wives and their little ones! Tears did not seem a sufficient expression for their sorrow, and yet when a strong man weeps — a burly warrior like Joab, a rough, coarse man like Abishai, or a strong young man like Asahel — there must be deep grief. They wept till they had no more power to weep.

1 Samuel 30:5-6. *And David’s two wives were taken captives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess and Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite. And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters; but David encouraged himself in the LORD his God.*

He had not only his own personal sorrow, but that of all his people; and then, instead of comforting him, every friend had turned into a foe; his house was a heap of ashes; he might have said, “Ahinoam is not, and Abigail is not, and my children have ye taken away; all these things are against me!” But he had more faith than Job, and so he encouraged himself in the Lord his God.

1 Samuel 30:7. *And David said to Abiathar, the priest, Ahimelech’s son, I pray thee, bring me hither the ephod. And Abiathar brought thither the ephod to David.*

Ah! that’s the thing! Bring hither the old family Bible; let us go to prayer about it; down on our knees and tell the Lord the case.

1 Samuel 30:8. *And David enquired at the LORD, saying, Shall I pursue after this troop? shall I overtake them? And he answered him, Pursue: for thou shalt surely overtake them, and without fail recover all.*

But it is easier said than done. Where are they? How shall they find these fleet Amalekites Who fly away so rapidly?

1 Samuel 30:9-10. *So David went, he and the six hundred men that were with him. and came to the brook Besor, where those that were left behind stayed. But David pursued, he and four hundred men: for two hundred abode behind, which were so faint that they could not go over the brook Besor.*

Worse and worse you see! But the case is in God's hands, and no matter what the circumstances may be. All's well that ends well, and God always has the enemy in his hands.

1 Samuel 30:11-13. *And they found an Egyptian in the field, and brought him to David, and gave him bread, and he did eat; and they made him drink water; And they gave him a piece of a cake of figs, and two clusters of raisins: and when he had eaten, his spirit came again to him; for he had eaten no bread, nor drunk any water, three days and three nights. And David said unto him, To whom belongest thou? and whence art thou? And he said, I am a young man of Egypt, servant to an Amalekite; and my master left me, because three days ago I fell sick.*

Shame on his master, I say, and yet there are some who stop their men's wages as soon as they get a little ill! Shame on them, I say. It might be fit for an Amalekite to do this, but certainly not for an Israelite. So this young Egyptian tells David all about what they had done; and David follows them, smites them with the sword, takes away their plunder, and, moreover, gets a great spoil to himself, and so the Lord hears the voice of David. Now Abraham's servant and David were men in like difficulties with us, but they asked guidance of God and received it; let us be sure in every time of difficulty to do the same.

This exposition consisted of readings from Genesis 24:1-16; 1 Samuel 30:1-13; 1 John 1:1-3.

Verses 1-25

David had joined the army of the Philistines; but, as the Philistine lords suspected him, he was obliged to leave, so he went back to the little city of Ziklag, which King Achish had given him.

1 Samuel 30:1-2. *And it came to pass, when David and his men were come to Ziklag on the third day, that the Amalekites had invaded the south, and Ziklag, and smitten Ziklag, and burned it with fire, and had taken the*

women captives, that were therein: they slew not any, either great or small, but carried them away, and went on their way.

They were roving bands of marauders, and no doubt preserved the women alive to sell them for slaves, the main object of those robbers being gain.

1 Samuel 30:3-4. *So David and his men came to the city, and, behold, it was burned with fire; and their wives, and their sons, and their daughters, were taken captives. Then David and the people that were with him lifted up their voice and wept, until they had no more power to weep.*

Weary with their marching, they had hoped to rest at home; but now that everything was gone, the strong men, who were not often moved to weeping, wept till they could weep no longer; the very sources of tears were dried up by the exceeding heat of their grief.

1 Samuel 30:5-6. *And David's two wives were taken captives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite. And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him,*

These rough men, who had not all joined him from the best of motives, now turned against him for having left the city defenseless.

1 Samuel 30:6. *Because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters: but David encouraged himself in the LORD his God.*

Blessed faith, that finds a secure shelter even amidst the ashes of his burned home, and when even his own followers have turned against him!

1 Samuel 30:7-8. *And David said to Abiathar the priest, Ahimelech's son, I pray thee, bring me hither the ephod. And Abiathar brought thither the ephod to David. And David enquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I pursue after this troop? shall I overtake them? And he answered him, Pursue: for thou shalt surely overtake them, and without fail recover all.*

The Hebrew runs, "Pursue, for overtaking thou shalt overtake, and recovering thou shalt recover;" that is to say, the work shall be done perfectly, and so it was.

1 Samuel 30:9-17. *So David went, he and the his hundred men that were with him, and came to the brook Besor, where those that were left behind stayed. But David pursued, he and four hundred men: for two hundred abode behind, which were so faint that they could not go over the brook Besor. And they found an Egyptian in the field, and brought him to David, and gave him bread, and he did eat; and they made him drink water; and*

they gave him a piece of a cake of figs, and two clusters of raisins: and when he had eaten, his spirit came again to him: for he had eaten no bread, nor drunk any water, three days and three nights. And David said unto him, To whom belongest thou? and whence art thou? And he said, I am a young man of Egypt, servant to an Amalekite; and my master left me, because three days ago I fell sick. We made an invasion upon the south of the Cherethites, and upon the coast which belongeth to Judah, and upon the south of Caleb; and we burned Ziklag with fire. And David said to him, Canst thou bring me down to this company? And he said, Swear unto me by God that thou wilt neither kill me, nor deliver me into the hands of my master, and I will bring thee down to this company. And when he had brought him down, behold they were spread abroad upon all the earth, eating and drinking, and dancing, because of all the great spoil that they had taken out of the land of the Philistines, and out of the land of Judah. And David smote them from the twilight even unto the evening of the next day: and there escaped not a man of them, save four hundred young men, which rode upon camels, and fled.

It is noteworthy that the four hundred who escaped were equal in number to the whole of David's attacking force; so that, manifestly, God was with these valiant men, or else they would have been completely outnumbered.

1 Samuel 30:18-20. *And David recovered all that the Amalekites had carried away: and David rescued his two wives. And there was nothing lacking to them, neither small nor great, neither sons nor daughters, neither spoil, nor any thing that they had taken to them: David recovered all. And David took all the flocks and the herds, which they drave before those other cattle, and said, This is David's spoil.*

That which was over and above what had been taken from Ziklag was very properly appropriated by David. I thought, as I read that "David recovered all," how truly it can be said that the greater Son of David has recovered all. All that was lost by sin, our glorious and victorious Captain has recovered. What then shall be his spoil? It was foretold that "He shall divide the spoil with the strong." Let your hearts and mine, and all we are, and all we have, be yielded up to him, and let us say of it all, "This is Jesus' spoil, and to him be glory evermore!"

1 Samuel 30:21. *And David came to the two hundred men, which were so faint that they could not follow David, whom they had made also to abide*

at the brook Besor: and they went forth to meet David, and to meet the people that were with him: and when David came near to the people, he saluted them.

There are some fainting and sick folk detained at home; I pray our blessed Lord to salute every one of them wherever they are at this moment.

1 Samuel 30:22-23. *Then answered all the wicked men and men of Belial, of those that went with David, and said, Because they went not with us, we will not give them ought of the spoil that we have recovered, save to every man his wife and his children, that they may lead them away, and depart. Then said David, Ye shall not do so, my brethren,-*

They were poor brethren for David to have. They were brethren by race, but not brethren by grace Yet David was wise in speaking to them as he did. It is always well, when you are opposing people, to do it courteously. You can often prevail with soft words if you have strong arguments. David said, “Ye shall not do so, my brethren,” —

1 Samuel 30:23-26. *With that which the LORD hath given us, who hath preserved us, and delivered the company that came against us into our hand. For who will hearken unto you in this matter? but as his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff: they shall part alike. And it was so from that day forward, that he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel unto this day.*

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CHAPTER 5

Verses 17-25

2 Samuel 5:17. *But when the Philistines heard that they had anointed David king over Israel, all the Philistines came up to seek David,*

To thrust him down, and kill him if they could, and so put an end to his prosperous reign.

2 Samuel 5:17-20. *And David heard of it, and went down to the hold. The Philistines also came and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim. And David enquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up to the Philistines? wilt thou deliver them into mine hand? And the LORD said unto David, Go up: for I will doubtless deliver the Philistines into thine hand. And David came to Baalperazim, and David smote them there, and said, The LORD hath broken forth upon mine enemies before me, as the breach of waters.*

As a flood breaks forth, and carries all before it.

2 Samuel 5:20-21. *Therefore he called the name of that place Baalperazim. And there they left their images, and David and his men burned them.*

The Philistines brought their gods with them, in the hope of being thereby defended; but “David and his men burned them.” That was the very best thing to do with them. What a pity they did not save them for aesthetic purposes! Thus do men with fine old works of art, like pictures of the Virgin Mary. No, no, burn them; for that is the very best thing to do with anything that ever has been worshipped of mortal man. If they have ever been set up in the place of God, they are cursed from that moment, let them be burned, or dashed in pieces, or in some way destroyed. “There they left their images, and David and his men burned them.”

2 Samuel 5:22-24. *And the Philistines came up yet again, and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim. And when David enquired of the LORD, he said, Thou shalt not go up; but fetch a compass behind them, and come upon them over against the mulberry trees. And let it be, when thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, that then thou shalt bestir thyself:*

Or be sharp up, and go at them.

2 Samuel 5:24-25. *For then shall the LORD go out before thee, to smite the host of the Philistines. And David did so, as the LORD had commanded him:*

I hope that may be said of you and me all our lives long.

2 Samuel 5:25. *And smote the Philistines from Geba until thou come to Gazer.*

That is, he utterly overthrew them, and drove them away.

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 144, And 2 Samuel 5:17-25.

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2 Samuel Chapter 6

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CHAPTER 7

Verses 1-22

[2 Samuel 7:1-2](#). *And it came to pass, when the king sat in his house, and the LORD had given him rest round about from all his enemies; that the king said unto Nathan the prophet, See now, I dwell in an house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains.*

He said no more, but his intention was very plain, namely, to build a house that should be a more suitable abode for the ark of the Lord.

[2 Samuel 7:3](#). *And Nathan said to the king, Go, do all that is in thine heart; for the LORD is with thee.*

He spoke too fast. Even prophets, who are inspired of God, must wait upon their Master for their message; and when they utter words which only come out of their own mouths, they say what they will have to unsay before long. It did look very clear that this was the proper thing for Nathan to say to David; but he had not a “Thus saith the Lord” for it.

[2 Samuel 7:4-5](#). *And it came to pass that night, that the ward of the LORD came unto Nathan, saying, Go and tell my servant David, Thus saith the LORD,—*

“You have already let him know what Nathan had to say about the matter;

now go and tell him what Jehovah says:”

[2 Samuel 7:5](#). *Shalt thou build me an house for me to dwell in?*

The conception was altogether too low. He has made all space, time is his creation, and the arch of heaven stands by his almighty power; shall he himself have a house in which he can dwell?

[2 Samuel 7:6](#). *Whereas I have not dwelt in any house since the time that I brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt, even to this day, but have walked in a tent and in a tabernacle.*

A structure to be set up, and taken down, and to be moved about wherever the people journeyed. That was sufficient to be a central shrine of worship, and God cared for nothing else.

[2 Samuel 7:7](#). *In all the places wherein I have walked with all the children of Israel spake I a word with any of the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to feed my people Israel, saying, Why build ye not me an house of cedar?*

Did God ever put to the children of Israel such a question as this? No; and it is very remarkable that, from the time that the temple was built, you may date the decay of true religion in Israel; and the same thing has happened many times since; whenever religion is surrounded by elaborate

ceremonies, and gorgeous architecture, it is almost certain to suffer loss of power and efficacy. The simplicity of worship may not be the life of it, but it has a very intimate connection with that life.

[2 Samuel 7:8-11](#). *Now therefore so shalt thou say unto my servant David, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I took thee from the shepcote, from following the sheep, to be ruler over my people, over Israel: and I was with thee whithersoever thou wentest, and have cut off all thine enemies, out of thy sight, and have made thee a great name, like unto the name of the great men that are in the earth. Moreover I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more, us beforetime, and as since the time that I commanded judges to be over my people Israel, and have caused thee to rest from all thine enemies. Also the LORD telleth thee that he will make thee an house.*

God has a way of returning men's generosity in kind. Since David wished to build God's house, God would build David's house.

[2 Samuel 7:12-15](#). *And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: but my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee.*

Here is our warrant for believing in the final salvation of Solomon. Perhaps that Book of Ecclesiastes, the work of his old age, shows us by what rough and thorny ways God brought the wanderer back. He had tried to satisfy himself with the things of time and sense, but he was constrained at last to utter this verdict, "Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all is vanity;" and he had to go back to his God, and God his comfort there.

[2 Samuel 7:16-18](#). *And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever. According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak unto David. Than went king David in, and sat before the LORD,—*

Like one weighted down with a great load of mercy, too heavy for him to stand up under it, and therefore he must needs sit down, and consider, and meditate upon the wonderful words of God to him.

[2 Samuel 7:18-19](#). *And he said, Who am I, O Lord God? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? And this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord GOD but thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come. And is this the manner of man, O LORD GOD?*

“All that thou hast done for me, therefore, in overcoming my enemies, and making me king over this people, has seemed to be but a small thing to thee, for ‘thou hast spoken also of thy servant’s house for a great while to come.’” That astonished David, and therefore he asked, “Is this the manner of man, O Lord God?” “Man gives stingily after his own grudging fashion; but thou givest in a lordly, kingly, divine way.” David’s question may be rendered, “Is this the law of the Man? Am I to be the parent of that Man who shall be my Lord as well as my Son, who shall reign for ever and ever, and of whose kingdom there shall be no end?” David was spelling out the inner mystery hidden in the words of the Lord, reading between the lines, and discovering that the covenant which God had made with him was, at least in some respects, a repetition of that greater covenant made with Christ on his behalf.

[2 Samuel 7:20](#). *And what can David say more unto thee?*

He had not said much, but he could not say much under such circumstances. He was utterly overwhelmed, just as, when some wondrous kindness has been shown to us, we wish rather to sit still, in grateful silence, than to stand up, and speak acknowledgments, for our heart is too full for utterance.

[2 Samuel 7:20-22](#). *For thou, LORD GOD, knowest thy servant. For thy word's sake, and according to thine own heart, hast thou done all these great things, to make thy servant know them. Wherefore thou art great, O LORD GOD: for there is none like thee, neither is there any God beside thee, according to all that we have heard with our ears.*

God had said to David, in the message he sent by Nathan, “I have made thee a great nation, like unto the name of the great that are in the earth;” and now David brings back the words to God, and says, “Thou art great, O Lord God; for there is none like thee, neither is there any God beside thee.”

Verses 18-29

[2 Samuel 7:18](#). *Then went king David in, and sat before the LORD,*

This was not the usual Oriental posture of prayer, but David was mingling meditation with his supplication, so that his attitude was not according to ordinary rules.

[2 Samuel 7:18](#). *And he said, Who am I, O Lord GOD?*

Why, you are David, the valiant man who slew Goliath! No, no, no; the man of God is nobody in his own esteem.

[2 Samuel 7:18-19](#). *And what is my house that thou hast brought me hitherto? And this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord GOD but thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come. And is this the manner of man, O Lord GOD?*

No, it is not the manner of man in general, but it is the manner of the Man Christ Jesus.

[2 Samuel 7:20-22](#). *And what can David say more unto thee? for thou, Lord GOD, knowest thy servant. For thy word's sake, and according to thine own heart, hast thou done all these great things, to make thy servant know them. Wherefore thou art great, O LORD God: for there is none like thee, neither is there any God beside thee, according to all that we have heard with our ears.*

There is some sweet doctrine here. The Lord blesses David, not because of David's virtue, or David's merit, or David's prowess, but for his own sake: "For thy word's sake, and according to thine own heart, hast thou done all these great things, to make thy servant know them." The reason why streams of love flow from God is just this, it is according to his nature. He is a fountain, so the blessing must flow from him. He is a sun, so he must shine. It is not only because we need his love, but because "God is love," that his love is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost who is given unto us. Now what is the inference from all this? Does David say, "Wherefore, O Lord, I am great and honourable"? Oh, no! he has nothing to say in praise of himself; but he says, "Wherefore thou art great, O Lord God: for there is none like thee, neither is there any God beside thee, according to all that we have heard with our ears."

[2 Samuel 7:23-25](#). *And what one nation in the earth is like thy people, even like Israel, whom God went to redeem for a people to himself, and to make him a name, and to do for you great things and terrible, for thy land, before thy people, which thou redeemest to thee from Egypt, from the nations and their gods? For thou hast confirmed to thyself thy people Israel to be a people unto thee for ever: and thou, LORD, art become their God. And now, O LORD God, the word that thou hast spoken concerning thy servant and concerning his house, establish it for ever, and do as thou hast said.*

What a blessed prayer this is, “Do as thou hast said”! Get hold of a promise of the Lord, take it to the throne of grace, and then urge this plea, “Do as thou hast said.” It is a good argument to use with every upright man when we remind him of his promise, and ask him to keep his pledged word; and certainly we may use this plea with the thrice holy God: “Do as thou hast said.”

[2 Samuel 7:26](#). *And let thy name be magnified for ever,-*

Or, “be greatened”-be made great “for ever.” Notice the way David returns to God the words that were addressed to himself. The Lord said to him, “I have made thee a great name, like unto the name of the great that are in the earth;” so David replies, “Let thy name be made great for ever. Thou, Jehovah of hosts, art God over Israel; if thou hast made me king, and if my throne shall be established, much more shall thine.”

[2 Samuel 7:26-27](#). *Saying, The LORD of hosts is the God over Israel: and let the house of thy servant David be established before thee. For thou, O LORD of hosts, God of Israel,-*

Notice how the name of the Lord seems to grow in this chapter until here it comes to its full force, and dignity, and majesty: “Thou, O Jehovah of hosts, God of Israel,”-

[2 Samuel 7:27](#). *Hast revealed to thy servant, saying, I will build thee an house: therefore hath thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto thee.*

That is the best place to find a prayer,-in your heart; no prayer comes up before God, with acceptance, but that which comes out of the very heart, which should be like the sacred ark of old, wherein were hidden Israel’s most precious things. God’s words had gone right down into David’s heart, and touched the secret springs of it, and now they welled up in this blessed prayer

[2 Samuel 7:28-29](#). *And now, O Lord GOD, thou art that God, and thy words be true, and thou hast promised this goodness unto thy servant: Therefore now let it please thee to bless the house of thy servant, that it may continue for ever before thee: for thou, O Lord GOD, hast spoken it:*

There is that grand pleading again: “Thou, O Lord God, hast spoken it.” If you can remind God of his own promise, you may have whatsoever you will of him; if he has said anything, his word shall surely be fulfilled.

[2 Samuel 7:29](#). *And with thy blessing let the house of thy servant be blessed for ever.*

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CHAPTER 15

Verses 12-37

[2 Samuel 15:12](#). *And Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counsellor, from his city, even from Giloh, while he offered sacrifices. And the conspiracy was strong; for the people increased continually with Absalom.*

Absalom had, by graft, insinuated himself into the hearts of the children of Israel, and led a rebellion against his father David, that he might obtain the crown for himself.

[2 Samuel 15:13-14](#). *And there came a messenger to David, saying, The hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom. And David said unto all his servants that were with him at Jerusalem, Arise, and let us flee, for we shall not else escape from Absalom; make speed to depart, lest he overtake us suddenly, and bring evil upon us, and smite the city with the edge of the sword.*

It must have been a sore peril which compelled so brave a man as David to say to his servants, "Arise, and let us flee."

[2 Samuel 15:15](#). *And the king's servants said unto the king, Behold, thy servants are ready to do whatsoever my lord the king shall appoint.*

What a loyal spirit they displayed in the time of trial! Oh, that such loyalty could always be found in all the servants of King Jesus! But, alas! many of his servants pick and choose as to which of his commands they will obey. Some of them will not understand the plain letter of Scripture; and others of them know their duty, yet they do it not. There is reason to question whether we are the servants of Christ if we have not the spirit of obedience to him. Brethren, let us search and look, in the book of the King's ordinances, and see whether we are walking in all of them blamelessly. If we can say that we are, it is well; but I am afraid that there are some of his commandments which we would rather not understand; or if we do understand them, we are not in a hurry to obey them. How easy it is to make excuses for not doing what we have no wish to do! Blessed are those Christians who can say, "Behold, thy servants are ready to do whatsoever my Lord the King shall appoint"

[2 Samuel 15:16-18](#). *And the king went forth, and all his household after him. And the king left ten women, which were concubines, to keep the*

house. And the king went forth, and all the people after him, and tarried in a place that was far off. And all his servants passed on beside him; and all the Cherethites, and all the Pelethites, and all the Gittites, six hundred men which came after him from Gath passed on before the king.

The king's bodyguard of personal friends, who had seen long service with him in the contest with Saul, these kept close to his person.

[2 Samuel 15:19-20](#). *Then said the king to Ittai the Gittite, Wherefore goest thou also with us? return to thy place, and abide with the king: for thou art a stranger, and also an exile. Whereas thou camest but yesterday, should I this day make thee go up and down with us? seeing I go whither I may, return thou, and take back thy brethren: mercy and truth be with thee.*

This was the manifestation of a generous spirit on the part of David, and therein he was like the Son of David, who thought more of the safety of his disciples than he did of any way of escape for himself. Let the same mind be in us which was also in David, and in Christ Jesus, great David's greater Son; and let us look, not only on our own things, but also on the things of others.

[2 Samuel 15:21](#). *And Ittai answered the king, and said, As the LORD liveth, and as my lord the king liveth, surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be.*

He was a new-comer, but he was a fine recruit, and when our young converts, who have lately joined the church, have this spirit of loyalty in them, they will make mighty men of valor in the Lord's army. Whether Christ's cause be held in honour or in contempt, we will cast in our lot with him, whether he be reigning on the earth or his name be cast out as evil, we will share his fortunes. To whom should we go but to him, and where could we find a better Master than this gracious King under whose banner we have enlisted?

[2 Samuel 15:22-26](#). *And David said to Ittai, Go and pass over. And Ittai the Gittite passed over and all his men, and all the little ones that were with him. And all the country wept with a loud voice, and all the people passed over: the king also himself passed over the brook Kidron, and all the people passed over, toward the way of the wilderness. And lo Zadok also, and all the Levites were with him, bearing the ark of the covenant of God: and they set down the ark of God; and Abiathar went up, until all the people had done passing out of the city. And the king said unto Zadok, Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the LORD, he*

will bring me again, and show me both it, and his habitation; But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him.

David would run no risks with this sacred treasure, and though it would have been a great comfort to him to have had the ark of the covenant with him, yet he cared too much for it to think of his own comfort alone. How careful ought we to be of the truth of God, and of the things of God, of which this ark was but a type! Lord, let us run what risks we may, but we would not expose thy truth, or thy good cause to any risk. “Let him do to me as seemeth good unto him.” What a grand spirit there was in David even in his exile! There was a sweet spirit of song in him before his great fall, but that fall broke his voice, and he sang more hoarsely ever afterwards; yet what depth, what volume, what melody and harmony are here; “deep calleth unto deep.” What submission and subjection to the divine will; and, withal, what a holy confidence! Let the Lord do as he wills, David feels himself to be less than nothing, and submits himself absolutely to the divine purpose. It is not easy to get to that pass, but we must be brought to it, if we are the Lord’s servants, we must lie passive in his hands, and know no will but his. Yet deep waters will have to be passed through ere we reach this blessed experience.

[2 Samuel 15:27-30](#). *The king said also unto Zadok the priest, Art not thou a seer? return into the city in peace, and your two sons with you, Ahimaaz thy son, and Jonathan the son of Abiathar. See, I will tarry in the plain of the wilderness, until there come word from you to certify me. Zadok therefore and Abiathar carried the ark of God again to Jerusalem: and they tarried there. And David went up by the ascent of mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered, and he went barefoot: and all the people that was with him covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went up.*

David probably wept partly because of his troubles, but also because of his sin, which the thought of his troubles doubtless brought to his mind, and especially that sin which he has so deeply deplored in the seven penitential Psalms, and most of all in the 51st Psalm. He wore no royal robe on this pilgrimage of sorrow, and “he went barefoot” up the slopes of Olivet.

[2 Samuel 15:31](#). *And one told David, saying, Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom. And David said, O LORD, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness.*

Ahithophel was David's choicest friend, companion, and counsellor, yet he had failed him in his time of need. David could use the weapon of all-prayer when he could use no other, and this is like the flaming sword at Eden's gate which turned every way. It will slay our foes if they come from hell, it will drive away Satanic suggestions; it will overcome our adversaries if they come from earth; it will sanctify our afflictions even if they come from heaven. To know how to pray is to know how to conquer. David checkmated Ahithophel when he said, "O Lord, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness."

[2 Samuel 15:32](#). *And it came to pass, that when David was come to the top of the mount, where he worshipped God, behold Hushai the Archite came to meet him with his coat rent, and earth upon his head:*

Here was an immediate answer to David's prayer, for the very man, who alone could deal effectually with Ahithophel, comes to the king.

[2 Samuel 15:33-37](#). *Unto whom David said, If thou passest on with me, then thou shalt be a burden unto me: But if thou return to the city, and say unto Absalom, I will be thy servant, O king; as I have been thy father's servant hitherto, so will I now also be thy servant: then mayest thou for me defeat the counsel of Ahithophel. And hast thou not there with thee Zadok and Abiathar the priests? therefore it shall be, that what thing soever thou shalt hear out of the king's house, thou shalt tell it to Zadok and Abiathar the priests. Behold, they have there with them their two sons, Ahimaaz Zadok's son, and Jonathan Abiathar's son; and by them ye shall send unto me every thing that ye can hear. So Hushai David's friend came into the city, and Absalom came into Jerusalem.*

You know the rest of the history, how Absalom took the advice of Hushai, and Ahithophel was defeated. God does not always answer prayer quite so rapidly as he did in this case, yet, when his people are in sore straits, they often have prompt replies to their petitions, to encourage their faith, and to keep their hope alive in the time of trial.

Verses 13-23

This was one of the greatest trials of David's life.

[2 Samuel 15:13-14](#). *And there came a messenger to David, saying, The hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom. and David said unto all his servants that were with him at Jerusalem, Arise, and let us flee; for we shall not else escape from Absalom: make speed to depart, lest he overtake us*

suddenly, and bring evil upon us, and smite the city with the edge of the sword.

There is much to admire in David's conduct when he fled from Absalom, but yet his courage would seem to have well nigh forsaken him. In his brighter days before his great sin had weakened him, he would have been master of the situation; but now he trembles in the presence of the great calamity.

[2 Samuel 15:15](#). *And the king's servants said unto the king, Behold, thy servants are ready to do whatsoever my lord, the king shall appoint.*

They were attached to him — ready to take his counsel at once. Can we say the same to King Jesus? Will every Christian here now say to his Master, "Behold, thy servants are ready to do whatsoever my Lord the King shall appoint"? There are many that pick and choose of Christ's commands. They do not obey all his will. There are known duties which are neglected — plain precepts which are wilfully forgotten. I would to God we could all say from our heart to King Jesus, "Behold, thy servants are ready to do whatsoever my Lord the King shall appoint."

[2 Samuel 15:16-18](#). *And the king went forth, and all his household after him. And the king left ten women, which were concubines, to keep the house. And the king went forth, and all the people after him and tarried in a place that was far off. And all his servants passed on beside him; and all the Cherethites, and all the Pelethites, and all the Gittites, six hundred men which came after him from Gath, passed on before the king.*

These were his old guard, soldiers which he kept always around his person, deeply attached to him, upon whose loyalty he could rely. But what a come-down from the King of Israel to have an army of only six hundred men — to be fleeing before his own rebellious people, led on by his more rebellious son!

[2 Samuel 15:19-23](#). *Then said the king to Ittai the Gittite, Wherefore goest thou also with us? return to thy place, and abide with the king: for thou art a stranger, and also an exile. Whereas thou camest but yesterday, should I this day make thee go up and down with us? seeing I go whither I may, return thou, and take back thy brethren: mercy and truth be with thee. And Ittai answered the king, and said, As the LORD liveth, and as my lord the king liveth, surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be. And David said to Ittai, Go and pass over. And Ittai the Gittite passed over, and all his men, and all the*

little ones that were with him. And all the country wept with a loud voice, and all the people passed over; the king also himself passed over the brook Kidron, and all the people passed over, toward the way of the wilderness.

A fit type of that future passage of the Kidron by the great son of David, when on that dark and doleful night, when all the powers of darkness met, the Prince — the King himself — passed over that black and bitter brook into the garden of Gethsemane. There were faithful ones that went with David: there were some faithful ones with Christ. Happy are they who shall be found to be with their Lord and Master in the day of his sorrow, for they shall be with him in the day of his joy.

This exposition consisted of readings from [2 Samuel 15:13-23](#); Isaiah 61.; [Mark 14:22-41](#).

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CHAPTER 23

Verses 1-5

[2 Samuel 23:1-5](#). *Now these be the last words of David. David the son of Jesse said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said, The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain. Although my house be not so with God;*

He remembered his many sins, and the many tribulations in his family which had come upon him in consequence of those sins, and the dying man felt a sad heart-ache so he thought of the errors of his life, so well he might.

[2 Samuel 23:5](#). *Yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow.*

What blessed words his last words were! His sorrow is turned into joy; his own house grieves him, but God's promise comforts him. I think we must read this verse again; perhaps there is some father here who is growing old, or some mother upon whom years are multiplying. May these last words of David be such as your last words may be! "Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting

covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire.”

This exposition consisted of readings from ISAIAH 44. and 45; and [2 Samuel 23:1-5](#).

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CHAPTER 5

Verses 1-18

[1 Kings 5:1-5](#). *And Hiram king of Tyre sent his servants unto Solomon; for he had heard that they had anointed him king in the room of his father: for Hiram was ever a lover of David. And Solomon sent to Hiram saying, Thou knowest how that David my father could not build an house unto the name of the LORD his God for the wars which were about him on every side, until the LORD put them under the soles of his feet. But now the*

LORD my God hath given me rest on every side, so that there is neither adversary nor evil occurrent. And, behold, I purpose to build an house unto the name of the LORD my God, as the LORD spake unto David my father, saying, Thy son, whom I will set upon thy throne in thy room, he shall build an house unto my name.

When God intends a man to do any special work for him, he will find him all the helpers he needs. Sometimes those helpers may seem to be very unlikely persons; but —“Remember that omnipotence has servants everywhere.” See, dear friends, when the Lord had given rest to Solomon, he proceeded with the building of the temple which David had planned. Whenever God blesses you, show your gratitude to him by undertaking some special service for him. Now that you are out of your recent trouble, bring your sacrifice of thanksgiving, and do all that you can for your Lord; your time of rest may not last so long as you could wish, therefore use it while you have it to God’s glory.

[1 Kings 5:6](#). *Now therefore command thou that they hew me cedar tree out of Lebanon; and my servants shall be with thy servants: and unto thee will I give hire for thy servants according to all that thou shalt appoint: for thou knowest that there is not among us any that can skill to hew timber like unto the Sidonians.*

It is not every man who has every gift. Hiram and his Sidonians could hew timber more skillfully than Solomon and his Israelites. God can always find the right sort of men to do his work. Do not be dispirited because you cannot do everything; why should you? Should not somebody else have a share, and be also permitted to have the honour of serving his God? It is well that you cannot do all that has to be done, and that somebody else can do something better than you can.

[1 Kings 5:7-8](#). *And it came to pass, when Hiram heard the words of Solomon, that he rejoiced greatly, and said, Blessed be the LORD this day, which hath given unto David a wise son over this great people. And Hiram sent to Solomon, saying, I have considered the things which thou sentest to me for: —*

It is always a good thing, before you agree to do anything, to consider it, to look at it from all points of view. I wish that, in giving money to the service of God, there was more consideration as to the object for which it is given. Some give simply because others do, some because they are asked; but he gives best who considers the matter, and looks all round, and then

says, “Yes, this is a just claim upon me as a servant of God, and therefore I will respond to it.” So, “Hiram sent to Solomon, saying, I have considered the things which thou sentest to me for:”–

[1 Kings 5:8-11](#). *And I will do all thy desire concerning timber of cedar, and concerning timber of fir. My servants shall bring them down from Lebanon unto the sea: and I will convey them by sea in floats unto the place that thou shalt appoint me, and will cause them to be discharged there, and thou shalt receive them: and thou shalt accomplish my desire, in giving food for my household. So Hiram gave Solomon cedar trees and fir trees according to all his desire. And Solomon gave Hiram twenty thousand measures of wheat for food to his household, and twenty measures of pure oil: thus gave Solomon to Hiram year by year.*

Is it not a very pleasing thought that both Jews and Gentiles built the temple of Solomon put the big stones together, and cut the cedar and fir trees into the proper shape, yet they were Hiram’s fir trees and Hiram’s cedar trees, and he floated them by sea to the place where they were landed, and whence they were dragged to Jerusalem, and God will let his people of every race and nation have a share in the building of his great spiritual house.

[1 Kings 5:12-14](#). *And the LORD gave Solomon wisdom, as he promised him: and there was peace between Hiram and Solomon; and they two made a league together. And king Solomon raised a levy out of all Israel; and the levy was thirty thousand men. And he sent them to Lebanon, ten thousand a month by courses: a month they were in Lebanon, and two months at home: and Adoniram was over the levy.*

That was a capital rule: “a month they were in Lebanon, and two months at home.” You who work for God must have your month at work, but you also need two months at home to attend to your own business. There are some people who keep always at Lebanon, always at work; but there is spiritual work to be done at home as well, getting your heart ready for service, sharpening your tools, looking after your own flocks and herds, and so on There was hard work to be done, and if it was to be done well, the workers needed to have their sinews and muscles in good order, so “a month they were in Lebanon, and two months at home.” One prayer in the glass and two prayers at home; one hour of teaching the lesson, twice as much time taken in getting it up and preparing it.

[1 Kings 5:15](#). *And Solomon had threescore and ten thousand that bare burdens, and fourscore thousand hewers in the mountains;*

What were their names? I cannot tell you, but probably there was a book in which they were all recorded, and Christ has many humble workers, hewers of wood and bearers of burdens, whose names are not known among men. Well, what is in a name? Let us be content to serve under our greater Solomon, and let the whole glory of building his spiritual temple go to him. Never mind who bears the burdens or who hews the stones, the temple is for God, so let God be glorified, and not man.

[1 Kings 5:16](#). *Beside the chief of Solomon's officers which were over the work, three thousand and three hundred, which ruled over the people that wrought in the work.*

There must be various degrees among the workers in the service of God. He is a Sovereign, and he divideth unto every man according as he wills. How this ought to hush all envy and rebellion against the officers in the work of God whom he has called to be overseers of others!

[1 Kings 5:17](#). *And the king commanded,*

That is at the bottom of all service for our King; let us but get a command from the King, and we obey at once.

[1 Kings 5:17-18](#). *And they brought great stones, costly stones, and hewed stones, to lay the foundation of the house. And Solomon's builders and Hiram's builders did hew them, and the stonesquarers:*

I am glad they are mentioned here, for there are still some brothers and sisters who are not hewers, but they are stonesquarers. Perhaps they do not see many conversions through their efforts, but they do a great deal of the work of instructing the converts. They polish what other people have excavated, they are stonesquarers; and just as the temple at Jerusalem needed the work of the stonesquarers, so does God's great spiritual temple need those who square as well as those who hew the stones that are to be built into it.

[1 Kings 5:18](#). *So they prepared timber and stones to build the house.*

Nothing is too good or too costly to be given to God, and let us reckon no labour too hard or too heavy that will bring glory to his holy name.

This exposition consisted of readings from 1 Kings 5, and Psalms 48, 95.

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CHAPTER 10

Verses 1-13

Let us first read part of the tenth chapter of the first Book of Kings; and, afterwards, a part of the twelfth chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew.

10:1. *And when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the LORD, she came to prove him with hard questions.*

Her visit, you see, had a religious aspect. She “heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the Lord.” He had wisdom of various kinds, but it was his knowledge of God, and of God’s ways, that seemed chiefly to attract this ruler from a far-distant land.

[1 Kings 10:2.](#) *And she came to Jerusalem with a very great train, with camels that bare spices, and very much gold, and precious stones: and*

when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart.

She came with a price in her hand to get wisdom. Well did Solomon say, “Buy the truth, and sell it not.” No price is too dear to pay for it, but any price would be too cheap to sell it at.

[1 Kings 10:3](#). *And Solomon told her all her questions: there was not any thing hid from the king, which he told her not.*

His wisdom came from God, and therefore it was full and complete, and could not be confounded by man. Let us seek after the wisdom which cometh from above, and remember that “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” Indeed, is it not the sum total of wisdom really to fear, in a filial sense, the Lord Most High?

[1 Kings 10:4-5](#). *And when the queen of Sheba had seen all Solomon’s wisdom, and the house that he had built, and the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, and his cupbearers, and his ascent by which he went up unto the house of the LORD there was no more spirit in her.*

She was a queen, but she had never seen such royal magnificence as Solomon’s. “The ascent by which he went up unto the house of the Lord” appears to have been a marvelous viaduct, constructed of the most ponderous stones, by which the king went from his own house up to the temple itself. I have read that an arch of that viaduct is standing at the present day, and it is still a marvel. To this princess, it must have seemed a wonder of wonders.

[1 Kings 10:6-12](#). *And she said to the king, It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts and of thy wisdom. Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it: and, behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard. Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom. Blessed be the LORD thy God, which delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel: because the LORD loved Israel for ever, therefore made he thee king, to do judgment and justice. And she gave the king an hundred and twenty talents of gold, and of spices very great store, and precious stones: there came no more such abundance of spices as these which the queen of Sheba gave to king Solomon. And the navy also of Hiram, that brought gold from Ophir, brought in from Ophir great plenty of almug trees, and precious stones. And*

the king made of the almug trees pillars for the house of the LORD, and for the king's house, harps also and psalteries for singers: there came no such almug trees, nor were seen unto this day.

Probably, these “almug trees” were trees of sandal-wood. Whatever they were, they seem to have been the best timber known to the Easterns, and therefore Solomon very properly used them in the house of the Lord. Let the harps of our praises be made of such wood that there shall be no others equal to them in the whole world. Let us give to our Lord our best young blood, our warmest zeal, our highest thoughts, our most careful attention. Let us give him, in fact, the whole of our being, the love of our heart. He should be served with the best of the best, “for he is good, and his mercy endureth for ever.”

[1 Kings 10:13](#). *And king Solomon gave unto the queen of Sheba all her desire, whatsoever she asked, beside that which Solomon gave her of his royal bounty. So she turned and went to her own country, she and her servants.*

The king first of all bountifully gave her a present which he thought most fitting; and then, afterwards, permitted her to ask whatever she would. How much is this like our King Solomon, who has already given us all our hearts can wish for; and yet, if there be any right desire that is still ungratified, he provides the golden mercy-seat, at the foot of his throne, where we may present our petitions to him, encouraged by his gracious word, “Ask what thou wilt; according to thy faith, so shall it be unto thee.”

This exposition consisted of readings from [1 Kings 10:1-13](#); and [Matthew 12:38-45](#).

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CHAPTER 11

Verses 40-43

God threatened Solomon, on account of his setting up other gods, that he would rend away a great part of the kingdom from him, and that he would set up another king in his place.

[1 Kings 11:40-43](#). *Solomon sought therefore to kill Jereboam. And Jeroboam arose, and fled into Egypt, unto Shishak king of Egypt, and was in Egypt until the death of Solomon. And the rest of the acts of Solomon, and*

all that he did, and his wisdom, are they not written in the book of the acts of Solomon? And the time that Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel was forty years. And Solomon slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David his father: and Rehoboam his son reigned in his stead.

After great mountains there usually come low hills. After Solomon comes Rehoboam. Grace does not run in the blood, we may be sure, for even human wisdom does not descend from father to son. There is no necessary transmission of gifts and talents, much less of grace, from one generation to another.

This exposition consisted of readings from [1 Kings 11:40-43](#); 1 Kings 12.

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CHAPTER 12

Verses 1-33

[1 Kings 12:1-3](#). *And Rehoboam went to Shechem: for all Israel were come to Shechem to make him king. And it came to pass, when Jeroboam. The son of Nebat, who was yet in Egypt, heard of it, (for he was fled from the presence of king Solomon, and Jeroboam dwelt in Egypt;) that they sent and called him.*

It was a sure sign of great discontent when the people sent for a rebel to be their spokesman.

[1 Kings 12:3-4](#). *And Jeroboam and all the congregation of Israel came, and spake unto Rehoboam, saying, Thy father made our yoke grievous: now therefore make thou the grievous service of thy father, and his heavy yoke which he put upon us, lighter, and we will serve thee.*

This was a very natural request; these Oriental monarchs took their thrones as by a kind of divine right, and there was a tendency among the people to demand something like a constitution, some regulations by which they should not be so heavily oppressed. I do not know whether they had been oppressed by Solomon or not; certainly, the realm as a whole was greatly enriched under his government; but the wisest ruler must not expect that he will have the uniform love of the people, there will be come discontented ones in every community.

[1 Kings 12:5](#). *And he said unto them, Depart yet for three days, then come again to me. And the people departed.*

One commentator says that it is the only sign of wisdom that there is in Rehoboam, that he took three days to consider the answer to this question.

Peradventure, if he had answered it rightly, it would have been better if answered immediately. Still, it is a good rule, when there is an important question before you, to take time to consider it. The mischievous point is that Rehoboam did not wait upon God for guidance in this emergency. Had he been like his grandfather David, those three days would have been spent with God in prayer, and he would have come back, with a greater wisdom than even his father Solomon possessed, to answer the people in this thing.

We often blunder over very ample matters when we speak without asking guidance of God; but in the most intricate circumstances our course will be perfectly clear if we commit our way unto the Lord.

[1 Kings 12:6-8](#). *And king Rehoboam consulted with the old men, that stood before Solomon his father while he yet lived, and said, How do ye advise that I may answer this people? And they spake unto him, saying, If thou wilt be a servant unto this people this day, and wilt serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be thy servants for ever. But he forsook the counsel of the old men, which they had given him, and consulted with the young men that were grown up with him, and which stood before him:*

He was probably a man forty years of age, and therefore no longer young; but he had all the while been playing the part of a young man. He had not been old in wisdom when he was young in years; it would have been well for him if he had been.

[1 Kings 12:9-11](#). *And he said unto them, What counsel give ye that we may answer this people, who have spoken to me, saying Make the yoke which thy father did put upon us lighter? And the young men that were grown up with him spake unto him, saying, Thus shalt thou speak unto this people that spake unto thee, saying, Thy father made our yoke heavy, but make thou it lighter unto us; thus shalt thou say unto them, My little finger shall be thicker than my father's loins. And now whereas my father did lade you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke: my father hath chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.*

Old men are not always wise, and young men are not always wise; he who consults with men only shall yet learn the truth of this verse, "Cursed

be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord.” Among Rehoboam’s counsellors, the old men had no real principle to guide them, they said to the king, in effect, “Just butter these people with soft words, delude and deceive them with the idea that you are going to yield to them, and then, when you once get the reins into your own hands, you can govern the nation as you like.” This was a wicked policy; but the young men said to the king, “No, no, no; do not pretend that you will listen to the people. There is nothing like putting a bold face on it, and just letting the people know that you will not yield to them. They will be startled by what you say; have you not the authority and example of your father Solomon? Nobody ever dared speak a word of this kind to him, so do you put it down at once, and be bold.” There is no principle, you see, about the advice in either case; it is all policy, but the latter policy is sure not to succeed. I counsel you, brother, — nay, I will give you no counsel except that I counsel you to take counsel of God. Wait upon him, for he knows what you should do in every difficulty that may arise. If Rehoboam had only had wit enough and grace enough to lay this case before his God he would have given him somewhat of the largeness of heart and the wisdom which he gave to his father Solomon.

[1 Kings 12:12-15](#). *So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king had appointed, saying, Come to me again the third day. And the king answered the people roughly, and forsook the old men’s counsel that they gave him; and spake to them after the counsel of the young men, saying My father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke: my father also chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions. Wherefore the king hearkened not unto the people; for the cause was from the LORD,*

The great, deep, mysterious providence of God was quietly working even behind the folly and the domineering pride of this foolish man.

[1 Kings 12:15-16](#). *That he might perform his saying, which the LORD spake by Ahijah the Shilonite unto Jeroboam the Son of Nebat. So when all Israel saw that the king hearkened not unto them, the people answered the king, saying, What portion have we in David? neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: to your tents O Israel: now see to thine own house, David. So Israel departed unto their tents.*

He that speaks roughly must expect to be answered roughly. Let us learn from this incident as one might who sees the warning light of a beacon, and

tacks his ship to avoid the rock on which it is placed.

[1 Kings 12:17-18](#). *But as for the children of Israel which dwelt in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them. Then king Rehoboam sent Adoram, who was over the tribute;*

Having made trouble, the king tried to make piece. He selected one of the ancient officers of his father Solomon to be his ambassador, but he selected the very worst that he could have found, "Adoram, who was over the tribute." The man who had been a leader in exactions from the people, or who had been thought to be so, was not the one to act as peace-maker.

[1 Kings 12:18-20](#). *And all Israel stoned him with stones, that he died. Therefore king Rehoboam made speed to get him up to his chariot, to flee to Jerusalem. So Israel rebelled against the house of David unto this day. And it came to pass, when all Israel heard that Jeroboam was come again, that they sent and called him unto the congregation, and made him king over all Israel: there was none that followed the house of David, but the tribe of Judah only.*

See what mischief may be done by one foolish man; and let me add, see what evil may come of the ill conduct of a wise man. Some think that Rehoboam was Solomon's only son, though he had a multitude of wives. That I cannot tell: but it is a singular thing that so wise a man should have but one son mentioned here, and that he should be such a foolish one. Yet what could be expected to come out of such a family as Solomon's was? He whose own house is so disorderly as his was, must expect that those who come after him will be no better than they should be. Blessed is that home where the Lord is the Master, where his law is loved, and his word is obeyed.

[1 Kings 12:21-24](#). *And when Rehoboam was come to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah, with the tribe of Benjamin, an hundred and fourscore thousand chosen men, which were warriors, to fight against the house of Israel, to bring the kingdom again to Rehoboam the son of Solomon. But the word of God came unto Shemaiah the man of God, saying Speak unto Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and unto all the house of Judah and Benjamin, and to the remnant of the people, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren the children of Israel: return every man to his house; for this thing is from me. They hearkened therefore to the word of the LORD, and returned to depart, according to the word of the LORD.*

It is a very striking fact that this one prophet did but speak in God's name, and that vast host disbanded in obedience to his word. It gives us some hope concerning Rehoboam, yet we cannot be sure that it was he who was thus obedient to the prophet. The people may have been better than their king; at any rate, they did not fight against their brethren, but they went their way. Oh, that God's servants in these days could speak with anything like such power as Shemaiah possessed!

[1 Kings 12:25-27](#). *Then Jeroboam built Shechem in mount Ephraim, and dwelt therein; and went out from thence, and built Penuel. And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David: if this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah.*

Jeroboam is moved by policy, you see. It is very hard, I believe, to be a ruler over men, and yet to be a servant of God. There seems to be connected with politics in every country something that besmears the mind, and defiles the hand that touches it. The king of Judah had but little wit, and this king of Israel has too much cunning; he is a far-seeing man, and perceives that, if the people go up to Jerusalem to worship, they may by-and-by return to their allegiance to the house of David.

[1 Kings 12:28](#). *Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.*

Truly, history repeats itself, only, if it be bad history, it is apt to grow worse. "Behold thy gods O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." This is almost exactly what they said in Aaron's days, when he made the ox which Scripture sarcastically calls a calf, the Egyptian image of strength. Jeroboam makes not merely one calf, but two; and he speaks of them in nearly the same language as they used concerning the golden calf in the wilderness: "Behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt."

[1 Kings 12:29-30](#). *And he set the one in Beth-el, and the other put he in Dan. And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan.*

I suppose that Jeroboam did not mean to draw them away from worshipping Jehovah; but he would have Jehovah worshipped under some

visible image, and not according to the rule which God had laid down. That is just where mischief often begins, both in the church and in the world. Men are willing to worship God if they are allowed to have a ritual and symbols which they have themselves devised; so, instead of the divine simplicity of the New Testament, they have many things added, things to please the taste, aesthetic, beautiful, sensuous; all of which take off the mind from that sublime worship of the invisible God which alone can be acceptable before him. It is not for us to determine how we will worship God; we are to worship him after his own manner, for his commandments are still in force: “Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the waters under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them nor serve them.” “Well, but the cross,” someone says, “surely that is a truly venerable symbol?” Let it be as venerable as you please; but we must not use it in divine worship. The ox was supposed to set forth strength; surely it was an admirable emblem of the Almighty, yet God pours contempt upon it when he bids his inspired servants to speak of it as the image of an ox that eateth grass, as if that could be any symbol of the Most High! “This thing became a sin.”

[1 Kings 12:31](#). *And, he made an house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi.*

For the sons of Levi went over to Judah, and remained faithful to God; and the better sort of people probably dreaded to assume the office to which God had called the sons of Levi, and none would undertake it but the very lowest of the people.

[1 Kings 12:32](#). *And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that is in Judah,*

He shifted the month, but retained the day, — the fifteenth day of the eighth month instead of the seventh. “That was quite unimportant,” say some. I do not agree with them, for nothing is unimportant that has to do with the law of God’s house. Disobedience may be more plainly seen in some of the non-essentials than in an essential thing. At all events, we have no right to alter jot or tittle of the divine command.

[1 Kings 12:32-33](#). *And he offered upon the altar. So did he in Beth-el, sacrificing unto the calves that he had made: and he placed in Beth-el the priests of the high places which he had made. So he offered upon the altar*

which he had made in Beth-el the fifteenth day of the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised of his own heart;

It is a strong condemnation of anything in religion if it be devised by a man's own heart. We are to do what God bids us, as God bids us, when God bids us, and because God bids us; but that which is merely of our own free will, ordained and manufactured by ourselves, is practically the worship of ourselves, and not the worship of God.

[1 Kings 12:33](#). *And ordained a feast unto the children of Israel: and he offered upon the altar, and burnt incense.*

Thus Israel was led astray at the very beginning. She came to the turning of the roads, and took the wrong course, and she went from bad to worse. God save all of us from following her evil example, but may we all serve the one living and true God, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

This exposition consisted of readings from [1 Kings 11:40-43](#); 1 Kings 12.

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1 Kings Chapter 13

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER 14

Verses 21-24

[1 Kings 14:21](#). *And Rehoboam the son of Solomon reigned in Judah.*

After great mountains often come low valleys. Solomon was a wise man; Rehoboam was otherwise.

[1 Kings 14:21](#). *Rehoboam was forty and one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which the LORD did choose out of all the tribes of Israel, to put his name there.*

Rehoboam ought to have been a good king. Jerusalem was the holy city, the chosen city; God put his own name there. It is a sad thing that this king should try to put away God's name from the chosen city.

[1 Kings 14:21](#). *And his mother's name was Naamah an Ammonitess.*

There was bad blood in him. How often do we find that the good king has a good mother's name mentioned with his own! Bad kings generally come from some stranger, some heathen princess. It was so with Rehoboam.

[1 Kings 14:22](#). *And Judah did evil in the sight of the LORD, and they provoked him to jealousy with their sins which they had committed, above all that their fathers had done.*

Their fathers had been great sinners; but, in the days of David, they had not set up false gods. In the days of Solomon, after the temple had been built, they began to go astray. It is a curious thing that a high ritualistic service, even if it be right, is usually attended with a down-coming in spirituality. When the temple service was instituted, it was the beginning of a decline; but in Rehoboam's day that decline became more apparent, the "down-grade" became more visible.

[1 Kings 14:23](#). *For they also built them high places, and images, and groves, on every high hill, and under every green tree.*

They could not have enough of it. When men go wrong, they generally go wrong very greedily; they cannot have too much of evil.

[1 Kings 14:24](#). *And there were also sodomites in the land: and they did according to all the abominations of the nations which the LORD cast out before the children of Israel.*

When men once turn aside from the living God to follow inventions of their own, there is no telling where they will go; nothing is too foul, nothing is too filthy for them. Now read the same story as you find it in 2 Chronicles 12.

This exposition consisted of readings from [1 Kings 14:21-24](#) and 2 Chronicles 12.

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1 Kings Chapter 15

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

1 Kings Chapter 16

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER 17

Verses 1-24

[1 Kings 17:1](#). *And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.*

How abruptly this man breaks in upon the scene! He leaps like a lion from the thicket. There is no previous announcement of his coming; but here he stands, God's own man ordained to bear witness in evil times, — to stand like a brazen pillar when everything around him seems to be moving from its place. Ahab had not been accustomed to be spoken to in this fashion. Mark how personal is Elijah's message; he does not begin even by saying, as the prophets usually did, "Thus saith the Lord." There is something that at first seems almost audacious about his expression: "There shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word." A man may sometimes seem self-assertive when, really, he has so completely lost himself in God that he does not care what people think about him, whether they regard him as an egotist or not. Some men appear to be modest because they are proud, while others seem to be proud because they have sunk themselves, and only speak so boldly because they have their Master's authority at the back of their words. Bravely did Elijah say, "There shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word."

[1 Kings 17:2-3](#). *And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan.*

Of course, the prophet would have had to share in the general want unless God had provided for him, and therefore the Lord took care that his servant should be hidden away where a brooklet would continue to run after the moisture had departed from other places.

[1 Kings 17:4](#). *And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there.*

Perhaps someone says, "Ravens were more likely to rob the prophet than to feed him;" and so they were. Some have objected that these ravens

were unclean; what if they were? Things are not made unclean because they are carried by unclean creatures. Did not Abigail bring to David food upon asses which were unclean? There is no sense in that objection. “Oh, but!” somebody else asks, “how should ravens bring food?” How should they not, if God commanded them? All creatures are under his control. A God, and a miracle is simple enough. If God does not feed his people by any other means, he will command ravenous beasts and unclean birds to feed them.

[1 Kings 17:5](#). *So he went and did according unto the word of the LORD: for he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan.*

It is the glory of Elijah that he does whatever God bids him, asking no questions. He simply, like a child, goes to the brook just as, like a hero, he had previously stood before the king.

[1 Kings 17:6-7](#). *And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook. And it came to pass after a while, that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land.*

Brooks will dry up, even if godly men are being sustained by them. Is there anyone here whose brook is drying up? Has it quite dried up? Still trust you in God; for, if the ravens are put out of commission, God will employ some other agency.

[1 Kings 17:8-9](#). *And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee.*

It was a time of famine, yet God sent him to a widow woman! She is sure to need sustaining herself; yes, and she shall get it, too, through sustaining the prophet, he that could command the ravens to feed his servant could command a widow woman to do the same thing; and he did so. This woman does not appear to have been originally a worshipper of Jehovah. She lived in a heathen country, and probably was herself a heathen; but she revered the servant of Jehovah, and she did his bidding, and doubtless became a true follower of the living God.

[1 Kings 17:10](#). *So he arose and went to Zarephath.*

There is the same unreasoning faith: “So he arose;” just as, in the 5th verse, it is written: “So he went;” that is, with all alacrity, he did his Lord’s bidding without any question.

[1 Kings 17:10](#). *And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman was there-*

There she was, the woman who was to sustain him. She had come, no doubt, with a carriage and pair, to take him home, to her mansion. Oh, no! “The widow woman was there” —

[1 Kings 17:10](#). *Gathering of sticks:*

She was a poor woman to sustain him, but there she was: “gathering of sticks.”

[1 Kings 17:10](#). *And he called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.*

Water was scarce then; every drop was very precious; it was therefore a large request that Elijah made to her.

[1 Kings 17:11](#). *And as she was going to fetch it,-*

For she saw, by his garment, and by his majestic bearing, that he was a messenger of God: “As she was going to fetch it,” —

[1 Kings 17:11-12](#). *He called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand. And she said, As the LORD thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die.*

It was such a little quantity, that two sticks would be quite enough; yet this is the woman who is to sustain Elijah! Poor creature, she needs someone to sustain her and her son! How often does God use very strange means for the accomplishment of his blessed purposes

[1 Kings 17:13](#). *And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son.*

What a trial for her faith! This stranger must have the first portion of her last meal; yet she had faith enough to obey his word.

[1 Kings 17:14-15](#). *For thus saith the LORD God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the LORD sendeth rain upon the earth. And she went and did according to the Saying of Elijah:*

Faith is blessedly contagious. God, by his Spirit can make the faith of one to beget faith in others. This woman learns, from the very boldness of Elijah, to believe in God; and she does as he tells her.

[1 Kings 17:15-18](#). *And she, and he, and her house, did eat many days. And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD, which he spoke by Elijah. And it came*

to pass after these things, that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, fell sick; and his sickness was so sore, that there was no breath left in him. And she said unto Elijah, What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?

Poor creature, having lost her husband, her heart was wrapped up in her son! Under this sharp trial, she condemned herself; but she also began to have hard thoughts of the man of God. We none of us know what we may say when we are overwhelmed with a great trouble. It is easy to find fault with the utterance of a poor distracted spirit, and to say, "That is improper language." Hast thou never spoken so in the hour of thy grief? Blessed is that man from whose lips there has never escaped a wrong word in the time of his anguish. This widow woman was a mother with a dead child in the house; do not find fault with her, but tenderly pity her, and all who are in a like case.

[1 Kings 17:19-20](#). *And he said unto her, Give me thy son. And he took him out of her bosom, and carried him up into a loft, where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed. And he cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, hast thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son!*

The words of the woman had touched his heart, and perhaps he also spoke unadvisedly; but who are we that we should judge? He seemed to feel that, wherever he went, he was bringing trouble upon people. All Israel was afflicted with drought because of his prophecy, and now this poor woman had lost her darling child. Yet even in this desperate case he did not give up hope, and prayer, and effort.

[1 Kings 17:21](#). *And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again.*

This was splendid faith on the part of the prophet. Nobody had ever prayed before for the restoration of one who was dead; no one had ever attempted to work such a miracle as this; but Elijah's faith was strung up to a wonderful pitch. Here was faith ready to receive the blessing, so the blessing would surely come. Here was the faith that could move mountains, and stir the very gates of death. Elijah treads an unaccustomed road, and asks for what had never been given before.

[1 Kings 17:22-23](#). *And the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived. And Elijah took the child, and brought him down out of the chamber into the house, and delivered him unto his mother: and Elijah said, See, thy son liveth.*

Elijah was never a man of many words; he was a prophet mighty in deeds; he said little, but what he did spoke loudly.

[1 Kings 17:24](#). *And the woman said to Elijah, Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in thy mouth is truth.*

Did she not know this before? Yes, or else she would not have given him the first portion of her meal. She must have known it, for she had been living for a long time upon the meal and the oil which he had multiplied. But now she said that she knew it, as if she had never known it before. God has a way of bringing truth home to the heart with such vividness that, though we have been perfectly acquainted with it for years, yet we are compelled to cry, "Now I know it; now I have it as I never had it before; now I grasp it and embrace it with my very soul!" May we all know the truth of God in this grand fashion! Amen.

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CHAPTER 18

Verses 17-40

We shall read at this time the story of Elijah's challenge to the priests of Baal. Remember that there had been three years without dew or rain. The whole country was dried up till it seemed to be a desert; and all were famished for lack of water.

[1 Kings 18:17-18](#). *And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel? And he answered, I have not troubled Israel: but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and Thou hast followed Baalim.*

It is the way of men to cast the blame of their trouble not upon their sin and upon themselves, but upon those who have warned them. Mark Elijah's holy boldness. "I have not troubled Israel, but thou."

[1 Kings 18:19](#). *Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel unto mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table.*

He knew how many there were of them. The man's heart was so engaged in this battle for God against idols, that he had counted all his adversaries.

[1 Kings 18:20-21](#). *So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto Mount Carmel. And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? If the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.*

So undecided were they — perhaps so cowed by the presence of that brave man who feared none, but only feared God.

[1 Kings 18:22-24](#). *Then said Elijah unto the people, I even I only, remain a prophet of the Lord; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men. Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves. and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under. And I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken.*

And the Baalite priests could not refuse the challenge. For they worshipped the sun-god — the god of fire; and if he could not answer the sun-worshippers, he must be no God at all.

[1 Kings 18:25-26](#). *And Elijah said unto the prophets of Baal, Choose you one bullock for yourselves, and dress it first; for ye are many; and call on the name of your gods, but put no fire under. And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon.*

Which was Baal's own high time, for then the sun would be at its zenith — “from morning, even unto noon.”

[1 Kings 18:26](#). *Saying, O Baal, hear us.*

Repeating their cry again and again. For this is the way of all false worship — to use vain repetitions, as the heathens do, which is forbidden to us.

[1 Kings 18:26](#). *But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made.*

Which was their superstition. They were going through the whole performance of the genuflexions of some kind or another. They leaped upon the altar which was made.

[1 Kings 18:27](#); [1 Kings 18:31](#). And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked. And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them. And it came to pass, when midday was past, and they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded. And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me. And all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the altar of the Lord that was broke, down. And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the LORD came, saying, Israel shall be thy name:

For he meant this day to prove that God was God of the twelve tribes — not of himself and his tribe, but of all the families of Israel.

[1 Kings 18:32-37](#). And with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD: and he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two measures of seed. And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid him on the wood, and said, Fill four barrels with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice, and on the wood. And he said, Do it the second time. And he said, Do it the third time, And they did it the third time. And the water ran round about the altar; and he filled the trench also with water. And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that. Elijah the prophet came near, and said, LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the LORD God, and thou hast turned their heart back again.

There was the prayer. How different altogether from this repetition of words — this leaping — this cutting with knives. He states his wish; he pleads his cause; he brings forward his arguments; and this is his prayer.

[1 Kings 18:38-40](#). Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, he is the God; the LORD, he is the God. And Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape. And they took them: and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there.

And thus did he prove that he was the prophet of God, and that God was the God of Israel.

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CHAPTER 19

Verses 1-21

[1 Kings 19:1](#). *And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal how he had slain all the prophets with the sword.*

Jezebel was the chief patroness of the idolatrous prophets, and therefore you may imagine how her wrath was stirred when her husband told her what Elijah had done to the men who ate at her table.

[1 Kings 19:2-3](#). *Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to morrow about this time. And when he saw that, he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beersheba, which belongeth to Judah, and left his servant there.*

This is the man who could fearlessly face the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of the groves, and slay them at the brook Kishon, the dauntless prophet of fire, who dared to call King Ahab the troubler of Israel; yet now he trembles before a woman's threatening, and arises, and flees for his life. Verily, the best of men are but men at the best, and the strongest of men are weak as water when once the power of God is withdrawn from them. The high-strung tension of the top of Carmel was now to be followed by a not unnatural reaction, and the heroic prophet was to sink into the lowest state of despondency. He left his servant at Beersheba;-

[1 Kings 19:4](#). *But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die;*

What inconsistent beings men are! Elijah had fled to save his life, yet "he requested for himself that he might die;" — that he might die because he was afraid of death, die under a juniper tree in the wilderness in order to escape death at the hand of Jezebel.

[1 Kings 19:4](#). *And said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers.*

This was the man who never died, yet “he requested for himself that he might die.” How gracious it is, on God’s part, not to grant the requests of his people when they are unwise, as this petition of Elijah was! Had he known that he would go up by a whirlwind into heaven, riding in a chariot of fire drawn by horses of fire, surely he would not have prayed after this fashion, “It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers.”

[1 Kings 19:5-6](#). *And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat. And he looked, and, behold, there was a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again.*

He was very sad at heart because of the apostasy of Israel; and beside that, he was very weary, utterly exhausted by the tremendous excitement through which he had passed, and by the long journey which he had already taken; so he did the wisest thing possible, “he did eat and drink, and laid him down again.”

[1 Kings 19:7](#). *And the angel of the LORD came again the second time, and touched him and said, Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee.*

God exercises foresight on behalf of his people which they cannot themselves exercise. He knows when we are to be called either to unusual service or unusual suffering, and he prepares us for it. He not only gives us spiritual meat to eat because we know that we are hungry, but he also gives it to us because of our future needs which, for the present, are quite unknown to us.

[1 Kings 19:8-9](#). *And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God. And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and, behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and he said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah?*

“Thou, Jehovah’s courageous prophet, why hast thou fled? Why art thou here when so much is necessary to be done for the apostate people? ‘What doest thou here?’ How comest thou to be here, in a cave, when the nation needs thy presence? ‘What doest thou here, Elijah?’”

[1 Kings 19:10](#). *And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down*

thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.

He despaired of the good cause, and this was a great pity; for a man such as he was ought never to have given way to such feelings. Was not God with him; and where God is, must there not be victory?

[1 Kings 19:11-13](#). *And he said, go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah?*

God will repeat his questions to his people if they have not due effect the first time, for he is very tender, and pitiful, and patient.

[1 Kings 19:14](#). *And he said,-*

A second time pouring out the bitterness of his soul before his God,-

[1 Kings 19:14](#). *I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.*

It was a good thing that Elijah could thus pour out his complaint into the sympathizing ear of the Most High. Such bitterness of soul as his is very apt to ferment, and to breed all manner of ills, but when we can tell the Lord all that is in our heart, then a time of blessed relief is not far off.

[1 Kings 19:15](#). *And the LORD said unto him, go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus:-*

“Get back to thy work; be not a deserter from the field of battle; return, for thou art wanted for various duties.”

[1 Kings 19:15-16](#). *And when thou comest, anoint Hazael to be king over Syria And Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel: and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abelmeholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room.*

Thus there shall be a successor to carry on your work when you have really done your part of it.

[1 Kings 19:17-18](#). *And it shall come to pass, that him that escapeth the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay: and him that escapeth from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay. Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him.*

How this gracious assurance must have revived the prophet's spirit! He knew nothing about those seven thousand faithful Israelites, and he must have been amazed and delighted to hear of them. There was no need for him to say, "I, even I only, am left," for there was a noble band of stalwarts to stand up with him, and defend the name and cause of Jehovah.

[1 Kings 19:19](#). *So he departed thence,-*

Cheered and comforted, he went back to his work without uttering another word, and we do not read of his spirit flagging again: "So he departed thence," —

[1 Kings 19:19-20](#) *And found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth: and Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him. And he left the oxen, and ran after Elijah, And said, Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee. And he said unto him, Go back again: for what have I done to thee?*

The Lord wants no pressed men in his service; his soldiers must all be volunteers; but Elisha was a man of a true heart and a brave spirit, so we read:-

[1 Kings 19:21](#). *And he returned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen, and slew them, and boiled their flesh with the instruments of the oxen, and gave unto the people, and they did eat. Then he arose, and went after Elijah and ministered unto him.*

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CHAPTER 20

Verses 1-34

[1 Kings 20:1-4](#). *And Benhadad the king of Syria gathered all his host together: and there were thirty and two kings with him, and horses, and chariots: and he went up and besieged Samaria, and warred against it. And he sent messengers to Ahab, king of Israel, into the city, and said unto him,*

Thus saith Benhadad, Thy silver and thy gold is mine, thy wives also and thy children, even the goodliest, are mine. And the king of Israel answered and said, My lord, O king, according to thy saying, I am thine, and all that I have.

This was a king of Israel, meanly crouching before the idolatrous king of Syria. Not after this fashion would David have spoken, or any of those kings who followed the Lord of hosts; but when men forsake God, they soon become cowards. What kingdom or nation shall prosper that casts off the yoke of the Most High?

1 Kings 20:5-6. *And the messengers came again, and said, Thus speaketh Benhadad, saying, although I have sent unto thee, saying, Thou shalt deliver me thy silver, and thy gold, and thy wives, and thy children; Yet I will end my servants unto thee tomorrow about this time, and they shall search thine house, and the houses of thy servants; and it shall be that whatsoever is pleasant in thine eyes, they shall put it in their hand, and take it away.*

That is always the way with such people, give them an inch, and they take a mile. Ahab had agreed to all that the Syrian king claimed, so now Benhadad pushes his advantage. If you ever yield to Satan, you will find him to be a hard taskmaster. You can never yield enough to satisfy him; and if you yield to any sin, whatever it may be, you will find it to be a cruel tyrant to you. If you allow it once to have power over your soul, it will push its advantage further and further, and make your yoke to be exceedingly heavy.

1 Kings 20:7-9. *Then the king of Israel called all the elders of the land, and said, Mark, I pray you, and see how this man seeketh mischief: for he sent unto me for my wives, and for my children, and for my silver, and for my gold, and I denied him not. And all the elders and all the people said unto him, Hearken not unto him, nor consent. Wherefore he said unto the messengers of Benhadad, Tell my lord, the king. All that thou didst send for to thy servant at the first I will do: but this thing I may not do. And the messengers departed, and brought him word again.*

Driven to extremity, Ahab showed that he had a little courage left, and when he was supported by his people, and, possibly, urged on by them, he put his foot down, and would not altogether submit to Benhadad. Oh, that men had the moral courage to revolt against sin! Would that, when they felt

its cruel bondage, they would resist it! God grant them grace to do so, and strengthen them in their resistance!

1 Kings 20:10. *And Benhadad sent unto him, and said, The gods do so unto me, and more also, if the dust of Samaria shall suffice for handfuls for all the people that follow me.*

As much as to say, “I will bring so many against you that all the dust of the city would not be enough to furnish a handful each.”

1 Kings 20:11. *And the king of Israel answered and said, Tell him, Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off.*

That was a sharp shrewd check to the boasting of the Syrian king.

1 Kings 20:12-15. *And it came to pass, when Benhadad heard this message, as he was drinking, he and the kings in the pavilions, that he said unto his servants, Set yourselves in array. And they set themselves in array against the city. And, behold, there came a prophet unto Ahab king of Israel, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Hast thou seen all this great multitude? Behold, I will deliver it into thine hand this day; and thou shalt know that I am the LORD. And Ahab said, By whom? And he said, Thus saith the LORD, Even by the young men of the princes of the provinces. Then he said, Who shall order the battle? And he answered, Thou. Then he numbered the young men of the princes of the provinces, and they were two hundred and thirty two: and after them he numbered all the people, even all the children of Israel, being seven thousand.*

All the volunteers that were ready for the war; they were only seven thousand.

1 Kings 20:16-18. *And they went out at noon. But Benhadad was drinking himself drunk in the pavilions, he and the kings, the thirty and two kings that helped him. And the young men of the princes of the provinces went out first; and Benhadad sent out, and they told him, saying, There are men come out of Samaria. And he said, —*

In his drunken fury,” he said,” —

1 Kings 20:18. *Whether they be come out for peace, take them alive; or whether they be come out for war, take them alive.*

They were not to be so easily taken as Benhadad imagined.

1 Kings 20:19-21. *So these young men of the princes of the provinces came out of the city, and the army which followed them. And they slew every one his man: and the Syrians fled, and Israel pursued them: and Benhadad the King of Syria escaped on an horse with the horsemen. And*

the king of Israel went out, and smote the horses and chariots, and slew the Syrians with a great slaughter.

God has ways and means of delivering his people at his own time. I wish all the young men of our churches had the high ambition to be serviceable to the Lord of hosts. These young princes were a very small band of soldiers, but they led the way, and smote the drunken monarch and his troops —and if our young men, full of holy zeal and ardor, had confidence in God, and went forth every one to slay his man, by which I mean, each one to win a soul to Christ, what glorious victories would be won for the truth as it is in Jesus!

1 Kings 20:22. *And the prophet came to the king of Israel, and said unto him, Go, strengthen thyself, and mark, and see what thou doest: for at the return of the year the king of Syria will come up against thee.*

Another year would bring another war, so they must be prepared.

1 Kings 20:23. *And the servants of the king of Syria said unto him, Their gods are god of the hills; therefore they were stronger than we; but let us fight against them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they.*

It was a current heathenish idea, that there was one god for a mountain, another for a stream, another for a plain; and these men imagined that the glorious Jehovah was a local deity like their images were supposed to be.

1 Kings 20:24. *And do this thing, Take the kings away, every man out of his place, and put captains in their rooms:*

“Do not let the kings, who have their own armies, govern them, for that creates divisions in the camp; but appoint captains in their place.”

1 Kings 20:25-27. *And number thee an army, like the army that thou hast lost, horse for horse, and chariot for chariot: and we will fight against them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they. And he hearkened unto their voice, and did so. And it came to pass at the return of the year, that Benhadad numbered the Syrians, and went up to Aphek, to fight against Israel. And the children of Israel were numbered, and were all present, —*

That is a grand record. It shows the kind of men they were. I wish that all our church-members were present at all our prayer-meetings, and on all occasions when work is to be done for Christ. What a healthy condition the church would be in if it could be said, “The children of Israel were numbered, and were all present,” —

1 Kings 20:27. *And went against them: and the children of Israel pitched before them like two little flocks of kids;*

A herd of goats was seldom very large, and the whole of the Israelites put together seemed only “like two little flocks of kids;” —

1 Kings 20:27-28. *But the Syrians filled the country. And there came a man of God, and spake unto the king of Israel, and said, Thus saith the LORD, Because the Syrians have said, The LORD is God of the hills, but he is not God of the valleys, therefore will I deliver all this great multitude into thine hand, and ye shall know that I am the LORD.*

See how good came to Israel through the blasphemy of the Syrians! Whenever there is a rather worse book than usual brought out against the religion of Jesus Christ, or a more than ordinary villainous blasphemy is invented against the grace of God, you may almost clap your hands, and say, “Now will God bestir himself for his truth and for righteousness’ sake. These men will provoke him so that he will arise, and defend his own cause.”

1 Kings 20:29-32. *And they pitched one over against the other seven days. And so it was, that in the seventh day the battle was joined: and the children of Israel slew of the Syrians an hundred thousand footmen in one day. But the rest fled to Aphek, into the city; and there a wall fell upon twenty and seven thousand of the men that were left. And Benhadad fled, and came into the city, into an inner chamber. And his servants said unto him, Behold now, we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings: let us, I pray thee, put sackcloth on our loins, and ropes upon our heads, and go out to the king of Israel: peradventure he will save thy life. So they girded sackcloth on their loins, and put ropes on their heads, and came to the king of Israel, and said, Thy servant Benhadad —*

There is a wonderful difference between this language and the way in which he had previously spoken. “Thy servant Benhadad” —

1 Kings 20:32. *Saith, I pray thee, let me live. And he said, Is he yet alive? he is my brother.*

When a man leaves his God, he cannot distinguish between his foes and his friends; so that, oftentimes, those who would do him the direst mischief he reckons to be his brothers.

1 Kings 20:33-34. *Now the men did diligently observe whether any thing would come from him, and did hastily catch it: and they said, Thy brother Benhadad. Then he said, Go ye, bring him. Then Benhadad came forth to*

him; and he caused him to come up into the chariot. And Benhadad said unto him, The cities, which my father took from thy father, I will restore; and thou shalt make streets for thee in Damascus, as my father made in Samaria. Then said Ahab, I will send thee away with this covenant. So he made a covenant with him, and sent him away.

Ahab actually made a treaty of peace with him, and let him live to plot incalculable mischief against the nation.

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CHAPTER 4

Verses 1-7

[2 Kings 4:1](#). *Now there cried a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophet unto Elisha, saying, Thy servant my husband is dead; and thou knowest that thy servant did fear the LORD: and the creditor is come to take unto him my two sons to be bondmen.*

It is sad for anyone to be in debt, and yet there may be circumstances under which even a man who fears the Lord may die in debt, and leave no provision for his wife and children except a large portion of sorrow. In the case of this poor widow, it was not long before she cried to Elisha, “The

creditor is come.” He generally does come pretty quickly, and he had come to her to take away her two sons whom she needed to support her, to make them bondmen,-slaves, to serve him for a certain number of years till their father’s debt was worked out, and this hurt the poor woman’s heart, so she came to see what the Lord’s servant could do for her. She could not bear to see her sons taken away to serve as bondmen to a stranger, through no fault of their own; and, possibly, through no fault on their father’s part.

[2 Kings 4:2](#). *And Elisha said unto her, What shall I do for thee?*

Elisha was probably about as poor as she was, so what could he do for her?

[2 Kings 4:2](#). *Tell me, what hast thou in the house?*

“Whatever there is in the house must go towards this debt, so ‘tell me what hast thou in the house?’”

[2 Kings 4:2](#). *And she said, Thine handmaid hath not any thing in the house, save a pot of oil.*

Her husband had been a God-fearing man, a true servant of Jehovah, yet he had died in such dire poverty that his widow had to say to Elisha “Thine handmaid hath not any thing in the house, save a pot of oil.” Those were indeed bad times for the sons of the prophets; for, in those days, men cared more for false prophets and for the priests of Baal than for the servants of the Most High God.

[2 Kings 4:3](#). *Then he said, Go, borrow thee vessels abroad of all thy neighbours, even empty vessels; borrow not a few.*

“Get as many empty oil jars as ever you can, it does not matter how great nor how many they are, but they must be empty.”

[2 Kings 4:4-6](#). *And when thou art come in, thou shalt shut the door upon thee and upon thy sons, and shalt pour out into all those vessels, and thou shalt set aside that which is full. So she went from him, and shut the door upon her and upon her sons, who brought the vessels to her; and she poured out. And it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said unto her son, Bring me yet a vessel. And he said unto her, There is not a vessel more. And the oil stayed.*

There was no reason why “the oil stayed” except that there was “not a vessel more” to receive the flowing stream.

[2 Kings 4:7](#). *Then she came and told the man of God.*

She must have understood that the oil was to be used for the payment of her debt; but she was a woman of delicate sensitiveness, with a tender

conscience, as honest people usually are, so she wanted full permission from Elisha before she would dispose of the oil. She regarded it, in some sense, as his oil: as it was through using the means that he had directed that her little store of oil had been so miraculously multiplied; so “she came and told the man of God.”

[2 Kings 4:7](#). *And he said, Go, sell the oil, and pay thy debt, and live thou and thy children of the rest.*

What a merciful deliverance that was for the poor widow and her sons! And there have been many other deliverances, in the experiences of God’s people, which, if they have not been quite so miraculous as this one, have nevertheless been very remarkable, although God has appeared to work them the common way in which he is constantly working. Yet they have been uncommon mercies all the while. Now let us read Paul’s letter to the Christians at Philippi who had been the means of supplying his necessities, though not in the miraculous manner in which the prophet Elisha had supplied the needs of that poor widow.

This exposition consisted of readings from [2 Kings 4:1-7](#); and Philippians 4.

Verses 1-37

[2 Kings 4:1](#). *Now there cried a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets unto Elisha, saying, Thy servant my husband is dead; and thou knowest that thy servant did fear the LORD and the creditor is come to take unto him my two sons to be bondmen.*

According to the very cruel custom of those times, if a man were in debt, and had no means of payment, his children were sold for slaves. Here was a poor widow, whose husband had been one of the sons of the prophets, but he had died in debt. He was evidently one who was known to Elisha as a faithful, God-fearing man, and perhaps that partly accounted for his poverty. The false priests were fed at Jezebel’s table; but because this man worshipped Jehovah, the one living and true God, he had probably been persecuted and hunted down until he had lost what little he formerly had, and, therefore, when he died, he could leave his wife no other legacy than that of debt; and, in consequence, the creditor came to seize her two sons to be bondmen.

[2 Kings 4:2](#). *And Elisha said unto her, What shall I do for thee? tell me, what hast thou in the house? And she said, Thine handmaid hath not any thing in the house, save a pot of oil.*

They used oil extensively in the preparation of their food as well as for lighting their dwellings. This woman was so poor that she had no meal in the house, but she had a little oil. When our Lord was about to feed the five thousand, he asked his disciples, "How many loaves have ye?" So here the prophet asked the poor woman, "What hast thou in the house?" and she told him she had only "a pot of oil."

[2 Kings 4:3](#). *Then he said, Go, borrow thee vessels abroad of all thy neighbours, even empty vessels; borrow not a few.*

Evidently the poor woman's credit was good though her debts were heavy; her neighbours knew she would have paid her creditor if she could, so they were willing to grant her request though they probably wondered why she wanted so many empty vessels.

[2 Kings 4:4-7](#). *And when thou art come in, thou shalt shut the door upon thee and upon thy sons, and shalt pour out into all those vessels, and thou shalt set aside that which is full. So she went from him, and shut the door upon her and her sons, who brought the vessels to her; and she poured out. And it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said unto her son, Bring me yet a vessel. And he said unto her, There is not a vessel more. And the oil stayed. Then she came and told the man of God.*

As it was through obeying his directions she had miraculously obtained this large supply of oil, she would not make use of it without further counsel from the man of God, who had already given her such good advice.

[2 Kings 4:7](#). *And he said, Go, sell the oil, and pay thy debt, —*
"That is thy first duty; 'pay thy debt,'" —

[2 Kings 4:7-8](#). *And live thou and thy children of the rest. And it fell on a day, that Elisha passed to Shunem, where was a great woman; and she constrained him to eat bread. And so it was, that as oft as he passed by, he turned in thither to eat bread.*

The prophet had helped a poor woman; now a rich woman helps him. God sometimes pays his servants in kind very speedily for anything they have done for those who belong to him; at other times, he puts it to the credit of their account.

[2 Kings 4:9-13](#). *And she said unto her husband, Behold now, I perceive that this is an holy man of God, which passeth by us continually. Let us make a little chamber, I pray thee, on the wall; and let us set for him there a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick: and it shall be, when he cometh to us, that he shall turn in thither. And it fell on a day, that he came*

thither, and he turned into the chamber, and lay there. And he said to Gehazi his servant, Call this Shunammite. And when he had called her, she stood before him. And he said unto him, Say now unto her, Behold, thou hast been careful for us with all this care; what is to be done for thee? wouldest thou be spoken for to the king, or to the captain of the host?

God's servants must not be ungrateful for any kindness that is shown to them. If they receive hospitality, they must be ready to give a return of such things as they have. Elisha was willing to do anything in his power for this hospitable Shunammite, so he said to her, "Wouldest thou be spoken for to the king, or to the captain of the host?"

[2 Kings 4:13](#). *And she answered, I dwell among mine own people.*

She had no desire for earthly greatness, and she was very wise, for, usually, happiness is to be found in that middle state which Agur desired when he said, "Give me neither poverty nor riches." This Shunammite had no wish to be removed to the trying and perilous atmosphere of the court or the army, so she answered, "I dwell among mine own people."

[2 Kings 4:14-19](#). *And he said, What then is to be done for her? And Gehazi answered, Verily she hath no child, and her husband is old. And he said, Call her. And when he had called her, she stood in the door. And he said, About this season, according to the time of life, thou shalt embrace a son. And she said, Nay, my lord, thou man of God, do not lie unto thine handmaid. And the woman conceived, and bare a son at that season that Elisha had said unto her according to the time of life. And when the child was grown, it fell on a day, that he went out to his father to the reapers. And he said unto his father, My head, my head.*

The sun had been too hot for the child; sunstroke had seized him.

[2 Kings 4:19-20](#). *And he said to a lad, Carry him to his mother. And when he had taken him, and brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees till noon, and then died.*

How transient are all our earthly treasures! The child was well, and ill and dead in the course of a few hours. Hold with a loose hand all things earthly. Make not your gourds into gods, for they will soon wither and die. Very often, we destroy our own comforts by thinking too much of them. As soon as we make anything that we have into an idol, it will be broken in pieces, or taken from us, or in some way turned into a curse to us. See how this good woman acted when she had suffered this great sorrow.

[2 Kings 4:21-22](#). *And she went up, and laid him on the bed of the man of God, and shut the door upon him, and went out. And she called unto her husband, and said, Send me, I pray thee, one of the young men, and one of the asses, that I may run to the man of God, and come again.*

She did not tell him her errand; she wished to keep the trouble to herself for a while.

[2 Kings 4:23](#). *And he said, Wherefore wilt thou go to him to day? it is neither new moon, nor sabbath.*

“It is not the ordinary time for going to the prophet.”

[2 Kings 4:23](#). *And she said, (Salem, that is, Peace; or as we read it,) It shall be well.*

She must have been a woman of great faith. She checked her natural emotions, and believed in God that all would be for the best. “It shall be well.”

[2 Kings 4:24-26](#). *Then she saddled an ass, and said to her servant, Drive, and go forward; slack not thy riding for me, except I bid thee. So she went and came unto the man of God to mount Carmel. And it came to pass, when the man of God saw her afar off, that he said to Gehazi his servant, Behold, yonder is that Shunammite: Run now, I pray thee, to meet her, and say unto her, Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child? And she answered, It is well.*

It is heroic faith when we can feel that, if the child shall die, it is well; if this husband shall die, it is well: and if we ourselves shall die, all is well, for he who has the arranging of all that concerns us cannot arrange otherwise than well. Alas that, often, our rebellious spirit says, with poor old Jacob, “All these things are against me,” but true faith sits humbly down at the feet of the great Disposer of all events, and says, “He hath done all things well.”

[2 Kings 4:27](#). *And when she came to the man of God to the hill, she caught him by the feet:*

As if she feared lest he should go away before she had poured into his ears the story of her grief.

[2 Kings 4:27](#). *But Gehazi came near to thrust her away. And the man of God said, Let her alone; for her soul is vexed within her: and the LORD hath hid it from me, and hath not told me.*

Those ancient prophets of God had only limited knowledge. The Spirit of God taught them some things, but not all things so Elisha was made to

feel that he was but man, even though the Spirit of God often spake through him.

[2 Kings 4:28](#). *Then she said, Did I desire a son of my lord? did I not say, Do not deceive me?*

Then he learned what her trouble was, and understood that the child was dead. Before she had said as much as that, he read the news in the tones of her voice.

[2 Kings 4:29-30](#). *Then he said to Gehazi, Gird up thy loins, and take my staff in thine hand, and go thy way; if thou meet any man, salute him not; and if any salute thee, answer him not again: and lay my staff upon the face of the child. And the mother of the child said, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee.*

She did not believe in Gehazi, nor yet in the staff, and herein she was a wise woman God would not bless the prophet's staff to the child's restoration, lest relic worship should spring up amongst the Israelites, or lest they should begin to attach some value to outward signs.

[2 Kings 4:30-34](#). *And he arose, and followed her. And Gehazi passed on before them and laid the staff upon the face of the child; but there was neither voice, nor hearing. Wherefore he went again to meet him, and told him, saying, The child is not awaked. And when Elisha was come into the house, behold, the child was dead, and laid upon his bed. He went in therefore, and shut the door upon them twain, and prayed unto the LORD. And he went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands: and he stretched himself upon the child; and the flesh of the child waxed warm.*

See the power of prayer; the very gates of death are made to open when Elisha, a man of like passions with ourselves, bows before the Lord in prayer. Learn a lesson also from Elisha's attitude toward the dead child; for, often, God is pleased to give spiritual life through the power of human sympathy. When we put ourselves into the condition of the sinner, hope for him, pray for him, agonize for him in broken-hearted sympathy on his account, putting ourselves as far as we can into his place, God often makes us the instruments by which his Spirit quickens the dead in sin.

[2 Kings 4:35-37](#). *Then he returned, and walked in the house to and fro; and went up, and stretched himself upon him: and the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes. And he called Gehazi, and said, Call this Shunammite. So he called her. And when she was come in unto him, he*

said, Take up thy son. Then she went in, and fell at his feet, and bowed herself to the ground, and took up her son, and went out.

Her heart was too full for speech just then, so she took up her son, and went out.

[2 KINGS CONTENTS](#)

2 Kings Chapter 5

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER 6

Verses 1-23

[2 Kings 6:1](#). *And the sons of the prophets said unto Elisha, Behold now, the place where we dwell with thee is too strait for us.*

It seems to have been a habit of the prophets to gather about them companies of young men whom they instructed in the holy Scripture and in the truths of revelation. Many of these young men became prophets themselves and were the instructors of the people. Elisha, then, was the President of a College for young men who were being trained for the sacred ministry of God. They had grown so numerous that they were cramped in their lodging and they said, "The place is too strait for us. Let us go, we pray thee, unto Jordan, and take thence every man a beam, and let us make us fit place there, where we may dwell." They were ready to work to build their own lodging; they do not appear to have gone into debt for it, and to have saddled themselves and the institution for many years afterwards, but they put their own shoulders to the wheel as good men should do when there is any work to be done for the cause of God.

[2 Kings 6:2-3](#). *Let us go, we pray thee, unto Jordan, and take thence every man a beam, and let us make us a place there, where we may dwell. And he answered, Go ye. And one said, Be content, I pray thee, and go with thy servants. And he answered, I will go.*

His presence would be an encouragement to them; his holy conversation would make their work more pleasant, they would feel also as if they were more truly working for God when they had the presence and the patronage

of God's servant. He, on the other hand, was quite ready to go. God's ministers, if they are what they should be are quite ready to help in any kind of work. We find Paul the Apostle picking up sticks to make a fire, and we find Elisha going with his dear friends to the forest when they would cut down timber to make a house. We sometimes regret that spiritual work should so often have to come into contact with common-place things, and yet so it is. Young prophets must have a house, and when we gather a congregation we must build them a meeting-house. In this country we cannot meet every day in the open air, and we often regret this, yet I believe it is meant by God to be a discipline for His Church. If the Church cannot come into contact with common life without its spirituality being endangered, so much the worse for its spirituality. It must be flimsy stuff if it cannot bear the wear and tear of common life.

[2 Kings 6:4-5](#). *So he went with them. And when they came to Jordan, they cut down wood. But as one was felling a beam, the axe-head fell into the water: and he cried, and said, Alas, master! for it was borrowed.*

These young men were too poor to buy tools of their own, and they therefore asked for a kindly loan of an axe-head that they might use it in the Lord's service. It was very natural, therefore, that this young man should regret that the axe which he had borrowed should fall off into the water. This made him say,- "Alas!" Be very careful about loans, be sure to repay them in due time, and be very particular that nothing happens so that you cannot. He said, "Alas, master! for it was borrowed."

[2 Kings 6:6](#). *And the man of God said, Where fell it? And he shewed him the place. And he cut down a stick, and cast it in thither; and the iron did swim.*

God can do all things, he can make iron swim-we cannot-and yet you see the prophet did it, and he did it by the use of a stick. He cut down a stick. Was there any connection between the stick and the iron? I can't see any, and yet God does use means, and he would have us use means. "He cut down a stick and cast it in thither, and the iron did swim." If you're in great trouble tonight, have confidence in that God who can make the iron swim. If you have some worry, and you do not know how to meet it, some work, and you do not know how to do it, look to him who made the iron swim and he can do the same for you. Trust him, rest upon him and see if he does not do it.

[2 Kings 6:7-8](#). *Therefore said he, Take it up to thee. And he put out his hand, and took it. Then the king of Syria warred against Israel, and took counsel with his servants, saying, In such and such a place shall be my camp.*

Of course, he wanted to keep it secret, and pounce upon Israel here and there without notice and so win an easy victory.

[2 Kings 6:9-11](#). *And the man of God sent unto the king of Israel, saying, Beware that thou pass not such a place for thither the Syrians are come down. And the king of Israel sent to the place which the man of God told him and warned him of, and saved himself there, not once nor twice. Therefore the heart of the king of Syria was sore troubled for this thing;*

He could not understand how all his well-laid plans were baffled.

[2 Kings 6:11-12](#). *And he called his servants and said unto them, Will ye not shew me which of us is for the king of Israel? And one of his servants said, None, my lord, O King.*

There is no traitor here, there is no one who blabs out the royal secrets, not anyone,

[2 Kings 6:12](#). *But ‘Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, telleth the King of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber.’”*

For the Lord knows what we say in the bedchamber when no ears can hear; if we speak to ourselves he hears it, and if we whisper in all quietness into the ear of one who will never repeat, it is written in the book of the divine record “Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber.”

[2 Kings 6:13](#). *And he said, Go and spy where he is, that I may send and fetch him.*

Not a very wise project, for if Elisha knew all about the words of the king it was not very likely that he would catch him.

[2 Kings 6:13-15](#). *And it was told him, saying, Behold, he is in Dothan. Therefore sent he thither horses, and chariots, and great host: and they came by night, and compassed the city about. And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, beheld, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do?*

That is a question we have often asked, “How shall we do.” We shall do nothing at all. How shall we do? If that were the question we might sit down in despair. The proper question is, “How will God do? How will God

deliver us? But it is only the man of faith who thinks about God at all. How many there are of you who are in trouble and you are wondering how you shall get out of it. Poor things! Poor things! Oh, if we had but faith to look to that Omnipotent arm that is moving among us, and to that great and wise heart that is thinking of us, and then trust our case with him.

[2 Kings 6:16-17](#). *And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.*

More of these horses of fire than there were horses of flesh, more of these chariots of flame than there were chariots of iron.

[2 Kings 6:18-19](#). *And when they came down to him, Elisha prayed unto the LORD and said, Smite this people, I pray thee, with blindness. And he smote them with blindness according to the word of Elisha. And Elisha said unto them, This is not the way, neither is this the city: follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom ye seek. But he led them to Samaria.*

In all which-though I grant you it seems a stratagem Elisha spoke neither more nor less than the truth; Dothan was not his city, Samaria was the city where the man of God dwelt. He was then outside Dothan, and he said, I will bring you to the man whom ye seek, He did lead them to him, took them to his own home, to the very place where he lived. I think I see him leading all these blind men; they had come to catch him, and he had caught them, and he led them to Samaria.

[2 Kings 6:20](#). *And it came to pass, when they were come into Samaria, that Elisha said, LORD, open the eyes of these men, that they may see. And the LORD opened their eyes, and they saw; and, behold, they were in the midst of Samaria.*

In the central square of the city. They opened their eyes and found themselves caught like rats in a trap. What cannot God do!

[2 Kings 6:21](#). *And the king of Israel said unto Elisha, when he saw them, My father, shall I smite them? shall I smite them?*

His hand was on his sword, he would call his men to come forward with their lances. "My father shall I smite them?" See the fine spirit of the prophet, the magnanimity of the man of God!

[2 Kings 6:22](#). *And he answered, Thou shalt not smite them: wouldest thou smite those whom thou hast taken captive with thy sword and with thy*

bow?

For if you had conquered them in fair fight you would not think of killing them; I have captured them by God's power, I have taken them prisoners and they had not be put to death.

[2 Kings 6:22](#). *Set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink, and go to their master.*

This is the way of carrying on war, the best way in all the world; to conquer by grace, to conquer by kindness.

[2 Kings 6:23](#). *And he prepared great provision for them: and when they had eaten and drunk, he sent them away, and they went to their master.*

Now mark the consequences.

[2 Kings 6:23](#). *So the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel.*

No, they could not come any more to vex a people who had treated them so generously, and thus the man of God was master of the situation, his noble spirit was put to the front, and God was glorified.

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2 Kings Chapter 7

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

2 Kings Chapter 8

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2 Kings Chapter 12

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER 13

Verses 1-25

[2 Kings 13:1-2](#). *In the three and twentieth year of Joash the son of Ahaziah king of Judah Jehoahaz the son of Jehu began to reign over Israel in Samaria, and reigned seventeen years. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, and followed the sins of Jeroboam the son, of Nebat, which made Israel to sin; he departed not therefrom.*

“Seventeen years” — that is a long time in which to do mischief. Seventeen years of reigning over a people, influencing them all for mischief, turning them aside from God, and doing his utmost to erase the name of Jehovah from the hearts of the people. Remember, this Jehoahaz was the son of John, who had been called to the front because of the sins of the house of Ahab. Though Jehu was brought forward to be a reformer, yet he and his race were as bad as those who were cast out. What a sad thing this is, when those who are planted where the cumber-ground tree used to be become just as barren as the one that has been out down, or are only fruitful in sour fruit! See here the force of evil example. It was many years since Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, had set up the calves at Bethel and Dan; yet here is another king walking in his footsteps. You cannot tell, if you leave a bad example behind, how your children, and your grandchildren to distant generations, may follow your evil footsteps. Bad examples are very vital; they live on age after age; and influence others long after the first transgressor is dead. The thought that we may be ruining those who are yet

unborn, should keep us back from sin. Notice also, at the end of the second verse, “He departed not therefrom.” There is a final perseverance in sin; some men seem to prove it: “He departed not therefrom.” He was warned against it; he was chastened for it; but “he departed not therefrom,” If men hold on in sin, how much more ought the people of God to hold on in righteousness! Whatever happens to you when you are once in the good old way, may it be said of you, “He departed not therefrom.” If all other men should turn aside, yet let that be said of you, “He departed not therefrom.” But, if you are in the wrong road, may the Lord cause you to turn from it, and to turn to himself at once! If you depart not from evil, you must depart from God.

[2 Kings 13:3](#). *And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he delivered them into the hand of Hazael king of Syria, and into the hand of Ben-hadad the son of Hazael, all their days.*

God’s people cannot sin without coming under chastisement. Remember this word of the Lord, “You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.” If you become church-members, and yet live unholy lives, you come under a special discipline, a discipline which I plainly see to be going on in the Church of God even to this day. “For this cause,” said Paul of the church in Corinth, “many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.” No doubt God does send many rods to his rebellious family. He is not one of those fathers who “spare the rod, and spoil the child.” Hazael and Benhadad were both wicked men; yet God used them as rods to chastise his sinning people.

[2 Kings 13:4](#). *And Jehoahaz besought the LORD, and the LORD hearkened unto him*

Bad as he was, he knew the hand that smote him, and he besought Jehovah. What a wonder it is that God does hear the prayers of even wicked men! I have heard it said, sometimes, that “the prayer of the wicked is an abomination unto God.” There is no such passage as that in the Scripture. It is “the sacrifice of the wicked” that is “abomination to the Lord.” Even when a wicked man cries unto God, and even if his prayer be not a spiritual and acceptable prayer, yet God may hear it in a measure, as he did in this case. Sometimes that hearing of prayer leads men to repentance; and they then pray better prayers, and receive greater blessings.

[2 Kings 13:4](#). *For he saw the oppression of Israel, because the king of Syria oppressed them.*

God cannot bear to see the sorrows of his own people. Even when he himself is laying on the rod, if his child cries, it goes to his heart. Remember what he did to Pharaoh when he heard the sighing and crying of his people in Egypt. There is nothing more powerful with a father's heart than the tears of his child; and God heard the prayers of this bad man because "He saw the oppression of Israel, because the king of Syria oppressed them."

[2 Kings 13:5](#). *(And the LORD gave Israel a saviour, so that they went out from under the hand of the Syrians: and the children of Israel dwelt in their tents, as beforetime.)*

The Lord gave them deliverance from the cruel fetters of the Syrians. They had been so tormented, so plundered, so oppressed in every way, that God had pity upon them, and gave them peace.

[2 Kings 13:6](#). *Nevertheless they departed not from the sins of the house of Jeroboam, who made Israel sin, but walked therein: and there remained the grove also in Samaria.)*

Israel's repentance was only half-hearted; they repented because they suffered. They repented because of the suffering rather than because of the sin. They went back to the sin after they escaped from the sorrow. Oh, be not so, my hearer! If God has chastened thee on account of sin, let thine be a thorough repentance. Go to God with hatred of thy sin; for until thou dost get rid of sin, thy being rid of sorrow will be a small blessing.

[2 Kings 13:7](#). *Neither did he leave of the people to Jehoahaz but fifty horsemen, and ten chariots, and ten thousand footmen; for the king of Syria had destroyed them, and had made them like the dust by threshing.*

God helped them and delivered them; but they were brought very, very low. If God's people sin, their deliverance will cost them dearly. Israel was once a great and powerful nation; their armies went forth in vast hosts; but now they have only the remnant of an army.

[2 Kings 13:8](#). *Now the rest of the acts of Jehoahaz, and all that he did, and his might, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?*

They were not worth writing in the Scriptures. We have very slender records concerning Jehoahaz; but quite enough for such a wicked man.

[2 Kings 13:9-11](#). *And Jehoahaz slept with his fathers; and they buried him in Samaria: and Joash his son reigned in his stead. In the thirty and seventh year of Joash king of Judah began Jehoash the son of Jehoahaz to*

reign over Israel in Samaria, and reigned sixteen years. And he did that which was evil in, the sight of the LORD

One sinner was followed by another. This young man must have seen the mischief that his father's idolatry brought on the people; but he went on in the same evil way. Oh, you sons of godly parents, you ought to follow your fathers' footsteps, for these wicked sons of wicked men followed their fathers' evil example! Oh, that there were an inclination in all the children of the godly to be like their parents, for there is evidently a tendency in the heart of the children of the ungodly to be like their sires!

[2 Kings 13:11](#). *He departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel sin: but he walked therein.*

I repeat what I said before, what a mischievous thing is one evil example! When a man makes another sin, the other who sins is guilty, and the man who makes him sin is a sharer in his guilt. Here is Jeroboam, dead for years, and yet, he keeps on sinning. I may say of him, "He, being dead, yet sinneth." His sin goes on burning like a fire; and surely the punishment continues if the sin continues. As long as souls exist, sin will exist; you cannot stop it. Sin will repeat itself again and again, and multiply in its repetition spreading among thousands perhaps yet unborn. Oh, what an evil thing is sin! Prove to me that sin ever ceases to operate, and you might give me some thought that the punishment will cease; but that can never be; and, as long as sin continues to poison, God will continue to punish.

[2 Kings 13:12-13](#). *And the rest of the acts of Joash, and all that he did, and his might wherewith he fought against Amaziah king of Judah, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? And Joash slept with, his fathers; and Jeroboam sat upon his throne: and Joash, was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel.*

Now, here is a story about this Joash which is preserved to us.

[2 Kings 13:14](#). *Now Elisha was fallen sick of his sickness whereof he died.*

An old man, probably in his ninetieth year; he had served his generation well. We read nothing of him for five and forty years; he seems to have been in comparative seclusion; perhaps in his old age he had been neglected and forgotten, as many a man of God has been who once stood in the front rank. Elisha has fallen mortally sick at last, and he is about to go home.

[2 Kings 13:14](#). *And Joash the king of Israel came down unto him,*

This is one good thing that Joash did. He remembered that it was through Elijah and Elisha that the men of his house, the house of Jehu, had been put upon the throne; and when he heard that Elisha was dying, something like compunction crossed his heart, and he “came down unto him.”

[2 Kings 13:14](#). *And wept over his face,*

As Bishop Hall says, he gave him some drops of warm water; and if a cup of cold water, given to a prophet, shall not be without its reward, so neither shall those tender tears be without their reward.

[2 Kings 13:14](#). *And said, O my father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof.*

Elisha must have opened his eyes when he heard those words, for he recollected that those were nearly the last words that he said to Elijah when his master was taken up to heaven. Perhaps the king had heard that; and, with a kind of delicate thoughtfulness, he applied the words to this grand old man, who was now about to die. He was to Israel chariot and horsemen, for it was by his means that Israel had been delivered.

[2 Kings 13:15-16](#). *And Elisha said unto him, Take bow and arrows. And he took unto him bow and arrows. And he said to the king of Israel, Put thine hand upon the bow. And he put his hand upon it; and Elisha put his hands upon the king's hands.*

Not because he could lend much strength, for he was an old man; but because this signified that God would be with the king, that the power which dwelt in the prophet's God would come through the prophet's hands to help the king.

[2 Kings 13:17](#). *And he said, Open the window eastward.*

They had no glass windows in those days, you know; but they threw back the iron bars that made the shutter, and opened the window eastward.

[2 Kings 13:17](#). *And he opened it. Then Elisha said, Shoot. And he shot. And he said, The arrow of the LORD'S deliverance, and the arrow of deliverance from Syria: for thou shalt smite the Syrians in Aphek, till thou have consumed them.*

It was usual, in the East, when war was proclaimed, to do it by shooting an arrow towards the enemy's country; and this brave old man, soon about to breathe out his life, had strengthened the king in the great weakness of the Israelitish state to proclaim war once more against Syria.

[2 Kings 13:18](#). *And he said, Take the arrows. And he took them.*

I suppose, a quiver full.

[2 Kings 13:18](#). *And he said unto the king of Israel, Smite upon the ground.*

“Shoot the arrows out of the window, and let them strike into the ground, and stick there.”

[2 Kings 13:18-19](#). *And he smote thrice, and stayed. And the man of God was wroth with him,*

Elisha was angry, but he did not sin. He loved the people, and he was grieved to think that the king was so slack and slothful.

[2 Kings 13:19-20](#). *And said, Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times; then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed it: whereas now thou shall smite Syria but thrice. And Elisha died, and they buried him.*

God has different ways of taking his people home. Some go on a sudden, whirled away, as Elijah was. This prophet died gently, worn out with age; but there is something very beautiful about his death. A king weeps over his aged face. He has the pleasure, though it was mingled with pain, of helping to deliver his people; and, after his death, God bore full witness to him.

[2 Kings 13:20-21](#). *And the bands of the Moabites invaded the land at the coming in of the year. And it came to pass, as they were burying a man, that, behold, they spied a band of men; and they cast the man into the sepulcher of Elisha: and when the man was let down, and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet.*

Thus God gave Elisha power, even after death, and certainly set the divine seal upon his message. It was as great a glory to him to give life to the dead as it was to Elijah to pass to heaven without dying at all.

[2 Kings 13:22-23](#). *But Hazael king of Syria oppressed Israel all the days of Jehoahaz. And the LORD was gracious unto them, and had compassion on them, and had respect unto them, because of his covenant*

Ah, that is what always lies at the bottom of God’s mercy, “his covenant.” Oh, that grand word “covenant”! Some think very little of it, few preach much about it; but this is the very foundation of mercy. This is “the deep that lieth under”, out of which all the wells of grace spring up.

[2 Kings 13:23](#). *With Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them, neither cast he them from his presence as yet.*

He would not do it till he was fully driven to it, till provocation upon provocation should wear out his patience,

[2 Kings 13:24-25](#). *So Hazael king of Syria died; and Benhadad his son reigned in, his stead. And Jehoash the son of Jehoahaz took again out of the hand of Benhadad the son of Hazael the cities, which he had taken out of the hand of Jehoahaz his father by war. Three times did Joash beat him, and recovered the cities of Israel.*

He shot three arrows, and now it came to pass that three times did Joash beat Benhadad, and recover the cities of Israel. Oh, that he had beaten the king of Syria six times, and set Israel completely free from its enemy!

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CHAPTER 17

Verses 23-41

[2 Kings 17:23-24](#). *So was Israel carried away out of their own hand to Assyria this day. And the king of Assyria brought men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel: and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof.*

It was a part of the tactics of the Assyrian empire to take people away from their original location and colonize them in other places — to shift them to another land; so that while the Israelites were taken to Babylon,

numbers of those who had lived round about Babylon were brought to live in the Samaritan province, in order that nationalities might thus be broken down and patriotism might expire, thus making it easier for the Assyrian tyrant to govern the land.

[2 Kings 17:25-27](#). *And so it was at the beginning of their dwelling there, that they feared not the LORD: therefore the LORD sent lions among them, which slew some of them. Wherefore they spake to the king of Assyria, saying, The nations which thou hast removed and placed in the cities of Samaria, know not the manner of the God of the land: therefore he hath sent lions among them, and, behold they slay them, because they know not the manner of the God of the land. Then the king of Assyria commanded, saying Carry thither one of the priests whom ye brought from thence; and let them go and dwell there, and let him teach in the manner of the God of the land.*

He did not care one single farthing himself what religion they were of: but if they did not happen to have a religion to suit the country, "Well, then, send one of the priests who used to live there who can teach them what it is." According to his notions, they could take it up just when they liked.

[2 Kings 17:28-31](#). *Then one of the priests whom they had carried away from Samaria came and dwelt in Bethel, and taught them how they should fear the LORD. Howbeit every nation made gods of their own, and put them in the houses of the high places which the Samaritans had made, every nation in their cities wherein they dwelt. And the men of Babylon made Succothbenoth, and the men of Cuth made Nergal, and the men of Hamath made Ashima, and the Avites made Nibhaz and Tartak, and the Sepharvites burnt their children in fire to Adrammelech and Anammelech the gods of Sepharvaim.*

It would answer no practical purpose if I were to explain the meaning of the names of these various gods. They were some of them of brute forms. Their worship was generally attended with the most lascivious rites, and especially the worship of Molech or Moloch, who is mentioned under two different forms here. He was a god whose worship was consummated with the most dreadful cruelties, for children were passed through the fires and burnt in his honour.

[2 Kings 17:32-38](#). *So they feared the LORD, and made unto themselves of the lowest of them priests of the high places, which sacrificed for them in the houses of the high places. They feared the LORD, and served their own*

gods after the manner of the nations whom they carried away from thence. Unto this day they do after the former manners: they fear not the LORD, neither do they after their statutes, or after their ordinances or after the law and commandment which the LORD commanded the children of Jacob, whom he named Israel; with whom the LORD had made a covenant, and charged them, saying, Ye shall not fear other gods, nor bow yourselves to them, nor serve them nor sacrifice to them; but the LORD, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt with great power and a stretched out arm, him shall ye fear, and him shall ye worship, and to him shall ye do sacrifice. And the statues, and the ordinances, and the laws and the commandment, which he wrote for you, ye shall observe to do for evermore; and ye shall not fear other gods. And the covenant that I have made with you ye shall not forget; neither shall ye fear other gods.

How this warning comes over and over and over again!" Hear, O Israel. The Lord thy God is one God." The worship of anything else under any pretext whatsoever, besides the one ever-blessed trinity in unity is for ever forbidden to us.

[2 Kings 17:39-41](#). *But the LORD your God ye shall fear; and he shall deliver you out of the hand of all your enemies. Howbeit they did not hearken, but they did their former manner. So these nations feared the LORD and served their graven images, both their children, and their children's children: as did their fathers, so do they unto this day.*

Trying, as far as ever they could, to link the old idolatries with the worship of the true God, which thing is the most loathsome in the sight of Most High.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Exodus 20:1-17](#); and [2 Kings 17:23-41](#).

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CHAPTER 20

Verses 1-7

[2 Kings 20:1](#). *In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz came to him, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live.*

That is to say, in the common course of providence, without a miracle, Hezekiah must have died. God did by no means change when afterwards he permitted him to live. This time he spoke after the order of nature; the next time he spoke according to the extraordinary work of his marvelous power.

[2 Kings 20:2](#). *Then he turned his face to the wall, and prayed unto the LORD, saying,*

What did he do that for? Well, as he could not rise from his bed through weakness he gets the greatest privacy he can, and the God who accepted Carmel as Elijah's prayer-shrine, would accept Hezekiah's prayer when he turned his face to the wall.

[2 Kings 20:3](#). *I beseech thee, O LORD, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore.*

I do not think this was intended to be a self-righteous prayer, though it reads like one, or else the Lord would not have heard it. He meant to say, "Lord, thou hast been good enough to make me what I am, be pleased to spare me." In fact, the probability is that at this time Sennacherib had not been routed, and Hezekiah could not bear to die whilst the nation was in danger. Certainly there was no son born to Hezekiah at this time, for Manasseh was only twelve years old when he began to reign at his father's death, and Hezekiah thought it would be a sad thing to leave a troubled kingdom without a prince to be his successor. It may be, too, that seeing he had just commenced the reformation, and the casting down of the false gods, he trembled for the cause of God, and could not bear to be so soon taken away. "Hezekiah wept sore." Ah! these are the things that prevail with God, these tears of his people.

"Prayer is the burden of a sigh, .
The falling of a tear,

The upward glancing of an eye,
When none but God is near.”

[2 Kings 20:4-7](#). *And it came to pass, afore Isaiah was gone out into the middle court, that the word of the LORD came to him, saying. Turn again, and tell Hezekiah the captain of my people, Thus saith the LORD, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will heal thee: on the third day thou shalt go up unto the house of the LORD. And I will add unto thy days fifteen years, and I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake. And Isaiah said, Take a lump of figs. And they took and laid it on the boil, and he recovered.*

This, of course, was not a sufficient means to cure the boil, but God made the means efficacious. Why were the means used? Why, to teach us that we are to expect God's blessing, not in neglecting means, but in using them. See how simple was the remedy — just a thick poultice of figs laid on the wound! Perhaps the physicians had tried expensive medicines without avail. What a mercy it is for us that the good medicine of the gospel is as cheap as it is good, that it is to be had for nothing. While some ransack the world for expensive ceremonies and for gaudy shows, we have Christ, like the lump of figs, ready to heal the wound and make us strong again. Again I say Hezekiah was a man of like passions with us, and he prayed earnestly that his life might be spared, and God delivered him from the jaws of death. Let us, therefore, not be afraid to pray.

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CHAPTER 13

Verses 1-14

[1 Chronicles 13:1-3](#). *And David consulted with the captains of thousands and hundreds, and with every leader. And David said unto all the congregation of Israel, If it seem good unto you, and that it be of the LORD our God, let us send abroad unto our brethren every where, that are left in all the land of Israel, and with them also to the priests and Levites which are in their cities and suburbs, that they may gather themselves unto us: and let us bring again the ark of our God to us: for we enquired not at it in the days of Saul.*

It had lain neglected at Kirjathjearim, “in the fields of the wood,” as David writes in the 132nd Psalm.

[1 Chronicles 13:4-5](#). *And all the congregation said that they would do so: for the thing was right in the eyes of all the people. So David gathered all Israel together, from Shihor of Egypt even unto the entering of Hemath, to bring the ark of God from Kirjathjearim. And David went up, and all Israel, to Baalah, that is, to Kirjathjearim, which belonged to Judah, to bring up thence the ark of God the LORD, that dwelleth between the cherubims, whose name is called on it. And they carried the ark of God in a new cart out of the house of Abinadab: and Uzza and Ahio drave the cart. And David and all Israel played before God with all their might, and with singing, and with harps, and with psalteries, and with timbrels, and with cymbals, and with trumpets.*

A stately array of all the leaders of the tribes, with all sorts of music, to do honour to the ark of God.

[1 Chronicles 13:9-10](#). *And when they came unto the threshing-floor of Chidon, Uzza put forth his hand to hold the ark; for the oxen stumbled. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzza, and he smote him, because he put his hand to the ark: and there he died before God.*

I suppose that Uzza, through the ark having been so long in his father’s house, had grown unduly familiar with it, and therefore touched it. Yet it was an express law that even the Levites should not lay a hand upon the ark. They carried it with staves; the priests alone might touch it for necessary purposes. It was for this profanation that Uzza “died before God.”

[1 Chronicles 13:11-12](#). *And David was displeased, because the LORD had made a breach upon Uzza; wherefore that place is called Perezuzza to this day. And David was afraid of God that day, saying, How shall I bring the ark of God home to me?*

He was afraid lest he also might die.

[1 Chronicles 13:13](#). *So David brought not the ark home to himself to the city of David, but carried it aside into the house of Obededom the Gittite.*

He must have been a brave, believing man, to be willing to receive the terrible ark into his house; but he probably knew that, so long as he behaved reverentially to it, he would have a blessing, and not a curse, through taking it under his charge.

[1 Chronicles 13:14](#). *And the ark of God remained with the family of Obededom in his house three months. And the LORD blessed the house of Obededom, and all that he had.*

(This exposition consisted of readings from 1 Chronicles 13, and [1 Chronicles 15:1-4](#); [1 Chronicles 15:11-16](#); [1 Chronicles 15:25-29](#).)

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CHAPTER 15

Verses 1-29

1; 2. *And David made him houses in the city of David, and prepared a place for the ark of God, and pitched for it a tent. Then David said, None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites: for them hath the LORD chosen to carry the ark of God; and to minister unto him for ever.*

It should not be carried upon a new cart, dragged by unwilling oxen but it should be borne upon the cheerful shoulders of the God-appointed bearers, the Levites.

[1 Chronicles 15:3-4](#). *And David gathered all Israel together to Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the LORD unto his place, which he had*

prepared for it. And David assembled the children of Aaron, and the Levites:

Then follows the list of them, which we need not now read.

[1 Chronicles 15:11-13](#). *And David called for Zadok and Abiathar the priests, and for the Levites, for Uriel, Asaiah, and Joel, Shemaiah, and Eliel, and Amminadab, and said unto them, Ye are the chief of the fathers of the Levites: sanctify yourselves, both ye and your brethren, that ye may bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel unto the place that I have prepared for it. For because ye did it not at the first, the Lord our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order.*

They had sought him, but they had not done it “after the due order.” They had been in too great a hurry; and they had followed their own notions, instead of looking to the written law wherein everything was prescribed for them.

[1 Chronicles 15:14-16](#). *So the priests and the Levites sanctified themselves to bring up the ark of the Lord God of Israel. And the children of the Levites bare the ark of God upon their shoulders with the staves thereon, as Moses commanded according to the word of the LORD. And David spake to the chief of the Levites to appoint their brethren to be the singers with instruments of musick, psalteries and harps and cymbals, sounding, by lifting up the voice with joy.*

Before, there had been a great medley of musical instruments, but little singing, and there had not been a proper choice as to the persons who were to sing; but, now, this service was put into the right hands. Then follows a list of the singers and the players upon the various kinds of instruments that went forth to bear the ark. Let us pass on to the 25th verse.

[1 Chronicles 15:25-26](#). *So David, and the elders of Israel, and the captains over thousands, went to bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of the house of Obededom with joy. And it came to pass, when God helped the Levites. —*

For, though the ark was by no means a great load, yet they must have felt some measure of alarm at the very idea of going near to it; but when God strengthened them, they took up their burden with delight: “When God helped the Levites” —

[1 Chronicles 15:26](#). *That bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, that they offered seven bullocks and seven rams.*

There is no mention of any sacrifice on the precious occasion. If there had been a proper offering of beasts unto the Lord, there might not have been the death of Uzza; but, now, they do everything in the right order, and the sacrificial blood is sprinkled; without that, there is no acceptance before God.

[1 Chronicles 15:27-28](#). *And David was clothed with a robe of fine linen, and all the Levites that bare the ark, and the singers, and Chenaniah the master of the song with the singers: David also had upon him an ephod of linen. Thus all Israel brought up the ark of the covenant of the Lord with shouting, and with the sound of the cornet and with trumpets, and with cymbals, making a noise with psalteries and harps.*

David himself, while playing on his harp, leaping and dancing through the intensity of joy which filled his soul.

[1 Chronicles 15:29](#). *And it came to pass, as the ark of the covenant of the Lord came to the city of David, that Michal the daughter of Saul looking out at a window saw king David dancing and playing: and she despised him in her heart.*

So have I known it, when a rich person has been converted, and has been found, in the first hush of his Christian joy, mixing with the poorest of the brethren full of delight, and somebody of his own rank has sneered at him. Yet Michal was less honourable than David, though she thought so much of herself. God forbid that we should ever blush to manifest enthusiasm even with the poorest of God's saints while we are glorifying the Lord! Let Michal sneer, if she will, it matters little what she does. We will only reply as David did, "I will yet be more vile than thus."

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CHAPTER 21

Verses 1-8

[1 Chronicles 21:1](#). *And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel.*

Israel had greatly offended and grieved God, and it was to be punished. God punished one sin by another: the sin of David works for the chastisement of a sinful people.

[1 Chronicles 21:2](#). *And David said to Joab and to the rulers of the people, Go, number Israel from Beersheba even to Dan; and bring the number of them to me, that I may know it.*

He had got proud, he had begun to depend upon the number of his people. In truth, it was a large population under his sway, five millions or more, and he, that had been a shepherd lad, that in his early youth had trusted in his God, now thinking himself a great man, somewhat in the spirit of Nebuchadnezzar, begins to say, "Behold, this great kingdom that I have gathered and founded."

[1 Chronicles 21:3](#). *And Joab answered, The LORD make his people an hundred times so many more as they be: but, my lord, the king, are they not all my lord's servants? why then doth my lord require this thing? why will he be a cause of trespass to Israel?*

It adds greatly to a wrong action if we are checked in it, and especially if we are checked in it by a man who has not any conscience to spare, but yet, notwithstanding his roughness, such as Joab had, nevertheless expostulates with you, “why do this?” The people generally understood that, when they were numbered, it was with a view to taxing them, it was with a view of showing David’s sovereignty over them. Now David was not their sovereign, the Lord God was their King; David was but the Viceroy, and when he began to count them as though they were his own, it was a source of great indignation to the most High. I am afraid when you and I begin to count up as we have done, begin to reckon upon how much we have given, or how much we have effected for God, we begin to appropriate a measure of glory to ourselves. We had better leave that alone, for although pride may not seem a great sin in the eye of men, it is assuredly that which bringeth the utmost wrath from the most High. He cannot endure pride, especially in those whom He has lifted up. He took David from the sheepfold, and if David has now become great, David must be brought down again.

[1 Chronicles 21:4-6](#). *Nevertheless the king’s word prevailed against Joab. Wherefore Joab departed, and went throughout all Israel, and came to Jerusalem. And Joab gave the sum of the number of the people unto David. And all they of Israel were a thousand thousand and an hundred thousand men that drew sword; and Judah was four hundred threescore and ten thousand men that drew sword. But Levi and Benjamin counted he not among them: for the king’s word was abominable to Joab.*

So he did no more of it than he could possibly help.

[1 Chronicles 21:7-8](#). *And God was displeased with this thing; therefore he smote Israel. And David said unto God, I have sinned greatly, because I have done this thing: but now I beseech thee, do away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly.*

We read that David’s heart smote him. Although he had gone wrong, he was nevertheless a good man, and when an ambitious man sins it is a great sin, but it is not long that he continues in it: his conscience is awakened; the Spirit of God is in him. David’s heart smote him. That is a terrible blow when your own heart smites you; if you never feel any other person smiting you, you will feel that.

Verses 1-30

May the Lord instruct us while we read. Perhaps We shall understand it better if we begin in the 21st chapter at the 26th verse.

[1 Chronicles 21:26-27](#). *And David built there an altar unto the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, and called upon the LORD and he answered him from heaven by fire upon the altar of burnt offering. And the LORD commanded the angel; and he put up his sword again into the sheath thereof.*

“And David built there” — that is upon the threshing-floor of Ornan. The place of sacrifice was the place of salvation. The angel was smiting Jerusalem, but as soon as the sacrifice was offered the angel sheathed his sword.

[1 Chronicles 21:28](#). *At that time when David saw that the LORD had answered him in the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite, then he sacrificed there.*

Then came a sacrifice of thanksgiving, as there always should be after prayer is answered. Remember how the Psalmist puts it, “Then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar” — after the sin is pardoned and the transgression is put away.

[1 Chronicles 21:29-30](#) and [1 Chronicles 22:1](#). *For the tabernacle of the LORD, which Moses made in the wilderness, and the altar of the burnt offering, were at that season in the high place at Gibeon. But David could not go before it to inquire of God: for he was afraid because of the sword of the angel of the LORD. Then David said, This is the house of the LORD God, and this is the altar of the burnt offering for Israel.*

The place where God had answered him, where the angel had appeared to him, where the fire had come down from heaven, he felt to be holiest, and that the Lord had directed him to it as the spot where his temple was to be built. It is very significant that it should be upon a threshing-floor, for surely the Church of God is God’s threshing-floor, where he gathereth his sheaves together, and separates between the wheat and the chaff. “I will winnow,” saith he, “my threshing-floor.” Oh! that we might ever recognize that Christ is the temple of God, and Christ is the sacrifice; Christ is the appearance of God that is better to us than the appearance of angels, and Christ is God’s answer to us by fire, and where Christ is, there is the burnt-offering.

[1 Chronicles 21:2](#). *And David commanded to gather together the strangers that were in the land of Israel; and he set masons to hew wrought stones to build the house of God.*

It is very observable, not the Israelites, but the foreigners, the aliens, the strangers, the remaining Canaanites that were in the land, were set to hew the stones for the house of the Lord. I have heard very good people indeed object to the ungodly giving any money whatever to God's cause. This is all against it; here are the aliens employed to hew the stones for the house of God, and why should not they? It will do them good, at least, to do some good thing or other in their lives. Let them have an opportunity so to do. But I see here an indication of the calling of the Gentiles, for whenever the Jews said the Gentiles had nothing to do with God, why the very stones of their temple spoke against them. Were not the timbers brought from Tyro by the Tyrians along in floats? Were not the stones quarried by aliens and foreigners? Oh! the Lord would have his people follow a large, and liberal, and prophetic policy in their dealing with mankind. God forbid that we should shut anybody out from anything that looks like good. Oh! let us not repel them; it may be that in repelling their offerings we may be hardening their hearts. David was a wiser man than that.

[1 Chronicles 21:3-4](#). *And David prepared iron in abundance for the nails for the doors of the gates, and for the joinings; and brass in abundance without weight; Also cedar trees in abundance: for the Zidonians and they of Tyre brought much cedar wood to David.*

Here, again, was a kind of prophecy of what would happen in better days, when the poor Gentiles should be permitted to have a share in the building of the house of God. These Tyrians and Zidonians were amongst the worst of idolaters, and yet they were used in their due place and subservience to hew the trees and float them to the temple, as near as they could get by sea to Joppa.

[1 Chronicles 21:5](#). *And David said, Solomon my son is young and tender, and the house that is to be builded for the LORD must be exceeding magnificent, of fame and of glory throughout all countries: I will therefore now make preparation for it.*

There is no way of helping young people to serve God like setting them a good example. Let the father feel, with regard to his son, that he is young and tender; he may not be able to begin, but if I begin, I shall get him in the mode of doing such things, and maybe he may carry out my design when I am sleeping in the grave. It was well, it was wise, it was splendid of David thus to make all preparations that Solomon might afterwards go on with the good work.

[1 Chronicles 21:5](#). So David prepared abundantly before his death.

If you cannot do everything yourself — and who can? — is it not well to prepare abundantly before our death for somebody else to go on with the work? Thus shall we live after we are dead — live in our sons, if God be so good to us, live in our grandchildren, who knows? — live in someone we were the means of bringing to the Saviour's feet by our ministry. Then he called to Solomon, his son. He had prepared everything, and now he speaks to him, and he charged him to build a house for Jehovah, the God of Israel.

[1 Chronicles 21:6-8](#). *Then he called for Solomon his son, and charged him to build an house for the LORD God of Israel. And David said to Solomon, My son, as for me, it was in my mind to build an house unto the name of the LORD my God: But the word of the LORD came to me, saying, Thou hast shed blood abundantly, and hast made great wars: thou shalt not build an house unto my name, because thou hast shed much blood upon the earth in my sight.*

It was not an allusion to Uriah's blood, as some have thought, for God said this to David long before David's great sin. The wars in which David was engaged were honest wars for the defense and deliverance of the country, in which God had helped him, and yet even the best war is bad in God's esteem. When blood is shed, God delights not in it; and he sets his servant on one side without blaming him, and says, "No: a bloody hand is not fit for the building of my temple. Thou hast been called in the order of Providence to be a warrior and a conqueror; thou must be content with that; thou canst not build the temple to the God of Peace."

[1 Chronicles 21:9](#). *Behold a son shall be born to thee, who shall be a man of rest.*

That is a very sweet name for Solomon, "A man of rest." I pray that many a believer here may be a man of that kind. Some believers have to be men of war. There they are, in a world of struggles, disputes, contentions, of their own ambitions — but happy is that man who is of a gentle and a tender spirit, a spirit of holy wisdom, and whom God gives the great privilege to be a man of peace.

[1 Chronicles 22:9-10](#). *And I will give him rest from all his enemies round about: for his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quietness unto Israel in his days. He shall build an house for my name and he shall be my son, and I will be his father; and I will established the throne of his kingdom over Israel for ever.*

What a sweet benediction from an aged man's mouth.

[1 Chronicles 21:11-13](#). *Now, my son, the LORD be with thee; and prosper thou, and build the house of the LORD thy God, as he hath said of thee. Only the LORD give thee wisdom and understanding, and give thee charge concerning Israel, that thou mayest keep the law of the LORD thy God. Then shalt thou prosper, if thou takest heed to fulfill the statutes and judgments which the LORD charged Moses with concerning Israel: be strong, and of good courage; dread not, nor be dismayed.*

This was addressed to a young man and tender by an old man who had displayed much courage. They who have been courageous themselves can safely encourage others to be so. God make us all in every good cause to be free from fear. Like Bernard, the knight, may we be “without fear, and without reproach,” ever contending for God and his truth.

[1 Chronicles 21:14](#). *Now behold, in my trouble I have prepared for the house of the LORD an hundred thousand talents of gold,*

Whatever sum that may have been, it could hardly have been a Babylonian talent, because that would have made him to have laid up one thousand millions sterling.

[1 Chronicles 21:14](#). *And a thousand thousand talents of silver; and of brass and iron without weight; for it is in abundance: timber also and stone have I prepared; and thou mayest add thereto.*

A capital text for a collection, whenever there has been a good sum given already, “Thou mayest add thereto.” Next Sunday week we collect for the hospitals. Thou mayest add to the gold if thou canst; thou mayest add to the silver if thou canst; thou mayest add to the copper if thou canst not add to the silver or the gold.

[1 Chronicles 21:15](#). *Moreover there are workmen with thee in abundance,*

David had foreseen all that was wanted, and had got a list of the men of skill and art throughout all his land.

[1 Chronicles 21:15](#). *Hewers and workers of stone and timber, and all manner of cunning men for every manner of work.*

You remember that text, “The Lord showed me four carpenters,” and so when the Lord wants carpenters there will be carpenters. Whatever kind of men he requires for his service, that kind of men shall be forthcoming in the day of need — “All manner of cunning men for every manner of work.”

[1 Chronicles 21:16](#). *Of the gold, the silver, and the brass, and the iron, there is no number. Arise, therefore and be doing, and the LORD be with thee.*

That is his word to Solomon.

[1 Chronicles 21:17](#). *David also commanded all the princes of Israel to help Solomon his son, saying,*

What a grand thing it is when a man has true-hearted helpers, men who are ready to stint themselves, annihilate themselves, as it were, to help some other man to do the work of the Lord, quite satisfied to be themselves unknown, so long as the house of the Lord is built, and God's name is glorified!

[1 Chronicles 21:18](#). *Is not the LORD your God with you? and hath he not given you rest on every side? for he hath given the inhabitants of the land into mine hand; and the land is subdued before the LORD, and before his people.*

So then they had not to fight, but to work. If Jesus Christ has conquered all our foes, and routed all our sins; if sin, and death, and hell lie prostrate at his feet, what can we do but devote our rest and peace to his service?

[1 Chronicles 21:19](#). *Now set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God; arise therefore, and build ye the sanctuary of the LORD God, to bring the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and the holy vessels of God, into the house that is to be built to the name of the LORD.*

Verses 7-30

[1 Chronicles 21:7](#). *And God was displeased with this thing;*

This numbering of Israel, which David had carried out in spite of Joab's protest: "God was displeased with this thing:" —

[1 Chronicles 21:7-15](#). *Therefore he smote Israel. And David said unto God, I have sinned greatly, because I have done this thing: but now, I beseech thee, do away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly. And the LORD spake unto Gad, David's seer, saying, GO and tell David, saying, Thus saith the LORD, I offer thee three things: choose thee one of them, that I may do it unto thee. So Gad came to David, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Choose thee either three years' famine; or three months to be destroyed before thy foes, while that the sword of thine enemies overtaketh thee; or else three days the sword of the LORD, even the pestilence, in the land, and the angel of the LORD destroying throughout all*

the coasts of Israel. Now therefore advise thyself what word I shall bring again to him that sent me. And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait: let me fall now into the hand of the LORD for very great are his mercies: but let me not fall into the hand of man. So the LORD sent pestilence upon Israel and there fell of Israel seventy thousand men. And God sent an angel unto Jerusalem to destroy it: and as he was destroying, the LORD beheld, and he repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed, It is enough, stay now thine hand.

See the power of the mercy of God; even when the angel has drawn his sword, and is already executing the Lord's just judgments, God's mercy interposes, and holds back the blade of death. Should we not love the Lord for his great longsuffering toward us? "He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities."

[1 Chronicles 21:15-16](#). *And the angel of the LORD stood by the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite. And David lifted up his eyes and saw the angel of the LORD stand between the earth and the heaven, having a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem. Then David and the elders of Israel, who were clothed in sackcloth, fell upon their faces.*

This was the very best clothing and the very best posture for men who were under the chastising hand of God; they had put on sackcloth, and they had fallen upon their faces. O guilty sinner, if God's sword of vengeance is drawn against you, you cannot do better than put sackcloth upon your soul, if not upon your body, and prostrate yourself before the Most High.

[1 Chronicles 21:17](#). *And David said unto God, Is it not I that commanded the people to be numbered? even I it is that have sinned and done evil indeed, but as for those sheep, what have they done? let thine hand, I pray thee, O LORD my God, be on me, and on my father's house; but not on thy people, that they should be plagued.*

Here we see David at his best; and what a true patriot he is! He interposes himself, willing rather that he should be destroyed than that the people should die. This was the spirit of Moses when he said to the Lord, "If thou wilt forgive their sin — — ; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written." And this was the spirit of Paul, when he wrote, "I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." There are times when our great love for others will overflow all bounds of moderation, when we shall say, and

say from our hearts, what we should not have dared to utter in cooler moments.

[1 Chronicles 21:18-27](#). *Then the angel of the LORD commanded Gad to say to David, that David should go up, and set up as altar unto the LORD in the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite. And David went up at the saying of Gad, which he spake in the name of the LORD. And Ornan turned back, and saw the angel; and his four sons with him hid themselves. Now Ornan was threshing wheat. And as David came to Ornan, Ornan looked and saw David, and went out of the threshingfloor, and bowed himself to David with his face to the ground. Then David said to Ornan, Grant me the place of this threshingfloor, that I may build as altar therein unto the LORD: thou shalt grant it me for the full price: that the plague may be stayed from the people. And Ornan said unto David, Take it to thee, and let my lord the king do that which is good in his eyes: lo, I give thee the oxen also for burnt offerings, and the threshing instruments for wood, and the wheat for the meat offering; I give it all. And king David said to Ornan, Nay; but I will verily buy it for the full price: for I will not take that which is thine for the LORD, nor offer burnt offerings without cost. So David gave to Ornan for the place six hundred shekels of gold by weight. And David built there an altar unto the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, and called upon the LORD, and he answered him from heaven by fire upon the altar of burnt offering. And the LORD commanded the angel; and he put up his sword again into the sheath thereof.*

See what was done by David's intercession and sacrifice; and remember that there is a greater David who, with a richer sacrifice and mightier intercession, sheathes the sword of God, so that his people are spared.

[1 Chronicles 21:28-30](#). *At that time when David saw that the LORD had answered him in the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite, then he sacrificed there. For the tabernacle of the LORD, which Moses made in the wilderness, and the altar of the burnt offering, were at that season in the high place at Gibeon. But David could not go before it to inquire of God: for he was afraid because of the sword of the angel of the LORD.*

(This exposition consisted of readings from [1 Chronicles 21:7-30](#): And 22.)

Verses 9-30

[1 Chronicles 21:9-11](#). *And the LORD spake unto Gad, David's seer, saying, Go and tell David, saying, Thus saith the LORD, I offer thee three*

things: choose thee one of them, that I may do it unto thee. So Gad came to David, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Choose thee—

One of them, that I may do it unto thee. David was to choose where there was no choice, for everything proposed to him seemed to be equally bitter.

[1 Chronicles 21:12-13](#). *Either three years famine, or three months to be destroyed before thy foes, while that the sword of thine enemies overtaketh thee, or else three days the sword of the LORD, even the pestilence in the land, and the angel of the LORD destroying throughout all the coasts of Israel. Now therefore advise thyself what word I shall bring again to him that sent me. And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait: let me fall now into the hand the LORD for very great are his mercies: but let me not fall into the hand of man.*

It shows how he was broken down. David's proud heart was humbled, he was entirely submissive to the will of God, he wished to fall into the hands of the Lord.

[1 Chronicles 21:14-15](#). *So the LORD sent pestilence upon Israel and there fell of Israel seventy thousand men. And God sent an angel unto Jerusalem to destroy it: and as he was destroying, the LORD beheld,--*

It is a very beautiful word,-the Lord looked steadfastly on what was being done.

[1 Chronicles 21:15](#). *And he repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed, It is enough, stay now thine hand. And the angel of the LORD stood by the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.*

One of the old inhabitants of the land, who had escaped destruction, and had his possession on the top of Mount Morah.

[1 Chronicles 21:16-17](#). *And David lifted up his eyes, and saw the angel of the LORD stand between the earth and the heaven, having a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem. Then David and the elders of Israel, who were clothed in sackcloth, fell upon their faces. And David said unto God, Is it not I that commanded the people to be numbered? Even I it is that have sinned and done evil indeed; but as for these sheep, what have they done? Let thine hand, I pray thee, O LORD my God, be on me, and on my father's house; but not on thy people, that they should be plagued.*

Here the great heart of the man who had sinned comes out again: he is no tyrant after all, he is a worthy man to be the Viceroy of the Most High.

He has the same spirit that Moses had, when he cried, “If not, blot my name out of the Book of Life.” He offers himself, not the innocent for the guilty, but, indeed, the guilty for the guilty; as far as he can, he will bear the consequences of his sin.

[1 Chronicles 21:18-20](#). *Then the angel of the LORD commanded Gad to say to David, that David should go up, and set up an altar unto the LORD in the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite. And David went up at the saying of Gad, which he spake in the name of the LORD. And Ornan turned back, and saw the angel;*

He was busy at his threshing, and he saw the angel standing by his own threshingfloor.

[1 Chronicles 21:20](#). *And his four sons with him hid themselves.*

There are great caverns hard by the spot, and, no doubt, they ran into one of them.

[1 Chronicles 21:20-23](#). *Now Ornan was threshing wheat. And as David came to Ornan, Ornan looked and saw David, and went out of the threshingfloor, and bowed himself to David with his face to the ground. Then David said to Ornan, Grant me the place of this threshingfloor, that I may build an altar therein unto the LORD: thou shalt grant it me for the full price: that the plague may be stayed from the people. And Ornan said unto David, Take it to thee, and let my lord the king do that which is good in his eyes: Lo, I give thee the oxen also for burnt offerings, and the threshing instruments for wood, and the wheat for the meat offering; I give it all.*

And as we are told in the other narrative, as a king giveth to a king, so did Araunah unto David. Probably he had been a king, and David had dispossessed him in his conquest of Jebus, but now he proves that he had a royal heart, and he offers to give all to King David.

[1 Chronicles 21:24-25](#). *And king David said to Ornan, Nay; but I will verily buy it for the full price: for I will no take that which is thine for the LORD, nor offer burnt offerings without cost. So David gave to Ornan for the place six hundred shekels of gold by weight.*

Not paid there and then, for he did not carry that amount with him, but fifty shekels of silver were paid that moment to bind their bargain, according to the narrative in the 2nd Book of Samuel.

[1 Chronicles 21:26-27](#). *And David built there an altar unto the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, and called upon the LORD and he answered him from heaven by fire upon the altar of burnt offering.*

And the LORD commanded the angel; and he put up his sword again into the sheath thereof.

That God had already done in his own intent and purpose, now he does it actually, just as before Jesus Christ, our great sacrifice, was offered. God, in the eternal purpose, had stayed the sword of vengeance from his redeemed people, and then actually did it when Christ their sacrifice was presented.

[1 Chronicles 21:28-30](#). *At that time when David saw that the LORD had answered him in the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite, then he sacrificed there. For the tabernacle of the LORD, which Moses made in the wilderness, and the altar of the burnt offering, were at that season in the high place at Gibeon. But David could not go before it to inquire of God: for he was afraid because of the sword of the angel of the LORD.*

Verses 25-30

David was commanded to go to Ornan, or Araunah, the Jebusite, to rear an altar unto the Lord in his threshingfloor. There had been a terrible plague in Jerusalem, in consequence of David's great sin in numbering the people; and they were falling in thousands by the sword of the angel of vengeance. David went up to the threshingfloor or Ornan on Mount Moriah. Ornan was willing to give it to him, but he determined to buy it. We read in the twenty-fifth verse; —

[1 Chronicles 21:25-28](#). *So David gave to Ornan for the place six hundred shekels of gold by weight. And David built there an altar unto the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, and called upon the LORD and he answered him from heaven by fire upon the altar of burnt offering. And the LORD commanded the angel; and he put up his sword again into the sheath thereof. At that time when David saw that the LORD has answered him in the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite, then he sacrificed there.*

There was the place for the temple, where the angel sheathed his sword. Christ Jesus, in his great atonement, is the corner-stone of the temple where divine justice sheathes its sword. There let the house of God be built. Every true Church of God is founded on the glorious doctrine of the atoning sacrifice. It was a threshingfloor, too; and God has built his Church on a threshingfloor. Depend upon it, the flail will always be going in every true Church, to fetch out the wheat from the chaff. We must have tribulation if

we are in the Church of God. The threshingfloor will always be needed until we are taken up to the heavenly garner above.

[1 Chronicles 21:29-30](#). *For the tabernacle of the LORD, which Moses made in the wilderness, and the altar of the burnt offering, were at that season in the high place of Gibeon. But David could not go before it to inquire of God; for he was afraid because of the sword of the angel of the LORD.*

(This exposition consisted of readings from [1 Chronicles 21:25-30](#); 1 Chronicles 22.)

[1 CHRONICLES CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 22

Verses 1-19

1 Chronicles 22:1. *Then David said, This is the house of the LORD God, and this is the altar of the burnt offering for Israel.*

From that moment, this place was set apart as the site of the future temple, and the center of the hopes of the people of God, and, dear friend, what better site could have been selected than the spot where the angel sheathed his sword, where prayer was heard, and where sacrifice was accepted? And now, today, you and I have only one temple, and that temple is the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Well-beloved, for in him the sword is sheathed, in him the sacrifice is accepted, and in him intercession still prevails.

1 Chronicles 22:2-4. *And David commanded to gather together the strangers that were in the land of Israel and he set masons to hew wrought stones to build the house of God. And David prepared iron in abundance for the nails for the doors of the gates, and for the joinings and brass in abundance without weight; also cedar trees in abundance: for the Zidonians and they of Tyre brought much cedar wood to David.*

See, a great deliverance brings a great offering. Because God has bidden the angel sheath his sword, there is to be a temple commenced, and David is busy preparing for it. O you who have been saved from death and hell, what can you render unto God for all his benefits toward you?

1 Chronicles 22:5. *And David said, Solomon my son is young and tender, and the house that is to be builded for the LORD must be*

exceedingly magnificent, of fame and of glory throughout all countries: I will therefore now make preparation for it. So David prepared abundantly before his death.

If he might not build the temple, he would at least gather the materials for it. So, let us try to do all we can in the cause of God. There is said to have been a king, who felt so grateful to God for some special favor, that he determined to build a great temple, and pay for it all himself; no one was to help at all in it. One night, in his dreams, he was told that the honour of building that temple would not belong to him as he desired, and he thought within himself, "To whom then can it be, for I have not allowed any person to work for me without full wage, and I have done it all?" At last, he discovered that there was a poor woman in his kingdom, who also loved his God, and not daring to help in the temple building, she had brought little handfuls of hay to give to the horse that had dragged the stones, so hers was to be the greater honour. If you may not do all you would, do all you can; for God will accept it of you if it be rendered by a willing mind and a loving heart.

1 Chronicles 22:6-9. Then he called for Solomon his son, and charged him to build an house for the LORD GOD of Israel. And David said to Solomon, My son, as for me, it was in my mind to build an house unto the name of the LORD my God; but the word of the LORD came to me, saying, Thou hast shed blood abundantly, and hast made great wars: thou shalt not build an house unto my name, because thou hast shed much blood upon the earth in my sight. Behold, a son shall be born to thee, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies round about: for his name shall be Solomon, —

That is, peaceful, or peaceable, —

1 Chronicles 22:9-14. And I will give peace and quietness unto Israel in his days. He shall build an house for my name; and he shall be my son, and I will be his father; and I will establish the throne of his Kingdom over Israel for ever. Now, my son, the LORD be with thee; and prosper thou, and build the house of the LORD thy God, as he hast said of thee. Only the LORD give thee wisdom, and understanding, and give thee charge concerning Israel, that thou mayest keep the law of the LORD thy God. Then shalt thou prosper, if thou takest heed to fulfil the statutes and judgments which the LORD charged Moses with concerning Israel: be strong, and of good courage; dread not, nor be dismayed. Now, behold in

my trouble I have prepared for the house of the LORD an hundred thousand talents of gold, and a thousand thousand talents of silver, and of brass and iron without weight; for it is in abundance: timber also and stone have I prepared; and thou mayest add thereto.

At the very lowest calculation, David had laid up eighteen millions of money for the building of this house for the Lord. It was an enormous sum, and he must have been long in saving it, yet he gives Solomon leave to increase it: "Thou mayest add thereto." I like that way of putting the matter; and when some of you see good help rendered to the cause of God by others who are able to do more than you can, do not therefore say, "I need not give anything," but remember what David said to Solomon, "Thou mayest add thereto." There is room in the treasury of God for your mite as well as David's millions.

1 Chronicles 22:15. *Moreover there are workmen with thee in abundance, hewers and workers of stone and timber, and all manner of cunning men for every manner of work.*

God will always find the right man in time for his own work, in his Church there are "all manner of cunning men for every manner of work."

1 Chronicles 22:16-19. *Of the gold, the silver, and the brass, and the iron, there is no number. Arise therefore, and be doing, and the LORD be with thee. David also commanded all the princes of Israel to help Solomon his son, saying, Is not the LORD your God with you? and hath he not given you rest on every side? for he hath given the inhabitants of the land into mine land, and the land is subdued before the LORD, and before his people. Now set your heart and your soul to seek the LORD your God, arise therefore, and build ye the sanctuary of the LORD God, to bring the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and the holy vessels of God, into the house that is to be built to the name of the LORD.*

(This exposition consisted of readings from 1 Chronicles 21:7-30 and 1 Chronicles 22.)

[1 CHRONICLES CONTENTS](#)

1 Chronicles Chapter 23

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

1 Chronicles Chapter 24

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

1 Chronicles Chapter 25

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

1 Chronicles Chapter 26

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

1 Chronicles Chapter 27

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER 28

Verses 1-21

[1 Chronicles 28:1](#). *And David assembled all the princes of Israel, the princes of the tribes, and the captains of the companies that ministered to the king by course, and the captains over the thousands, and captains over the hundreds, and the stewards ever all the substance and possession of the king, and of his sons, with the officers, and with the mighty men, and with all the valiant men, unto Jerusalem.*

David, in his old age, and soon to die, summoned a great representative assembly of the notables of his kingdom.

[1 Chronicles 28:2](#). *Then David the king stood up upon his feet,*
He was ill, and obliged to keep his bed; but; he left his couch for this solemn occasion. He did not even remain seated, although extremely weak; but he stood up upon his feet.

[1 Chronicles 28:2](#). *And said, Hear me, my brethren, and my people:*

Those who read carefully will notice the sweetness of David's style now that he is about to die. It was after the great sin of his life, and after he and his subjects had suffered because of his numbering the people, that he calls the men before him "my brethren." He had sometimes spoken of them as his servants; but now he adopts a very humble style, and putting himself on a level with them, he says to them, "Hear me, my brethren, and my people."

[1 Chronicles 28:2-3](#). *As for me, I had in mine heart to build an house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and for the footstool of our God, and had made ready for the building: but God said unto me, Thou shalt not build an house for my name, because thou hast been a man of war, and hast shed blood.*

Admire the frankness of David in telling the people what God had said to him. There is no other biography in the world like the Bible, for it tells the faults and follies of those whose history it records. David was a man after God's own heart; yet, as he had been used as a sword, for the defense of God's people, and the destruction of their enemies, he could not be permitted to build the temple. He frankly tells the people all that God had said; it would not reflect any honour upon himself, but it was true, and therefore he kept nothing back. One falls in love with David for the frankness of his utterance. When a king, and an aged man, and just about to die, he tells the people all this story.

[1 Chronicles 28:4](#). *Howbeit the LORD God of Israel chose me before all the house of my father to be king over Israel for ever: for he hath chosen Judah to be the ruler; and of the house of Judah, the house of my father; and among the sons of my father he liked me to make me king over all Israel:*

He delights to dwell upon the election of God. It was not by the right of primogeniture that he was chosen king; it was by the will and good pleasure of God. Judah was one of the younger tribes, and yet it was made the royal tribe. In Judah, the house of Jesse was of no great importance; yet God chose it as the royal family; and in the household of Jesse, David was the youngest, yet the Lord "liked" him, and chose him to be king over all Israel.

[1 Chronicles 28:5](#). *And of all my sons, (for the LORD hath given me many sons,) he hath chosen Solomon my son to sit upon the throne of the kingdom of the LORD over Israel.*

David seems to harp upon this sweet string of the divine choice. I wonder that so many good people are afraid of this blessed doctrine. They

fight shy of it; they seem to run away at the very sound of the word “election.” Yet is it the very joy of saints. God hath chosen them, and ordained them to be his servants.

[1 Chronicles 28:6-8](#). *And he said unto me, Solomon thy son, he shall build my house and my courts: for I have chose him to be my son, and I will be his father. Moreover I will establish his kingdom for ever, if he be constant to do my commandments and my judgments, as at this day. Now therefore in the sight of all Israel the congregation of the LORD, and in the audience of our God, keep and seek for all the commandments of the LORD your God: that ye may possess this good land, and leave it for an inheritance for your children after you for ever.*

Thus he talked with the great number of the nobility and chief men of his kingdom who were gathered round him.

[1 Chronicles 28:9](#). *And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father,*

God is very dear to us; but perhaps under no aspect is he more tenderly near us than as the God of our father: “My son, know thou the God of thy father.”

[1 Chronicles 28:9](#). *And serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he wilt be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever.*

What a covenant this was under which Solomon stood! Alas! he was not as true to God as he should have been; and though we hope he was not east away for ever, yet under his rule Israel began to decay, and he pierced himself through with many sorrows in his latter days.

[1 Chronicles 28:10](#). *Take heed now; for the Lord hath chosen thee to build an house for the sanctuary: be strong, and do it.*

It is fine to hear this old man, in his weakness, stirring up the young man. We generally expect to see the youths full of zeal, and the old men somewhat slow; but grace can turn the tables against nature. Here the old man, feeble as to his body, is vigorous as to his spirit.

[1 Chronicles 28:11](#). *Then David gave to Solomon his son the pattern of the porch, and of the houses thereof, and of the treasuries thereof, and of the upper chambers thereof, and of the inner parlours thereof, and of the place of the mercy seat,*

He had it all ready in his mind; and before he died, he passed over the plans of that wonderful piece of architecture to his son Solomon.

[1 Chronicles 28:12-13](#). *And the pattern of all that he had by the spirit, of the courts of the house of the LORD, and of all the chambers round about, of the treasuries of the house of God, and of the treasuries of the dedicated things: also for the courses of the priests and the Levites, and for all the work of the service of the house of the LORD, and for all the vessels of service in the house of the LORD.*

Everything was laid down, catalogued, and arranged so that Solomon had only to follow the plans given to him by his father, and all would be right. Think of the love of David to his God. Though he might not build the temple, he would draw the plans for it; and though he might not live to see it completed, yet he would, in his own mind, arrange all the courses of the priests and the Levites, and every detail, even to the placing of the vessels of service in the courts of the Lord's house.

[1 Chronicles 28:14-15](#). *He gave of gold by weight for things of gold, for all instruments of all manner of service; silver also for all instruments of silver by weight, for all instruments of every kind of service: even the weight for the candlestick of gold,*

Or, the candelabra.

[1 Chronicles 28:15](#). *And for their lamps of gold, by weight for every candlestick, and for the lamps thereof: and for the candlesticks of silver by weight, both for the candlestick, and also for the lamps thereof, according to the use of every candlestick.*

They were not for the burning of candles, but for oil lamps. There was a Lamp-stand, with seven lamps upon the stand; and there were ten of these in the temple. There was only one in the tabernacle; but there were ten in the temple. David arranged everything.

Those seven-branched golden candlesticks stood like pastors of the church; and the little silver candlesticks were carried about like evangelists, who go from place to place that the whole house of God may be served with light. Everything was by weight. God knows what he would have in his house, and he measures out to each one according to his need.

[1 Chronicles 28:16-17](#). *And by weight he gave gold for the tables of shewbread, for every table; and likewise silver for the tables of silver: also pure gold for the flesh-hooks, and the bowls, and the cups: and for the*

golden basons he gave gold by weight for every bason; and likewise silver by weight for every bason of silver:

I like to think of David planning all these little things, first receiving instruction from God, then waiting upon God for further direction, and thinking not only about the great golden candelabra, but about the silver candlesticks, and the flesh-hooks, and the howls, and the cups, and the basons. They who love God love everything that has to do with him; they have a holy concern even for the smaller matters pertaining to the house of the Lord.

[1 Chronicles 28:18-20](#). *And for the altar of incense refined gold by weight; and gold for the pattern of the chariot of the cherubims, that spread out their wings, and covered the ark of the covenant of the LORD. All this, said David, the LORD made me understand in writing by his hand upon me, even all the works of this pattern. And David said to Solomon his son, Be strong and of good courage, and do it:*

Do not talk about it; do not sit down, and dream over the plans, and think how admirable they are, and then roll them up; but, “Be strong and of good courage, and do it.”

[1 Chronicles 28:20](#). *Fear not, nor be dismayed: for the LORD God, even my God, will be with thee;*

What a pretty touch that is! “The LORD God, even my God, will be with thee.”

[1 Chronicles 28:20](#). *He will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of the LORD.*

Therefore, be of good courage, you that are working for God, for he will not fail you, nor forsake you, until you have finished all the work for the service of the house of the Lord.

[1 Chronicles 28:21](#). *And, behold, the courses of the priests and the Levites, even they shall be with thee for all the service of the house of God: and there shall be with thee for all manner of workmanship every willing skillful man, for any manner of service!*

God always finds men for his work. We sometimes see a lot of cowards run away, and we say to ourselves, “What will happen now?” Why, God will find better men than they are! And when there seems to be a paucity of really valiant men in Israel, God has them in training; and that awkward squad out there will yet become a band of brave men for the service of the house of God.

[1 Chronicles 28:21](#). *Also the princes and all the people will be wholly at thy commandment.*

Thus the grand old man finished up his life by starting another to carry on the work which he was obliged to leave.

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CHAPTER 11

Verses 1-17

Let us read, for our instruction, part of the story of Rehoboam, the son of Solomon.

[2 Chronicles 11:1-4](#). *And when Rehoboam was come to Jerusalem, he gathered of the house of Judah and Benjamin an hundred and fourscore thousand chosen men, which were warriors, to fight against Israel, that he might bring the kingdom again to Rehoboam. But the word of the LORD came to Sheniuiiah the man of God, saying, Speak unto Rehoboam the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and to all Israel in Judah and Benjamin, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren: return every man to his house: for this thing is done of me. And they obeyed the words of the LORD, and returned from going against Jeroboam.*

So far, so good. There was some degree of the fear of God in the minds of men when, at the bidding of a single prophet, a king would disband his troops, and cease from war.

[2 Chronicles 11:5-15](#). *And Rehoboam dwelt in Jerusalem, and built cities for defense in Judah. He built even Bethlehem, and Etam, and Tekoa, and Bethzur, and Shoco, and Adullam, and Gath, and Mareshah, and Ziph, and Adoraim, and Lachish, and Azekah, and Zorah, and Aijalon, and Hebron, which are in Judah and in Benjamin fenced cities. And he fortified the strong holds, and put captains in them, and store of victual, and of oil and wine. And in every several city he put shields and spears, and made them exceeding strong, having Judah and Benjamin on his side. And the priests and the Levites that were in all Israel resorted to him out of all their coasts. For the Levites left their suburbs and their possession, and came to Judah and Jerusalem: for Jeroboam and his sons had cast them off from executing the priest's office unto the LORD and he ordained him priests for the high places, and for the devils, and for the calves which he had made.*

No wonder, therefore, that Rehoboam's kingdom was strengthened by the advent of these men, who were, doubtless, the best men in the whole country, men who feared the Lord,-men who knew the law, and who knew how to teach the people what they should do.

[2 Chronicles 11:16](#). *And after them out of all the tribes of Israel such as set their hearts to seek the LORD God of Israel came to Jerusalem, to sacrifice unto the LORD God of their fathers.*

“Birds of a feather flock together,” so those in Israel who feared the Lord went where their ministers had gone; this movement would bring about an emigration of some of the best of the population, to reside near to the sacred shrine where Jehovah was worshipped; and it must have tended still further to the strengthening of Rehoboam’s little kingdom.

[2 Chronicles 11:17](#). *So they strengthened the kingdom of Judah, and made Rehoboam the son of Solomon strong, three year: for three year they walked in the way of David and Solomon.*

That was well while it lasted; but, alas! it did not continue long.

This exposition consisted of readings from [2 Chronicles 11:1-17](#); 2 Chronicles 12.

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CHAPTER 12

Verses 1-16

[2 Chronicles 12:1](#). *And it came to pass, when Rehoboam had established the kingdom, and had strengthened himself, he forsook the law of the LORD, and all Israel with him.*

He was not able to endure the perils of prosperity. He forgot the Lord who had caused him to prosper; and, in the pride of his heart, he turned aside to idols.

[2 Chronicles 12:2](#). *And it came to pass, that in the fifth year of king Rehoboam Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, because they had transgressed against the LORD,*

That was not Shishak’s reason for coming up against Jerusalem. He had heard of the riches of Solomon; and doubtless, he came for the sake of the spoil which the palace and the temple would yield to him. But God often overrules, for the accomplishment of his own purposes, the lower motives of men. “I girded thee,” said he of Cyrus, “though thou hast not known me.” So did he gird Shishak for the chastisement of Israel, though Shishak knew him not.

[2 Chronicles 12:3-4](#). *With twelve hundred chariots, and threescore thousand horsemen: and the people were without number that came with him out of Egypt; the Lubims, the Sukkiims, and the Ethiopians. And he took the fenced cities which pertained to Judah, and came to Jerusalem.*

How vain is man when he boasts in the strength of his fortifications! These fenced cities fell at once, like houses built of cards, before the power of the mighty king of Egypt, and the vast hordes that accompanied him. Rehoboam had spent his strength in making these defenses, but how soon they were proved to be worthless. “Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is;” but “cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord.”

[2 Chronicles 12:5-6](#). *Then came Shemaiah the prophet to Rehoboam, and to the princes of Judah, that were gathered together to Jerusalem because of Shishak, and said unto them, Thus saith the LORD, Ye have forsaken me, and therefore have I also left you in the hand of Shishak. Whereupon the princes of Israel and the king humbled themselves; and they said, The LORD is righteous.*

Now, that is the very essence of true humility, the acknowledgment that God is righteous in whatever punishment he brings upon us on account of our sin. It is a very short sentence, but there is a great fullness of meaning in it: “Jehovah is righteous.”

[2 Chronicles 12:7-8](#). *And when the LORD saw that they humbled themselves, the word of the LORD came to Shemaiah, saying, They have humbled themselves; therefore I will not destroy them, but I will grant them some deliverance; and my wrath shall not be poured out upon Jerusalem by the hand of Shishak. Nevertheless they shall be his servants; that they may know my service, and the service of the kingdoms of the countries.*

That is a very instructive expression. I believe that, when God’s people go astray from him, he sometimes allows them to fall into great bondage, in order that they may realize the difference between his happy service and the servitude in which they may be held by any other lord. All masters, to whom we surrender our minds and hearts, will turn out to be tyrants, except the blessed Prince of peace. His yoke is easy, and his burden is light; but all other yokes gall the shoulders sooner or later; and God has sometimes made his wandering people feel this so bitterly that they have longed to get back again to the service of their God.

[2 Chronicles 12:9](#). *So Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, and took away the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king’s house; he took all: he carried away also the shields of gold which Solomon had made.*

He did not plunder the people; he was contented with the loot of the temple and the palace. These were comparatively easy terms for the conquered nation, and one wonders how such a powerful king as Shishak should have been thus satisfied in those days; but God has the hearts of all men under his control, and even when he lets a powerful foe go forth against his people, he still restrains him when he pleases. What a mercy it is for us that, when God chastens us, there is an end to it! It is always in measure, he does not let loose the fullness and the fierceness of his wrath, as he will upon the castaways in eternity; but when he lays his rod upon us, he counts every stripe. Forty stripes save one was all that an Israelite might have to endure; and, surely, God often stops far short of that number when he deals with us. However, Shishak humiliated the king and his people by taking away the treasures of the temple and the palace; and, among the rest of his plunder, “he carried away the shields of gold, which Solomon had made.”

[2 Chronicles 12:10-12](#). *Instead of which king Rehoboam made shields of brass, and committed them to the hands of the chief of the guard, that kept the entrance of the king's house. And when the king entered into the house of the LORD, the guard came and fetched them, and brought them again into the guard chamber. And when he humbled himself, the wrath of the LORD turned from him, that he would not destroy him altogether: and also in Judah things went well.*

Or, rather, “things in Judah even went well.” There was comparative prosperity; they were not altogether prosperous, for they were not altogether right with God; but there was a sufficient proportion of godly men, the Puritanic party, the Evangelical party, was strong enough in the land, for God still to look upon it with favor, yet not unmixed with disapprobation; for the party that worshipped idols, the party composed of the superstitious, the party belonging to the world was still very strong.

[2 Chronicles 12:13-15](#). *So king Rehoboam strengthened himself in Jerusalem, and reigned: for Rehoboam was one and forty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which the LORD had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, to put his name there. And his mothers name was Naamah an Ammonitess. And he did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the LORD. Now the acts of Rehoboam, first and last, are they not written in the book of Shemaiah the prophet, and of Iddo the seer concerning genealogies?*

Where are those books now? It is of no consequence whatever where they are. There are a great many other books that have perished because they were not inspired. They were books of genealogies, valuable in their day; but if they had been of any use to us spiritually, they would have been preserved. Now, as other ancient books have evidently been lost, let us devoutly bless God that the inspired Books have been preserved to us. By what a continuous miracle of Providence, every inspired letter has been continued in existence, it would be hard to tell; but we ought constantly to praise the Lord that, out of the Book of this prophecy, not a line has been removed.

[2 Chronicles 12:15-16](#). *And there were wars between Rehoboam and Jeroboam continually. And Rehoboam slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David: and Abijah his son reigned in his stead.*

This exposition consisted of readings from [2 Chronicles 11:1-17](#); 2 Chronicles 12.

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CHAPTER 20

Verses 1-30

[2 Chronicles 20:1-3](#). *It came to pass after this also, that the children of Moab, and the children of Ammon, and with them other beside the Ammonites, came against Jehoshaphat to battle. Then there came some that told Jehoshaphat, saying, There cometh a great multitude against thee from beyond the sea on this side Syria; and, behold, they be in Hazazontamar, which is Engedi. And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah.*

An angry God is to be sought. Even though he smite us, we must turn to him. It is from the hand that wields the rod that we are to expect deliverance, if it ever come at all.

[2 Chronicles 20:4](#). *And Judah gathered themselves together, to ask help of the LORD: even out of all the cities of Judah they came to seek the LORD.*

The host of enemies were so enormous that they threatened to eat up all the land. The men of Judah could not keep them out. They would soak and storm and burn and destroy right and left. You see the great peril. What a heavy chastisement it must have been to the king to see his land thus in danger of being destroyed. But they had begun to pray.

[2 Chronicles 20:5-12](#). *And Jehoshaphat stood in the congregation of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the LORD, before the new court, and said, O LORD God of our fathers, art not thou God in heaven? and rulest not thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in thine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee? Art not thou our God who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend for ever? And they dwelt therein, and have built thee a sanctuary therein for thy name, saying, If, when evil cometh upon us, as the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we stand before this house, and in thy presence, (for thy name is in this house,) and cry unto thee in our affliction, then thou wilt hear and help. And now, behold, the children of Ammon and Moab and mount Seir, whom they wouldest not let Israel invade, when they came out of the land of Egypt, but they turned from them, and destroyed them not; Behold, I say, how they reward us, to come to cast us out of thy possession, which thou hast given us to inherit. O our God, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee.*

What a prayer it is! How argumentative! How it pleads his case as an advocate in a court of law, appealing to the mercy of God as logically as if it were to be argued out of the divine heart. Oh, how good it would be if we learnt to pray like this, — in this earnest, importunate fashion! Say the Lord teach us to pray as he taught his disciples!

[2 Chronicles 20:13](#). *And all Judah stood before the LORD, with their little ones, their wives, and their children.*

It must have been a wonderful sight — the vast crowd — the pleading king — his voice heard afar, and the men and the women; but, to my mind, the most touching thing of all is the little children standing there, making their silent appeal to God that he would not let the babes be destroyed — that he would not suffer the young children to be slain by the cruel hosts that now threatened the land. Young children's prayers are powerful. Little ones, may God teach you how to pray.

[2 Chronicles 20:14](#). *Then upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, came the Spirit of the LORD in the midst of the congregation;*

Perhaps he had never delivered a prophecy before. This is his first sermon; but the Spirit of God was with him, and he could not hold his

tongue.

[2 Chronicles 20:15-17](#). *And he said, Hearken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat, Thus saith the LORD unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's. To morrow go ye down against them: behold, they come up by the cliff of Ziz; and ye shall find them at the end of the brook, before the wilderness of Jeruel. Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the LORD with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; to morrow go out against them: for the LORD will be with you.*

Oh, how those words must have fallen on the weary ears of those who were in such trouble! And how glad those ears must have been to hear such a message of wondrous mercy, and so near at hand, too! “To morrow.” Imminent danger brings eminent mercy, and when the lion is about to leap upon his prey, then comes the lionslayer and breaks his teeth, and delivers his lamb even from between his jaws. Glory be to God for such promises as he gives to his people in times of trouble, even such promises as he gave here.

[2 Chronicles 20:18](#). *And Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground: and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell before the LORD, worshipping the LORD.*

What a sight! That is the kind of ritualism one likes — when the posture is suggested by the feelings — when the man feels that there is nothing else to do but to bow before the Lord. The king could not speak, he was too full of gratitude — too joyous at the thought that God had so appeared for him. And he felt that the only thing he could do was in silence to bow his head, and prostrate himself before God. Have not you sometimes felt so full of gratitude that you could not express yourself? “A sacred silence checks our songs and praise sits silent on our tongues.” Now, while they were worshipping, and just as they had finished that silent adoration, the joy-strains were heard. They had taken breath.

[2 Chronicles 20:19](#). *And the Levites, of the children of the Kohathites, and of the children of the Korhites, stood up to praise the LORD God of Israel with a loud voice on high.*

Here, again, we seem to be carried by great waves of excitement and devotion. One moment we are sinking down in adoration, now all rising up

to listen to the loud voice of God's priests and Levites. But they have to wait for the morrow.

[2 Chronicles 20:20-21](#). *And they rose early in the morning, and went forth into the wilderness of Tekoa: and as they went forth, Jehoshaphat stood and said, Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem; Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper. And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the LORD, and that should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the LORD for his mercy endureth for ever.*

So you can see them marching out of the city gate with the king at their head, and, as they go out, the army is marching with banners and with songs and hosannas. This is their style of going out to meet the foe.

[2 Chronicles 20:22-23](#). *And when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten. For the children of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of mount Seir, utterly to slay and destroy them: and where they had made an end of the inhabitants of mount Seir, every one helped to destroy another.*

There were three or four nations, and some jealousy or mistrust must have manifested itself, or some mistake had been made, and the motley host divided itself into self-destroying bands. The Israelites had nothing to do but to sing. Perhaps their very singing was the cause of that disruption among the bands. They could not make it out. They had seen the people rush to battle with discordant cries; but these were marching along as if they were coming to a wedding-feast, singing hymns and chants. That was a new style of fighting. So the Moabites and the Ammonites thought that there must be something wrong. "Surely there must be some confederates in the camp," they would say. They suspected each other, as bad men very soon do, and so they fell foul of one another and spared the Israelites all the trouble of killing them.

[2 Chronicles 20:24-26](#). *And when Judah came toward the watch tower in the wilderness, they looked unto the multitude, and, behold, they were dead bodies fallen to the earth, and none escaped. And when Jehoshaphat and his people came to take away the spoil of them, they found among them in abundance both riches with the dead bodies, and precious jewels, which they stripped off for themselves, more than they could carry away: and they*

were three days in gathering of the spoil, it was so much. And on the fourth day they assembled themselves in the valley of Berachah; for there they blessed the LORD: therefore the name of the same place was called, The valley of Berachah, unto this day.

This is the Valley of Blessing: surely an appropriate name worthy of long remembrance.

[2 Chronicles 20:27](#). *Then they returned, every man of Judah and Jerusalem, and Jehoshaphat in the forefront of them, to go again to Jerusalem with joy;*

Another march of hosannas. What a wonderful sight it must have been! We have read of the Battle of the Spurs; but here is the Battle of the Song — the battle of praise. How wondrously it was won! Jehoshaphat is now in the forefront of those who go back singing. He feels he must sing the loudest who has had such signal mercy after his sin.

[2 Chronicles 20:27-30](#). *For the LORD had made them to rejoice over their enemies. And they came to Jerusalem with psalteries and harps and trumpets unto the house of the LORD. And the fear of God was on all the kingdoms of those countries, when they had heard that the LORD fought against the enemies of Israel. So the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet: for his God gave him rest round about.*

Now, it is a long piece we have read, but I think it would not be complete if I did not read you the song which they sang. In all probability it was the 47th Psalm. You can almost hear them singing it as they march back.

This exposition consisted of readings from [2 Chronicles 20:1-30](#); and Psalms 47.

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CHAPTER 24

Verses 1-25

This chapter gives us the story of the reign of Joash. He was the only one of the royal seed who was preserved alive when Athaliah sought to destroy all the family of Ahaziah. He was hidden away for some six years in the temple by his aunt Jehoshabeath, the wife of Jehoiada the high priest, who arranged matters so well that, when the child was seven years old, Jehoiada caused him to be crowned king, and he put to death the cruel she-wolf Athaliah, who had destroyed the royal family. You see, therefore, how much this young king owed to his uncle the high-priest. Now let us read the story of his reign.

[2 Chronicles 24:1](#). *Joash was seven years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years in Jerusalem.*

He might have reigned much longer had he not erred and turned aside from the right way, and so brought judgment upon himself.

[2 Chronicles 24:1-2](#). *His mother's name also was Zibiah of Beersheba. And Joash did that which was right in the sight of the LORD all the days of Jehoiada the priest.*

As long as his uncle lived, that truly devout statesman as well as priest of the Lord, "Joash did that which was right in the sight of the Lord."

[2 Chronicles 24:3-4](#). *And Jehoiada took for him two wives; and he begat sons and daughters. And it came to pass after this,*

Probably, some three and twenty years after, —

[2 Chronicles 24:4](#). *That Joash was minded to repair the house of the LORD.*

Jehoiada had with him broken in pieces the images of Baal, and battered down the temples of the idols; and now the young king is "minded to repair the house of Jehovah."

[2 Chronicles 24:5](#). *And he gathered together the priests and the Levites, and said to them, go out unto the cities of Judah, and gather of all Israel money to repair the house of your God from year to year, and see that ye hasten the matter. Howbeit the Levites hastened it not.*

It is a great pity when those who live in the house of God have not enough interest in it to see to its repair. The fact was, the offerings presented at the temple, like the tithes in modern times, were intended not only for the ministers, but for the maintaining of the fabric, too. But these priests and Levites would not allow anything to be deducted from their own income even for the repair of the house in which they served. So Joash ordained that special collections should be made for the purpose.

[2 Chronicles 24:6-9](#). *And the king called for Jehoiada the chief, and said unto him, Why hast thou not required of the Levites to bring in out of Judah and out of Jerusalem the collection, according to the commandment of Moses the servant of the Lord, and of the congregation of Israel, for the tabernacle of witnesses? For the sons of Athaliah, that wicked woman, had broken up the honour of God: and also all the dedicated things of the house of the LORD did they bestow upon Baalim. And at the king's commandment they made a chest, and set it without at the gate of the house of the LORD. And they made a proclamation through Judah and Jerusalem, to bring in to the LORD the collection that Moses the servant of God laid upon Israel in the wilderness.*

Everyone must give his half shekel by way of redemption money, and this had not been brought in.

[2 Chronicles 24:10-14](#). *And all the princes and all the people rejoiced, and brought in, and cast into the chest, until they had made an end. Now it came to pass, that at what time the chest was brought unto the king's office by the hand of the Levites, and when they saw that there was much money, the king's scribe and the high priest's officer came and emptied the chest, and took it, and carried it to his place again. This they did day by day, and gathered money in abundance. And the king and Jehoiada gave it to such as did the work of the service of the house of the LORD, and hired masons and carpenters to repair the house of the LORD, and, also such as wrought iron and brass to mend the house of the LORD. So the workmen wrought, and the work was perfected by them, and they set the house of God in his state, and strengthened it. And when they had finished it, they brought the rest of the money before the king and Jehoiada, whereof were made vessels for the*

house of the LORD, even vessels to minister, and to offer withal, and spoons, and vessels of gold and silver. And they offered burnt offerings in the house of the LORD continually all the day of Jehoiada.

See the influence of one man. One man can sway a state. One man can check sin. One man can be the head of a host who shall serve God, and honour his name.

[2 Chronicles 24:15](#). *But Jehoiada waxed old,*

It happened to him as it must happen to us all; for the best of men must grow old, and pass away. Let us value them while we have them. Too often we give them stones while they are alive, in anticipation of giving them bigger stones to keep them in memory when they die. “Jehoiada waxed old,” —

[2 Chronicles 24:15](#). *And was full of day when he died; an hundred and thirty years old was he when he died.*

An unusual age for that time; short enough as compared with the years of the antediluvian patriarchs, but still a great age for those days.

[2 Chronicles 24:16](#). *And they buried him in the city of David among the kings, because he had done good in Israel, both toward God, and toward his house.*

That is the best kind of good which begins with doing good toward God, and then goes on to doing good towards God’s house. The Church is to be served, but even it must be second to God’s glory. God first, and then the very best must come next.

[2 Chronicles 24:17](#). *Now after the death of Jehoiada came the princes of Judah, and made obeisance to the king. Then the king hearkened unto them.*

These flatterers came with all their daintiest manners, and made obeisance to the king, and “the king hearkened unto them.” All the days of Jehoiada, these princes had been afraid to set up the fashionable worship the worship of Baalim, that had been introduced by the Sidonian queen Jezebel, that wicked woman of strong and masterful spirit. This worldly and false religion had been put down by the strong hand of Jehoiada; but when its adherents thought they had a chance to get to the front again, they came and flattered the king, and “the king hearkened unto them.”

[2 Chronicles 24:18](#). *And they left the house of the LORD God of their fathers, and served groves and idols:*

Or, “Asherah and idols.” The word is mistakenly translated “groves.” These were certain horrible and disgusting emblems of the heathen goddess

Ashtaroth, or Astarte: “They served Asherah and idols.”

[2 Chronicles 24:18-19](#). *And wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this their trespass. Yet he sent prophets to them, to bring them again unto the LORD and they testified against them: but they would not give ear.*

“These old Puritans have come back again,” said they. “We will not listen to them.” The common people were still mostly worshippers of Jehovah; but the great ones of the earth had gone over to the idols, and they could not endure that one and another of the prophets, often very humble and unlearned men, should come and bear testimony for Jehovah.

[2 Chronicles 24:20](#). *And the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, which stood above the people, and said unto them, Thus saith God, Why transgress ye the commandments of the Lord, that ye cannot prosper? because ye have forsaken the Lord, he hath also forsaken you.*

He spoke very temperately and affectionately. The warning was faithful; but it was delivered in the very best and kindest spirit. But now see what the wicked men did.

[2 Chronicles 24:21](#). *And they conspired against him, and stoned him with stones at the commandment of the king in the court of the house of the Lord.*

This is probably the prophet to whom Christ alludes when he speaks of Zechariah, “whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.” It was a crime most foul to murder the son of Jehoiada, one of those who had helped to put the crown upon the head of the king. To do this evil deed in the court of God’s house, when the prophet was engaged in his Master’s business, and delivering a divine message, was to heap sin upon sin.

[2 Chronicles 24:22-23](#). *Thus Joash the king remembered not the kindness which Jehoiada his father had done to him, but slew his son. And when he died, he said, The LORD look upon it, and require it. And it came to pass at the end of the year, that the host of Syria came up against him: and they came to Judah and Jerusalem, and destroyed all the princes of the people from among the people, and sent all the spoil of them unto the king of Damascus.*

God delayed not long the punishment of the evil-doers. When his servants are persecuted, he will speedily avenge his own elect. “They destroyed all the princes of the people from among the people.” Was not that remarkable? These were the authors of the sin; and they had chiefly to

endure the penalty. It is not always that invaders lay hold upon the princes alone, and slay them; but these Syrians did so.

[2 Chronicles 24:24-25](#). *For the army of the Syrians came with a small company of men, and the LORD delivered a very great host into their hand, because they had forsaken the LORD God of their fathers. So they executed judgment against Joash. And when they were departed from him, (for they left him in great diseases,) his own servants conspired against him for the blood of the sons of Jehoiada the priest, and slew him on his bed, and he died: and they buried him in the city of David, but they buried him not in the sepulchres of the kings.*

When one set of executioners had gone, his own servants conspired against him and slew him. Here ends our reading. May it be profitable to us!

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CHAPTER 28

Verses 1-16

[2 Chronicles 28:1-3](#). *Ahaz was twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem: but he did not that which was right in the sight of the LORD, like David his father: for he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and made also molten images for Baalim.*

Moreover he burnt incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and burnt his children in the fire, after the abominations of the heathen whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel.

God had driven out the Canaanites because of these abominations; therefore, for his own people to practice them, was peculiarly provoking to him.

[2 Chronicles 28:4](#). *He sacrificed also and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree.*

He could not do enough of it; so many trees, so many altars. There are some men who use every opportunity for sin, with a diligence which should bring the blush into the face of Christians, who are not as diligent in obeying as these men are in sinning.

[2 Chronicles 28:5](#). *Wherefore the LORD his God delivered him into the hand of the king of Syria; and they smote him, and carried away a great multitude of them captives, and brought them to Damascus. And he was also delivered into the hand of the king of Israel, who smote him with a great slaughter.*

It did not look as if the captives would ever return; yet the prophet's son was named Shear-jashub, "The remnant shall return." Ahaz might have said to Isaiah, "Your child's name is a lie." We shall see.

[2 Chronicles 28:6-11](#). *For Pekah the son of Remaliah slew in Judah an hundred and twenty thousand in one day, which were all valiant men; because they had forsaken the LORD God of their fathers. And Zichri, a mighty man of Ephraim, slew Maaseiah, the king's son, and Azrikam the governor of the house, and Elkanah that was next to the king. And the children of Israel carried away captive of their brethren two hundred thousand, women, sons, and daughters, and took also away much spoil from them, and brought the spoil to Samaria. But a prophet of the LORD was there, whose name was Oded: and he went out before the host that came to Samaria, and said unto them, Behold, because the LORD God of your fathers was wroth with Judah, he hath delivered them into your hand, and, ye have slain them in a rage that reacheth up unto heaven. And now ye purpose to keep under the children of Judah and Jerusalem for bondmen and bondwomen unto you: but are there not with you, even with you, sins against the LORD your God? Now hear me therefore, and deliver the captives again, which ye have taken captive of your brethren: for the fierce wrath of the LORD is upon you.*

It was very wonderful that these wild fellows should listen to this prophet with all those captives round about them. It was a brave act on the part of the prophet Oded to go out, and utter his protest.

[2 Chronicles 28:12-15](#). *Then certain of the heads of the children of Ephraim, Azariah the son of Johanan, Berechiah the son of Meshillemoth, and Jehizkiah the son of Shallum, and Amasa the son of Hadlai, stood up against them that came from the war, and said unto them, Ye shall not bring in the captives hither: for whereas we have offended against the LORD already, ye intend to add more to our sins and to our trespass: for our trespass is great, and there is fierce wrath against Israel. So the armed men left the captives and the spoil before the princes and all the congregation. And the men which were expressed by name rose up, and took the captives, and with the spoil clothed all that were naked among them, and arrayed them, and shod them, and gave them to eat and to drink, and anointed them, and carried all the feeble of them upon asses, and brought them to Jericho, the city of palm trees, to their brethren: then they returned to Samaria.*

What a wonderful thing that was! Ahaz ought to have said to Isaiah, “Your child’s name is right, after all; for the remnant has returned.” Did it not seem as if Ahaz must now trust God? But notice what the next verse says.

[2 Chronicles 28:16](#). *At that time did king Ahaz send unto the kings of Assyria to help him.*

When men are determined to be unbelievers and disobedient, they will send anywhere for help but to the Lord. Israel and Syria were very little kingdoms; but Assyria was a great empire, the mighty nation of the period. Yet no help came to Ahaz from that quarter, for we read in the twentieth verse, “And Tilgath-pilneser king of Assyria came unto him, and distressed him, but strengthened him not.” The twenty-first verse tells us that Ahaz bribed the king of Assyria; “but he helped him not.” That is always the dirge at the end of all efforts to secure human instead of divine aid.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Isaiah 7:1-16](#), and [2 Chronicles 28:1-16](#).

Verses 1-27

[2 Chronicles 28:1](#). *Ahaz was twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem:*

So that he died before he reached the prime of life; he was cut off by God in the very midst of his sin.

[2 Chronicles 28:1-2](#). *But he did not that which was right in the sight of the LORD, like David his father: for he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, —*

They had set up the worship of God under emblems, there were the calves of Bethel, the representation of strength: it was the worship of God by imagery, and Ahaz imitated it, and went even further in sin, —

[2 Chronicles 28:2](#). *And made also molten images for Baalim.*

If we worship the true God under some symbol, the next step is to worship a false God.

[2 Chronicles 28:3](#). *Moreover he burnt incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and burnt his children in the fire, after the abominations of the heathen whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel.*

The worship of Moloch was one of the most horrible that can be imagined. A brazen image was made terribly hot, and then children were thrust into its burning arms to be consumed; and this king went to such a length that he gave his own children to death in that cruel fashion in the place commonly called by the Jews Topheth, or, the place of spitting, since it was so loathsome to them to think of this false God.

[2 Chronicles 28:4](#). *He sacrificed also and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree.*

According to the command of God, there was to be but one altar, and that one was to be at Jerusalem; but these people multiplied their altars; there could not be a high place but they must have an idol shrine set up upon it.

[2 Chronicles 28:5](#). *Wherefore the LORD his God delivered him into the hand of the king of Syria; and they smote him, and carried away a great multitude of them captives, and brought them to Damascus. And he was also delivered into the hand of the king of Israel, who smote him with a great slaughter.*

He received blow upon blow; God would not let him rest in his sin. Now turn to verse 16.

[2 Chronicles 28:16](#). *At that time did king Ahaz send unto the kings of Assyria to help him.*

The king of Assyria was the greatest potentate in that region, and all the little kings were afraid of him, and therefore sent to him for help when they were in trouble. Ahaz made no appeal to God, for the assistance he required, but he turned to the arm of flesh.

[2 Chronicles 28:17](#). *For again the Edomites had come and smitten Judah, and carried away captives.*

The Edomites had been under subjection to Judah; but now that God had left her, Judah could not hold her position.

[2 Chronicles 28:18](#). *The Philistines also —*

A people that one might have thought had become extinct, so weak were they that we scarcely hear of them; yet “the Philistines also” —

[2 Chronicles 28:18-20](#). *Had invaded the cities of the low country, and of the south of Judah, and had taken Bethshemesh, and Ajalon, and Gederoth, and Shocho with the villages thereof, and Timnab with the villages thereof, Gimzo also and the villages thereof: and they dwelt there. For the LORD brought Judah low because of Ahaz king of Israel; for he made Judah naked, and transgressed sore against the LORD. And Tilgathpilneser king of Assyria came unto him, and distressed him, but strengthened him not.*

How vain it is to seek relief apart from God!

[2 Chronicles 28:21-22](#). *For Ahaz took away a portion out of the house of the LORD, and out of the house of the king, and of the princes, and gave it unto the king of Assyria: but he helped him not. And in the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the LORD: this is that king Ahaz.*

A black mark is put against his name, to show how greatly guilty he was. Those who rebel against divine checks, and will not be held in by the providence of God, are to be written down in capital letters as great sinners. They sin with emphasis who sin against the chastising rod.

[2 Chronicles 28:23-25](#). *For he sacrificed unto the gods of Damascus, which smote him: and he said, Because the gods of the kings of Syria help them, therefore will I sacrifice to them, that they may help me. But they were the ruin of him, and of all Israel. And Ahaz gathered together the vessels of the house of God, and cut in pieces the vessels of the house of God, and shut up the doors of the house of the LORD, and he made him altars in every corner of Jerusalem. And in every several city of Judah he made high places to burn incense unto other gods, and provoked to anger the LORD God of his fathers.*

He set up little shrines, so that every passer-by might worship which idol he pleased, and each man might present a little incense; thus the whole city was filled with idolatry.

[2 Chronicles 28:26-27](#). *Now the rest of his acts and of all his ways, first and last, behold, they are written in the book of the kings of Judah and*

Israel. And Ahaz slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city, even in Jerusalem: but they brought him not into the sepulchres of the kings of Israel:

There was a holy and reverent feeling amongst the remnant of God's people that a man who had lived as Ahaz had done should not lie with the good kings of Israel.

[2 Chronicles 28:27](#). *And Hezekiah his son reigned in his stead.*

Now turn to Isaiah, the second chapter, and the sixth verse.

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CHAPTER 33

Verses 1-19

[2 Chronicles 33:1-2](#). *Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty and five years in Jerusalem: but did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord,*

Yet who could have had a better father than Manasseh had? He was given to Hezekiah during those fifteen years which God graciously added to that good king's life. Manasseh was, therefore, doubtless carefully trained, and looked upon as being one who would maintain God's worship, and the honour of his father's name. But grace does not run in the blood; and the best of parents may have the worst of children. Thus Manasseh, though he was the son of Hezekiah, "did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord,"

—
[2 Chronicles 33:2](#). *Like unto the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel.*

It often happens that, when the sons of good men become bad, they are among the worst of men. They who pervert a good example generally run headlong to destruction.

[2 Chronicles 33:3](#). *For he built again the high places which Hezekiah his father had broken down, and he reared up altars for Baalim, and made groves, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them.*

One form of idolatry was not enough for him; he must have all forms of it, even rearing altars to Baal, and making the stars also to be his gods.

[2 Chronicles 33:4](#). *Also he built altars in the house of the LORD, whereof the LORD had said, In Jerusalem shall my name be for ever.*

Manasseh was worse than an ordinary idolater, for he polluted the very place which was dedicated to the service of the only living and true God.

[2 Chronicles 33:5-6](#). *And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD. And he caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom:*

Perhaps he gave some of them actually to be burned in honour of his false gods; or if not some of his children were made to pass through the fire and were thus dedicated to the idol deities.

[2 Chronicles 33:6](#). *Also he observed times, and used enchantments, and used witchcraft, and dealt with a familiar spirit, and with wizards: he wrought much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger.*

You cannot imagine, I think, a worse character than this Manasseh was. He seems to have raked the foulest kennels of superstition to find all manner of abominations. Like false-hearted Saul, he had dealings with a familiar spirit, he had entered into a covenant with Satan himself, and made a league with hell, and yet, marvel of grace! this very Manasseh was saved, and is now singing the new song before the throne of God in glory.

[2 Chronicles 33:7-9](#). *And he set a carved image, the idol which he had made, in the house of God, of which God had said to David and to Solomon his son, In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen before all the tribes of Israel, will I put my name for ever: neither will I any more remove the foot of Israel from out of the land which I have appointed for your fathers; so that they will take heed to do all that I have commanded them, according to the whole law and the statutes and the ordinances by the hand of Moses. So Manasseh made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and to do worse than the heathen, whom the LORD had destroyed before the children of Israel.*

You see, dear friends, that he was not only a monster in iniquity himself, but he led a whole nation astray. Some people who, under the gracious rule of his father Hezekiah, had kept the passover in so joyous a manner, now, under this false son of so good a father, turned aside.

[2 Chronicles 33:10](#). *And the LORD spake to Manasseh, and to his people: but they would not hearken.*

This was all that was necessary to fill up the measure of his guilt. He and his people were warned of God, but they would not hearken.

[2 Chronicles 33:11](#). *Wherefore-*

Since words were not sufficient, and God intended to save him, he came to blows: "Wherefore" —

[2 Chronicles 33:11](#). *The LORD brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon.*

They very likely chastened him with thorns, for the kings of Babylon were very cruel; and it may be that, when his back was lacerated by thorny scourges, he was put in prison with heavy fetters upon him.

[2 Chronicles 33:12-13](#). *And when he was in affliction, he besought the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto him: and he was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD he was God.*

There surely can be no person in this assembly who can say that he has sinned worse than Manasseh did. He seems to have gone as far as any human being could go; and yet, you see, when he humbled himself before the Lord, and lifted up his heart in supplication, God forgave his sin, and restored him to his former position in Jerusalem.

[2 Chronicles 33:14](#). *Now after this he built a wall without the city of David, on the west side of Gihon, in the valley, even to the entering in at the fish gate, and compassed about Ophel, and raised it up a very great height, and put captains of war in all the fenced cities of Judah.*

This is not of very much importance, but what else did he do?

[2 Chronicles 33:16](#). *And he took away the strange gods,-*

When grace comes into any man's heart, there is sure to be a change in his action. Manasseh "took away the strange gods," —

[2 Chronicles 33:16](#). *And the idol out of the house of the LORD, and all the altars that he had built in the mount of the house of the LORD, and in Jerusalem, and cast them out of the city.*

Sins which were before so pleasing to him are now abominations in his sight, and he flings them over the city wall like unclean things. In the very valley of the son of Hinnom where he had dedicated his sons to idols he now consumes his idol gods as foul and offensive things, to be cast away with all the refuse of the city.

[2 Chronicles 33:16](#). *And he repaired the altar of the LORD, and sacrificed thereon peace offerings and thank offerings, and commanded Judah to serve the LORD God of Israel.*

It was not possible for him to undo all the evil which he had wrought, as he soon found out.

[2 Chronicles 33:17](#). *Nevertheless the people did sacrifice still in the high places, yet unto the Lord their God only.*

The work of reformation is slow; you can lead men to sin as rapidly as you like, that is down-hill work; but to get them to toil with you up-hill toward the right is not so easy.

[2 Chronicles 33:18-19](#). *Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, and his prayer unto his God, and the words of the seers that spake to him in the name of the LORD God of Israel, behold, they are written in the book of the kings of Israel. His prayer also, and how God was entreated of him, and all his sins, and his trespass, and the places wherein he built high places, and set up groves and graven images, before he was humbled; behold, they are written among the sayings of the seers.*

So we must remember that all the deeds that we have done, both good and evil, are written in God's Book of Remembrance.

Verses 1-20

[2 Chronicles 33:1](#). *Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign,*

He was, therefore, born after the time when Hezekiah was raised up from the bed of sickness. That prolongation of life was not all mercy: I am not sure that we should be so eager for such an extension of earthly existence either for ourselves or for others. Had Hezekiah been able to foresee what would be the abominations of the first part of Manasseh's reign, should he come to the throne of Judah, methinks that the godly king might have been content to die at once rather than live any longer to become the father of such a sinner, and one who would prove to be such an enemy of the true faith. "Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign." It was too early for a youth to reign over any nation. It is a great temptation, and a serious peril, when an individual has too much power before he reaches his manhood. It would have been far better for Manasseh if his accession to the throne had been postponed for a good while. You who are very young, and are entrusted with wealth and position, may God keep you from going wrong! It will need great grace to preserve you in the right path.

[2 Chronicles 33:1](#). *And he reigned fifty and five years, in Jerusalem:*

Manasseh's was a long reign, a varied reign, and at first a wicked reign of the very worst kind. Sometimes men are spared notwithstanding their sin. Manasseh's was one of the longest reigns on record: "He reigned fifty and five years in Jerusalem."

[2 Chronicles 33:2](#). *But did that which was evil in the light of the LORD, like unto the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD, had cast out before the children of Israel.*

The Lord drove out the Canaanites for the very sins that Manasseh committed. If we follow in the sins of others, we must not wonder if we share in their doom. It is a sad thing, however, when the child of such a father as Hezekiah does evil in the sight of the Lord, "like unto the abominations of the heathen, whom Jehovah had cast out before the children of Israel."

[2 Chronicles 33:3](#). *For he built again the high places which Hezekiah his father had broken down,*

These high places were at first built for the worship of God, the true God; but then the law of Jehovah was that there should be only one altar, namely, that at Jerusalem. This was not Popery, but Ritualism; it was adding

something to the simple worship of God, and therefore it was wrong. He who goes a little way in sin will soon go a long way. It is always a mercy to stop where you ought to stop, and not begin going down. Hezekiah had broken down the high places, and his son Manasseh rebuilt them.

[2 Chronicles 33:3](#). *And he reared up altars for Baalim, and made groves, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them.*

He not only worshipped them, but he served them; he threw his whole strength into the propagation of this form of idolatry. They who build altars to God, contrary to the Lord's law, will soon have false gods. First, men set up images to remind them of the true God; and then they go off to the worship of the idols, or false gods. Oh, that we may have grace to make no similitude of the Lord, and to set up nothing contrary to the simple teaching of the Word of God!

[2 Chronicles 33:4-5](#). *Also he built altars in the house of the LORD, whereof the LORD had said, In Jerusalem shall my name be for ever. And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD.*

There was plenty of room elsewhere for them if Manasseh wanted them; but; nothing would do for him but that in the house of God itself must be built altars for the worship of the sun and all the host of stars.

[2 Chronicles 33:6](#). *And he caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom: also he observed times, and used enchantments, and used witchcraft, and dealt with a familiar spirit, and with wizards:*

All which is imitated, nowadays, by certain persons who try to break through the vail which parts us from the spiritual world. Manasseh did this on a large scale.

[2 Chronicles 33:6-11](#). *He wrought much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger. And he set a carved image, the idol which he had made, in the house of God, of which God had said to David and to Solomon his son, In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen before all the tribes of Israel, will I put my name for ever: neither will I any more remove the foot of Israel from out of the land which I have appointed for your fathers; so that they will take heed to do all that I have commanded them, according to the whole law and the statutes and the ordinances by the hand of Moses. So Manasseh made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and to do worse than the heathen, whom the LORD had destroyed before*

the children of Israel. And the LORD spake to Manasseh, and to his people: but they would not hearken. Wherefore the LORD brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon.

If you will not learn anywhere else, you will have to be taught among thorns, and in chains, and in exile. There are some men who will never go to heaven except through a sea of affliction and trial. Oh, for wisdom to yield to almighty grace at once!

[2 Chronicles 33:12-13](#). *And when he was in affliction, he besought the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto him: and he was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD he was God.*

He had set up Baal and Ashtaroah; but now he knows who is the true God, and he bows before Jehovah.

[2 Chronicles 33:14-17](#). *Now after this he built a wall without the city of David, on the west side of Gihon, in the valley, even to the entering in at the fish gate, and compassed about Ophel, and raised it up a very great height, and put captains of war in all the fenced cities of Judah. And he took away the strange gods, and the idol out of the house of the LORD, and all the altars that he had built in the mount of the house of the LORD, and in Jerusalem, and cast them out of the city. And he repaired the altar of the Lord, and sacrificed thereon peace offerings and thank offerings, and commanded Judah to serve the LORD God of Israel. Nevertheless the people did sacrifice still in the high places,*

They do the same today, and we cannot get them away from them. Even some who love the gospel yet cling to the old Romish rites and ceremonies. Ah, men do love to multiply outward performances instead of spiritual worship! The one altar of Calvary is not enough for them; they must have many altars: "Nevertheless the people did sacrifice still in the high places."

[2 Chronicles 33:17](#). *Yet unto the LORD their God only.*

So far, it was well; but it would have been better if they had given up all those altars.

[2 Chronicles 33:18-20](#). *Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, and his prayer unto his God, and the words of the seers that spake to him in the name of the LORD God of Israel, behold, they are written in the book of the kings of Israel, His prayer also, and how God was entreated of him, and all*

his sins, and his trespass, and the places wherein he built high places, and set up groves and graven images, before he was humbled: behold, they are written among the sayings of the seers. So Manasseh slept with his fathers, and they buried him in his own house: and Amon his son reigned in his stead.

The short passage, which I am going to read from the first chapter of Isaiah, seems to get a fine illustration in this story of Manasseh.

This exposition consisted of readings from [2 Chronicles 33:1-20](#); And [Isaiah 1:2-19](#).

2 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 34

Verses 14-33

[2 Chronicles 34:14-15](#). *And when they brought out the money that was brought into the house of the LORD, Hilkiyah the priest found a book of the law of the LORD given by Moses. And Hilkiyah answered and said to Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD, And Hilkiyah delivered the book to Shaphan.*

This was a very remarkable find. Of all the discoveries that they might have made, they could have discovered nothing that would work so much good to all the people as this “book of the law of the Lord given by Moses.”

[2 Chronicles 34:16-19](#). *And Shaphan carried the book to the king, and brought the king word back again, saying, All that was committed to thy servant, they do it. And they have gathered together the money that was found in the house of the LORD, and have delivered it into the hand of the overseers, and to the hand of the workmen. Then Shaphan the scribe told the king, saying, Hilkiyah the priest hath given me a book. And Shaphan read it before the king. And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the law, that he rent his clothes.*

Such was his horror upon discovering how they had all sinned, and how many terrible judgments were to be inflicted upon them because of all that long time of sin, that he rent his clothes.

[2 Chronicles 34:20-21](#). *And the king commanded Hilkiyah, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Abdon the son of Micah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah a servant of the king's, saying, Go, inquire of the LORD for me,*

and for them that are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the book that is found:

Oh, that all who read God's Book now would do as young Josiah did! If there be any difficulty in a book, the short way to get to understand it is to inquire of the author; and, surely, never is there greater wisdom than having read any of the deep mysteries or solemn threatenings in this Volume and feeling ourselves staggered by them, we inquire of the Lord concerning them. I believe that there is many a puzzling passage in the Bible on purpose that we may be driven to inquire of the Lord about it. If the Book were all so easy of understanding that, at the first reading of it, we could comprehend all its meaning, we might, perhaps, keep away from God; but he has purposely given us many dark sentences, and made the sense to be somewhat obscure in order that we may wait upon his enlightening Spirit and so obtain instruction, for the Spirit of God is more useful to us even than the Word itself is. Great as the blessing of the Book is, the blessing of the living Spirit is greater still, and anything is good that drives us to him. That which had influenced the mind of Josiah was the terror of the Book.

[2 Chronicles 34:21-28](#). *For great is the wrath of the LORD that is poured out upon us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the LORD, to do after all that is written in this book. And Hilkiah, and they that the king had appointed, went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvath, the son of Hasrah, keeper of the wardrobe; (now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the college:) and they spake to her to that effect. And she answered them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Tell ye the man that sent you to me, Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the curses that are written in the book which they have read before the king of Judah: because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore my wrath shall be poured out upon this place, and shall not be quenched. And as for the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the LORD, so shall ye say unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel concerning the words which thou hast heard; because thine heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God, when thou heardest his words against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, and humbledst thyself before me, and didst rend thy clothes, and weep before me; I have even heard thee also, saith the LORD. Behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy*

grave in peace, neither shall thine eyes see all the evil that I will bring upon this place, and upon the inhabitants of the same. So they brought the king word again.

When God selects an instrument for his own service, how well he tunes it for the use to which it is to be put! Here is a woman, a married woman, and she is selected to be the Lord's prophetess to the king; but never has any man spoken more bravely than she did. Her opening words show a holy courage which is lifted above all fear of men: "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Tell ye the man that sent you to me," for before God kings are only men; and though Huldah was only a subject of Josiah, see with what real dignity God's ordination had invested her. Josiah was not to succeed in the reformation of Israel. He was true and sincere, but the people were steeped in hypocrisy, and formality, and idolatry, and they did not go with the king in all his root and branch reforms. They still clung in their hearts to their idols, and therefore they must be destroyed, and the nation must be carried away captive. It was, however, a very singular promise that God gave to Josiah "I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace." Yet he was mortally wounded in battle, so how could that promise be fulfilled? You know how it could be. However we may die, — if sword or plague or fire consume the saints among the rest of mankind, their very deaths and graves are blest. There was no fighting about Josiah's grave; he was buried in peace. Pharaoh-Necho had smitten him, but he did not destroy the land; and Josiah was allowed to be buried amid the great lamentations of a people who only began fully to appreciate him when he was taken away from them.

[2 Chronicles 34:29-30](#). *Then the king sent and gathered together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. And the king went up into the house of the LORD, and all the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the priests, and the Levites, and all the people, great and small: and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant that was found in the house of the LORD.*

That was a grand Bible-reading, with a king for reader, and all his princes and all his people gathered to Listen to the Word of God. What could he have said better, had he been the greatest of orators? To read out of this blessed Book must surely be to the edification of the hearers.

[2 Chronicles 34:31-33](#). *And the king stood in his place, and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD, and to keep his*

commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all his heart, and with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant which are written in this book. And he caused all that were present in Jerusalem and Benjamin to stand to it. And the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers. And Josiah took away all the abominations out of all the countries that pertained to the children of Israel, and made all that were present in Israel to serve, even to serve the LORD their God. And all his days they departed not from following the LORD, the God of their father.

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CHAPTER 1

Verses 1-11

[Nehemiah 1:1-2](#). *The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah. And it came to pass in the month, Chisleu, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the palace, that Hanani, one of my brethren, came, he and certain men of Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem.*

Nehemiah was in a high office in Shushan the palace of King Artaxerxes, but his heart was at Jerusalem. He therefore remembered the very date, “in the month Chisleu,” when some of his brethren came from Judah to visit him, for he was more interested in their coming than in any transaction of the court in which he was for a while employed. Observe the subject of this good man’s conversation: “I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem.” Whenever Christian people meet together, they ought to make the subject of their mutual discourse an enquiry as to the progress of the Kingdom of God in the place where they respectively dwell. If you have come up from the country, we want you to tell us about the work of God in your village, or in the town to which you belong; are there many conversions there? We also will tell you about the work in London. Thus should Christian brethren commune with one another, and ask concerning Christ’s kingdom among men, and the progress that his gospel is making.

[Nehemiah 1:3](#). *And they said unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in, great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire.*

They gave a correct description of the real state of affairs in Jerusalem; they did not colour it, but they stated the actual facts. It is well, sometimes, to tell our Christian brethren about the low estate of Zion; where things are not prospering as they should, it is best to say so, and not to try to smother up the truth, and give a false report.

[Nehemiah 1:4](#). *And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven,*

This good man was greatly affected by the sad news which he heard. He was not indifferent to, the condition of his countrymen; he did not say, “We are getting on very well here; I am a Jew, and I am in the palace of

Artaxerxes, but I cannot do anything to help my brethren. You, who are away there at Jerusalem, must do the best you can.” No; Nehemiah said no such thing; he looked upon himself as being part and parcel of the whole Jewish race, just as every true believer should regard all Christians as being near akin to himself. We are not twenty churches, brethren, nor two hundred; our Lord Jesus Christ is the head, and we are members of that one body which is his Church. We ought to sympathize with all who are in Christ; and, especially, if the cause of God is not prospering in any place, we should do as Nehemiah did, he wept, and mourned, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven. He tells us what he said in his prayer; these are, as it were, the shorthand notes of his supplication.

[Nehemiah 1:5-6](#). *And said, I beseech thee, O LORD God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments: Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee: both I and my father's house have sinned.*

This is quite a model prayer. How earnest it is, and how truthful! Nehemiah recognizes the terrible side of God's character as well as his mercifulness. He evidently had right views of God. Some people try to explain away all the passages of Scripture which represent God as a terrible God; whether they know it or not, they will find this course of action to be a great source of weakness to them in dealing with the ungodly. Nehemiah calls Jehovah “the great and terrible God;” but he adds, “that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him.” He tells us that he prayed before the Lord day and night. Of course, he had to attend to his daily duties, so that he could not always be upon his knees; but his heart was praying even while he was engaged with other matters; and as often as he could, he retired to his room, so that he might cry out unto God. Please to observe that he makes a confession of “the sins of the children of Israel.” It is our duty as Christians, as it were, to take the great lead of the sins of the nation upon ourselves, and to make confession of them before God; if the guilty ones will not repent, we must repent for them; if they will not, confess their sins, we must confess their sins as though we stood in their stead. Nehemiah very pathetically says, “and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee:” and then coming

still more closely home, he adds, “both I and my father’s house have sinned.”

[Nehemiah 1:7-9](#). *We have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which thou commandedst thy servant Moses. Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandedst thy servant Moses, saying, If ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations: But if ye turn unto me, and keep my commandments, and do them; though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of the heaven, yet will I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set my name there.*

He quotes the covenant, and he pleads the promise of Jehovah. Now, there is no means of getting a man to do us a favor so powerful as this, to quote his own promise,” You said you would do it.” So, here, Nehemiah says, “Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandedst thy servant Moses.”

[Nehemiah 1:10-11](#). *Now these are thy servants and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power, and by thy strong hand. O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name: and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man.*

That is, in the sight of King Artaxerxes to whom he was about to speak.

[Nehemiah 1:11](#). *For I was the king’s cupbearer.*

He counts this as a high privilege, that he would be able to speak for his people to the great king who would give him the opportunity to go and rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.

[NEHEMIAH CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 2

Verses 1-8

[Nehemiah 2:1](#). *And it came to pass in the month Nisan, Three or four months after he began to pray.*

[Nehemiah 2:1](#). *In the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king, that wine was before him: and I took up the wine, and gave it unto the king.*

We have in some of the old slabs and carvings some singular pictures of the dainty way in which the kings of Persia and Media were served by their

cupbearers. They always spilled a little wine upon their left hand and drank first, for fear the king should be poisoned. So the greatest men of the different provinces of the empire were called by turns to act this part before the king. It was a piece of state ceremonial.

[Nehemiah 2:1](#). *Now I had not been beforetime sad in his presence.*

And there was a law—one of those stupid Median laws—that no man was to come before the king with a sad countenance. It was supposed that the king must be so serenely happy himself that none might come there unless they were happy, too. Nehemiah had been able to observe this rule, but on this occasion he did not, because he could not.

[Nehemiah 2:2-6](#). *Wherefore the king said unto me, Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? this is nothing else but sorrow of heart. Then I was very sore afraid, And said unto the king, Let the king live for ever: why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire? Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven. And I said unto the king, If it please the king, and if thy servant have found favor in thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto Judah, unto the city of my father's sepulchres, that I may build it. And the king said unto me, (the queen also sitting by him,)*

Who was, probably, queen Esther, and therefore abundantly agreeable that such a work should be done for her own nation. “The king said unto me.”

[Nehemiah 2:6](#). *For how long shall thy journey be? and when wilt thou return? So it pleased the king to send me: and I set him a time.*

He was a valued servant. They did not wish to part with him, and if he would go for a time to do this business, yet they take security that he should return. There are some servants that I know of, who, if they were to go away, their masters would not be particularly anxious that they should come back again. It is well when a man is so in favor with God that his piety acts upon his ordinary life, and he becomes in favor with men also. That is a poor, miserable religion that does not make its possessor a good servant. Yes, in whatever station of life we may be placed, we ought to be far more valuable to those round about us on account of our fearing God. May we always be of such a character that, if we were gone, we should be missed. “I set him a time.”

This exposition consisted of readings from [Nehemiah 1:1](#) to [Nehemiah 2:8](#).

[NEHEMIAH CONTENTS](#)

Nehemiah Chapter 3

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER 4

Verses 1-23

Nehemiah 4:1. *But it came to pass, that when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews.*

It was needful to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, which had been lying in ruins. They went on pretty briskly, for everyone had a mind to work. There never was a good work yet but what there were some to oppose it, and there never will be till the Lord comes. Sanballat heard what the Jews were doing, and he was very angry. "He was wroth, and took great indignation." He was all on fire with anger that God's work was being continued.

Nehemiah 4:2. *And he spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, What do these feeble Jews?*

The enemies of God's people generally take to sneering. It is a very easy way of showing opposition. Will they fortify themselves? Will they sacrifice? Will they make an end in a day? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned? No doubt these questions were thought to be very witty and very sarcastic. The enemies of Christ are generally good hands at this kind of thing. Well, if it amuses them, I do not know that it need hurt us much; for, after all, it is their way of paying homage to God's power.

Nehemiah 4:3. *Now Tobiah the Ammonite was by him, and he said, Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall.*

Such a man as Sanballat never lacks friends. If there is a bad man anywhere, there is sure to be another close at hand. The devil does not make

a fire with one stick. When he has set the first one alight, he can generally find a fagot to put near it. Tobiah the Ammonite, who was tarred with the same brush as Sanballat the Horonite, was by him.

Nehemiah 4:4-5. *Hear, O our God; for we are despised: and turn their reproach upon their own head, and give them for a prey in the land of captivity; and cover not their iniquity, and let not their sin be blotted out from before thee: for they have provoked thee to anger before the builders.*

This was righteous indignation; but Nehemiah is not a perfect model for us. He was not only stern, but he mingled with his severity a measure of bitterness in his prayer that we must not imitate. Sometimes, when we have seen men plotting against God, seeking to ruin the souls of others, and trying to stop us in our endeavor to build up the church of God, we have felt such language as this trembling on our lips. It were better, however, for us to bow the knee, in humble imitation of our Lord upon the cross, and cry, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Nehemiah 4:6. *So built we the wall.*

You half expected to read, "So we stopped building the wall, and answered Sanballat and Tobiah." Not a bit of it. They kept to their work and let these two men scoff as they pleased.

Nehemiah 4:6. *And all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work.*

They built the wall as high as they meant it to be ultimately; but they carried it all round, and joined it well together. If we cannot do all we would like to do, let us do what we can; and let us endeavor, as far as possible, to finish off the part that we do, waiting for better times to carry the walls higher.

Nehemiah 4:7. *But it came to pass, that when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites, heard that the walls of Jerusalem were made up, and that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth*

They were "wroth" before; now they were "very wroth." If a work has no opposition from Satan, we may be half afraid it is good for nothing. If you cannot make the devil roar, you have not done him much harm; but the more he roars, the more cause is there for the angels singing the praises of God before the throne.

Nehemiah 4:8. *And conspired all of them together to come and fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it.*

It is wonderful how unanimous bad men can be. It has always struck me as a very startling thing, that you have never heard of any division among the devils in hell. There are no sects among the devils; they seem to work together with an awful unanimity of purpose in their wicked design. In this one thing they seem to excel the family of God. Oh, that we were as hearty and united in the service of God as wicked men are in the service of Satan!

Nehemiah 4:9-10. *Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them. And Judah said,*

—
Judah, you know, was the lion tribe. Christ is “the Lion of the tribe of Judah.” But Judah, instead of being lion-hearted, made a noise more like a mouse than a lion, for Judah said, —

Nehemiah 4:10. *The strength of the bearers of burden is decayed, and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall.*

Poor Judah! He ought to have been bolder and braver; but he was not. It is the same today; some who seem to be pillars, prove very weak in the hour of trial, and by their cowardice discourage the rest.

Nehemiah 4:11. *And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come in the midst among them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease.*

While some were discouraging the people within the city, their enemies, without the walls, were plotting to take them by surprise, and slay them.

Nehemiah 4:12. *And it came to pass, that when the Jews which dwelt by them came, they said unto us ten times, From all places whence ye shall return unto us they will be upon you.*

These Jews ought to have been helping to build the wall; but they did not come to the help of the Lord’s people. Still, they were sufficiently friendly to tell Nehemiah of the plot that was being hatched by his enemies. God knows how, when his enemies are sinking a mine, to undermine them. If secrecy is necessary to the success of evil, somebody speaks out, and tells the story, so that the plot is discovered.

Nehemiah 4:13. *Therefore set I in the lower places behind the wall, and on the higher places, I even set the people after their families with their swords, their spears, and their bows.*

When Nehemiah knew the danger to which the people were exposed, he took measures to guard against it. I like the common-sense of Nehemiah. He kept families together. “I set the people after their families, with their

swords, their spears, and their bows.” Beloved friends, I have no greater joy than such as I had last Tuesday, when I received five children of one family, all brought to Christ. May the Lord make our families to be the guards of the church!

Nehemiah 4:14. *And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not afraid of them.*

Fear may waken us, but it must never be allowed to weaken us. We should put on the armor, and take the sword and spear and bow when there is cause for fear; we should never dream of running away.

Nehemiah 4:14-15. *Remember the Lord, which is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses. And it came to pass, when our enemies heard that it was known unto us, and God had brought their counsel to nought, that we returned all of us to the wall, every one unto his work.*

There was no fighting after all. As soon as the enemy knew that their plot was found out, they did not make any assault. One commentator says: — “Some men, if they had been delivered from danger, would have returned every one to the ale-house; but these men returned every one to his work.” They went back to their building, and continued still in the service of the city.

Nehemiah 4:16. *And it came to pass from that time forth, that the half of my servants wrought in the work, and the other half of them held both the spears, the shields, and the bows, and the habergeons; and the rulers were behind all the house of Judah. They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon.*

They which builded on the wall, and they that bore burdens, with those that laded, every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon. The sword and the trowel both guarded the city and builded the wall.

Nehemiah 4:18. *For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded. And he that sounded the trumpet was by me.*

What the trumpet was for, we are told directly.

Nehemiah 4:19-20. *And I said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, The work is great and large, and we are separated upon the wall, one far from another. In what places, therefore ye hear the sound of the trumpet, resort ye thither unto us: our God shall fight for us.*

That is a grand sentence. The moment you hear the trumpet, you are to leave your place on the wall, and come to the point where the enemy is attacking us. But Nehemiah does not say, “You shall fight for us,” he puts it much better, “Our God shall fight for us.” So he will still.

Nehemiah 4:21. *So we laboured in the work: and half of them held the spears from the rising of the morning till the stars appeared.*

They made long days. Christian people do not want merely eight hours a day for Christ. We can sometimes do eighteen hours’ work for him in a day; and we wish that we could do twenty-four.

Nehemiah 4:22-23. *Likewise at the same time said I unto the people, Let everyone with his servant lodge within Jerusalem, that in the night they may be a guard to us, and labour on the day. So neither I, nor my brethren, nor my servants nor the men of the guard which followed me, none of us put off our clothes.*

Nehemiah was a good leader. He did not say, “Go,” he said, “Come”; and he bore the brunt of the service. Like Alexander, who went with the Macedonians into the rough places, and did the hard work, so did Nehemiah. He and those with him did not put off their clothes, even for sleeping.

Nehemiah 4:23. *Saving that every one put them off for washing.*

WHICH WAS NECESSARY FOR CLEANLINESS IS NEXT TO GODLINESS. THE LORD SENDS US MORE NEHEMIAHS, and PLENTY OF PEOPLE TO WORK WITH THEM, WHO CAN ENDURE HARDNESS AS GOOD SOLDIERS OF JESUS CHRIST, and WHO WILL ALSO BE GOOD BUILDERS OF THE CHURCH OF GOD!

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CHAPTER 1

Verses 1-5

[Job 1:1](#). *There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil.*

That was Job's character before the trial which made him famous; perhaps, if it had not been for that trial, we should never have heard of him; now, as the apostle James wrote, "Ye have heard of the patience of Job."

God, by great; afflictions, gave to his servant that usefulness for which he had possibly prayed, without knowing how it would come to him. A long-continued life, of prosperity may not so truly glorify God as a life that is chequered by adversity; and God, who intended to put honour upon his servant, did as kings do when they confer the honour of knighthood, they strike with the, back or flat of the sword, so God smote the patriarch Job that he might raise him above his fellow men. The Lord intended to make him Job the patient, but to that end He must make him Job the sufferer. From this Book I learn what gospel perfection is. We are told that Job was perfect and upright, yet I am sure that he was not free from tendencies to evil, he was not absolutely perfect. As old Master Trapp says, "God's people may be perfect, but they are not perfectly perfect;" and so it certainly was with Job. There were imperfections deep down in his character which his trials developed, and which the grace of God no doubt afterwards removed; but after the manner of speech that is used in Holy Scripture, Job was a "perfect" man; he was sincere, thorough-hearted, consecrated; and he was also "upright." He leaned neither this way nor that way, he had no twist in him, he had no selfish ends to serve. He was "one that feared God." Everybody could see that; and, consequently, he hated evil with all his heart.

[Job 1:2](#). *And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters.*

It was a great privilege to have such a family as this, but it brought to Job great responsibilities and many anxieties.

[Job 1:3](#). *His substance also was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she asses, and a very great household; so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the east.*

A man may be a good man and a rich man, but it is not usually the case. I am afraid that what Mr. Bunyan says is all too true,—"Gold and the gospel seldom do agree; Religion always sides with poverty." Yet it should not be so, for God can give a man grace enough to use all his substance to his Lord's glory. I wish that it were oftener the case that we could see a holy Job as well as a godly Lazarus, a company of men who would prove their consecration to God by never allowing their wealth to become their master, but being master of all their substance, and realizing constantly that it is all the Lord's. This, after all, is the noblest heritage a man has with the exception of his God. Job, in adversity, could possess his soul in patience

because, in his prosperity, he had not let his riches possess him, but he had possessed them.

[Job 1:4](#). *And his sons went and feasted in their houses, every one his day; and sent and called for their three sisters to eat and to drink with them.*

This showed that it was not drunken riotousness, or they would not have wanted their sisters; the sweet, gentle, delicate influence of their sisters would tend to keep their feasting what it should be. Besides, they were the sons of a man of God, and so they would know how to keep their feasting within due bounds. Yet we are all mortal and fallible, and feasting times are dangerous times. The Puritans used to call fasting, soul-fattening fasting; but feasting, they might call soul-weakening feasting. Solomon truly said, "It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting." There is always a risk about feasting, and Job was therefore a little afraid about how his sons might have behaved.

[Job 1:5](#). *And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts, Thus did Job continually.*

They might have spoken unadvisedly with their lips, they might have even taken God's name in vain, there might have been something about their conduct which was not altogether proper; so their father desired to put the sin of it; away. Observe Job's resort to burnt offerings. He lived before the Jewish law was given, yet he felt the instinct concerning the need of a sacrifice which every believing heart feels when it approaches the holy God. I pray you, never give up that idea of coming to God by means of a sacrifice, for there is no other way of access. We may think as we will, but there is nothing else that will ever quiet the conscience, and bring us near to God, but the divinely-appointed sacrifice. And Job knew this; he did not think that his sons could be cleansed by his prayers alone, but he must offer burnt sacrifices according to the number of them all, that they might, every one have a share in, the blessings which those sacrifices typified.

Verses 1-22

[Job 1:1](#). *There was a man in the land of Uz,*

Job was a man indeed; a true man, a man of the highest type, for he was a man of God.

[Job 1:1](#). *Whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright,--*

Job was thoroughly true and sincere, and in this sense he “was perfect and upright,”-

[Job 1:1](#). *And one that feared God, and eschewed evil.*

He had both sides of a godly character, a love of God and a hatred of sin.

[Job 1:2](#). *And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters.*

Job was highly favoured in having such a family of sons and daughters.

[Job 1:3](#). *His substance also was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she asses, and a very great household; so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the east.*

Job was not a poor man, yet he was a man of God;-one of those “camels” that manage to go through “the eye of a needle.”

[Job 1:4](#). *And his sons went and feasted in their houses every one his day; and sent and called for their three sisters-*

Who were very modest and retiring, and would not have gone to the feast if they had not been sent for, but their brothers were kind and thoughtful, as all good brothers will be.

[Job 1:4-5](#). *To eat and to drink with them. And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them,*

Job did not go to the feast, perhaps he felt too old, his character was too staid for such a gathering, and he had higher joys, that were nearer his heart than any earthly feast could be.

[Job 1:5](#). *And rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their heart. Thus did Job continually.*

He thought, “Perhaps, in their rejoicing, unholy thoughts may have intruded; they may have been unguarded and lax in their conduct. They may not have fallen into my cross sin; but, in their feasting, they may have sinned against God, therefore I will offer sacrifices for them.” “Thus did Job continually.” Not only occasionally, but every day, he sacrificed upon his altar unto God, and so sought to keep his household right before Jehovah.

[Job 1:6](#). *Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them.*

Into heaven? Oh, no! The presence of God is very widespread, and there was no need to admit the evil spirit again into heaven in order that he might be present before God.

[Job 1:7](#). *And the LORD said unto Satan, Whence comest thou?*

God is Satan's Master, so he asks him where he has been. I wonder whether, if the Lord were to put that question to everybody here, "Whence comest thou?" each of us could give a satisfactory answer to it.

[Job 1:7](#). *Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.*

Uneasy, restless, ever active, like a roaring lion "seeking whom he may devour." Ah! we little know how near Satan is to us now; and even in our hours of prayer, when we are nearest to God, he may come and assail us.

[Job 1:8](#). *And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job,-*

"He is an example to you, he may well chide you, he is so obedient, and you are so rebellious: 'Hast thou considered my servant Job,'" -

[Job 1:8-9](#). *That there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said,-*

We may be certain that, if there had been anything bad in Job, Satan would have found it out, and brought it against him. However excellent a man is, though there are none like him on earth, you can find fault with him if you want to do so. Satan found fault with Job because he had prospered, and his friends afterwards found fault with him because he did not prosper; so you can make anything into a blot on the character of men if you have a mind to do so. "Satan answered the Lord, and said," -

[Job 1:9-10](#). *Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side?*

The black dog of hell had been prowling around to see where he could get in, so he knew that there was a hedge right round Job, and round his house and all that he had. Notice how the devil insinuates that Job feared God for what he could get out of him. "His love is cupboard love," says Satan; "he is well paid by providence for his reverence to God."

[Job 1:10](#). *Thou hast blessed the work of his hands,-*

Even the devil dared not deny that Job was a working man, or say that he had come by his estate by oppression or plunder. No; he said to God, "Thou hast blessed the work of his hands," -

[Job 1:10-11](#). *And his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy*

face.

Oh, what mischief Satan can imagine against the righteous! The mercy is that, although he is mighty, he is not almighty; he is very malicious, but there is One who is far wiser and stronger than he is, who can always circumvent and overpower him.

[Job 1:12-15](#). *And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD. And there was a day when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house: and there came a messenger unto Job, and said, The oxen were plowing, and the asses feeding beside them: And the Sabeans fell upon them, and took them away; yea, they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.*

Job had not wronged these Sabeans, they were plunderers on the lookout for spoil; and when Satan moved them, they came and stole the patriarch's oxen and asses, and slew his servants.

[Job 1:16](#). *While he was yet speaking,-*

As if to give Job no time to rally his faith and encourage his heart,-

[Job 1:16](#). *There came also another, and said, The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep, and the servants and consumed them; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.*

This calamity must have distressed Job all the more because "the fire of God" had burnt up the sheep that he was accustomed to offer in sacrifice to Jehovah, and the blow had seemed to come directly from God himself, as it was lightning that had destroyed both sheep and shepherds too. Poor Job had not time to recover from that shock ere the next blow fell upon him;-

[Job 1:17](#). *While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The Chaldeans made out three bands, and fell upon the camels and have carried them away, yea, and slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.*

He had not time to think before the heaviest stroke of all came:-

[Job 1:18-19](#). *While he was yet speaking there came also another, and said, Thy Sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house: and, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and, they are dead; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.*

Satan had arranged to bring on the patriarch's troubles so quickly one after another as to utterly overwhelm the good man; at least, so the devil hoped it would prove; yet it did not.

[Job 1:20](#). *Then Job arose,-*

With all his burden on him, he arose,-

[Job 1:20](#). *And rent his mantle, and shaved his head,-*

He did not pull his hair out as a Pagan, or a maniac, or a person delirious through trouble might have done; but he deliberately "rent his mantle, and shaved his head,"-

[Job 1:20](#). *And fell down upon the ground, and worshipped,-*

Grand old man, how bravely does he play the man here! He "fell down upon the ground, and worshipped,"-

[Job 1:21](#). *And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither:*

That is, to the womb of Mother Earth.

[Job 1:21](#). *The LORD gave and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.*

I think these are the grandest words in the whole record of human speech. Considering the circumstances of the man at the time, that he should thus speak was, I think, a miracle of grace.

[Job 1:22](#). *In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.*

Verses 6-22

[Job 1:6](#). *Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them.*

Angels and all kinds of intelligent spirits had, as it were, a special, solemn, general assembly, — a great field-day, or levee. Perhaps, in stars far remote, in various parts of the universe, there was celebrated that day a high festival of honour unto Jehovah, but since sin has come into the world, since even amongst the twelve apostles there was a Judas, so in every assembly, even though it be an assembly of the sons of God, there is sure to be a devil: "Satan came also among them." If he is not anywhere else, he is sure to be where the sons of God are gathered together. Yet what impudence this is on his part, that he dares to come even into the assemblies of the saints! And what hardness of heart he must have, for he comes in as a devil, and he goes out as a devil! The sons of God offer their spiritual prayers

inspired by the Holy Ghost, but the devil offers diabolical petitions suggested by his own malice.

[Job 1:7](#). *And the LORD said unto Satan, Whence comest thou?*

He is obliged to give an account of himself, he cannot go a yard from his door without divine permission.

[Job 1:7](#). *Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, from going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.*

Satan is always busy, never quiet; he cannot be still.

[Job 1:8](#). *And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, —*

You see, Job is a man whom God calls his servant even in speaking to the devil, “Hast thou considered my servant Job?”

[Job 1:8](#). *That there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?*

God himself gives Job that high character. He is a non-such, he stands alone amongst mankind: “There is none like him in the earth.” “Hast thou reckoned him up? Hast thou taken his measure, O thou accuser of the brethren?”

[Job 1:9](#). *Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought?*

Even the devil could not bring a charge against Job’s conduct; so he insinuated that his motives were not pure.

[Job 1:10](#). *Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side?*

“He finds that it pays, it answers his purpose to be devout.”

[Job 1:10-11](#). *Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face.*

See, the devil measures Job’s cow in his own bushel; but, happily, it was the measurement of a liar, so he measured amiss. There are still some who say, “Yes, it is a fine thing to be good when you are rich; it is a very easy thing to behave yourself aright when all goes smoothly with you. Would the man, who is such a devout servant of God now, be like that if he were in poverty, or if he were cruelly slandered, or if he were tested with contempt? Would the grace of God carry him over those rough bridges? His religion is a fine thing, no doubt; but if he were tried and tested we should see what he would do.” Now, the Lord delights in proving the graces of his people, for it

brings great glory to his name when experiments are made upon them, to test them and try them, and to let even their greatest adversary know how true they are, and what a divine work it is which God has wrought upon them.

[Job 1:12](#). *And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand.*

Satan could go so far, but no farther, there is an “only” in the permission granted to him: “Only upon himself put not forth thine hand.”

[Job 1:12-13](#). *So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD. And there was a day when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother’s house:*

That was a bad day for trouble to come. Satan selected that day because it was a joyful day, and therefore it would make the trials of Job the more startling. Moreover if Job could have had his choice, he would have preferred that his trouble should come when his sons and his daughters were praying, not when they were feasting.

[Job 1:14-15](#). *And there came a messenger unto Job, and said, The oxen were plowing, and the asses feeding beside them: And the Sabeans fell upon them, and took them away; yea, they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.*

The bad news comes to him all of a sudden, just when he is thinking of something very different. There is only one servant left to tell the tale, he was spared that Job might know that the news was true. If that one other servant had been killed, the tidings could only have reached Job as a rumor, that might or might not be true, but now, one of his own servants tells him the sad story, so there is no mistake about it. Ah! the devil knows how and where to strike when he does strike; yet this was only the first blow for poor Job, and there were heavier ones to follow.

[Job 1:16](#). *While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep, and the servants, and consumed them; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.*

Now, if that lightning had fallen on the Sabeans while they were robbing and plundering, one might not have wondered; but to fall on the flocks of a man of God who had clothed the naked with the fleeces of his sheep, and had presented many of the fat of the flock unto God in sacrifice, — that did seem strange. This trial, too, comes right upon the back of the other, and this one would appear to be more severe than the former one because it

seemed to come distinctly from God. “The fire of God” — the lightning, “is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep.”

[Job 1:17](#). *While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The Chaldeans made out three bands, and fell upon the camels, and have carried them away, yea, and slain the servants with the edge of the word; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.*

Three such heavy blows will surely be enough to test the patriarch, but a fourth messenger came with the direst news of all.

[Job 1:18-19](#). *While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother’s house: And, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.*

Did any other man ever have to endure such a complication of trouble, such agonies piled one upon another with no respite? Job must have felt well-nigh stunned and choked by these consecutive griefs.

[Job 1:20-22](#). *Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, And said, Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.*

Oh, the triumphs of almighty grace! May God grant us such patience, if he sends us such trials, and unto him shall be the glory evermore!

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CHAPTER 7

Verses 1-21

Job was sorely troubled by the cruel speeches of his friends, and he answered them out of the bitterness of his soul. What we are first about to read is a part of his language under those circumstances.

[Job 7:1](#). *Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth? are not his days also like the days of an hireling?*

Is there not a certain time for each one of us to live? Is there not an end to all the trouble and sorrow of this mortal state? “Woe is me,” says Job, “will this sad condition of things never come to a close? Must it always be thus with me?”

[Job 7:2](#). *As a servant earnestly desireth the shadow, —*

When the day shall close, and he can go to his home, —

[Job 7:2-3](#). *And as an hireling looketh for the reward of his work: So am I made to possess months of vanity, and wearisome nights are appointed to me.*

If that is the case with any of you, dear friends, you ought to be comforted by the thought that a better man than you are underwent just what you are enduring, and underwent it so as to glorify God by it. Remember what the apostle James wrote, “Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.” But if our

case is not so bad as Job's was, if we are in good health, and surrounded by God's mercy, let us be very grateful. Every morning that you wake after a refreshing night's rest, praise God for it, for it might have been far otherwise, for you might have had wearisome nights through pain and suffering,

[Job 7:4-5](#). *When I lie down, I say, When shall I arise, and the night be gone? and I am full of tossings to and fro unto the dawning of the day. My flesh is clothed with worms and clods of dust; my skin is broken, and become loathsome.*

Such was the dreadful disease under which this man of God laboured, for the worst of pain may happen to the best of men. Sometimes, God ploughs his best fields most; and why should he not do so? Do not men try to do most with that which will yield most? And so God may most chasten those who will best repay the strokes of his hand. It is no token of displeasure when God smites us with disease; it may be an evidence that we are branches of the vine that bring forth fruit, or else he would not have taken the trouble to prune us.

[Job 7:6](#). *My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and are spent without hope.*

His spirits are sunk so low that he had not any hope at all left; — at least, there was none apparent just then. O you poor tried children of God, I beseech you once again to see that you are only walking where others have gone before you! Mark their footprints, and take heart again.

[Job 7:7-8](#). *O remember that my life is wind: mine eye shall no more see good. The eye of him that hath seen me shall see me no more: thine eyes are upon me, and I am not.*

As if God only looked at him, and the very look withered him; or as if there was only time for God just to look at him, and then he disappeared as though, he had been but a dream, an unsubstantial thing. It is good, my brethren, sometimes to know what vanities we are; and if we complain that things around us are vanity, what are we ourselves but the shadows of a shade?

[Job 7:9-12](#). *As the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away: so he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more. He shall return no more to his house, neither shall his place know him any more. Therefore I will not refrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit; I will complain in*

the bitterness of my soul. Am I a sea, or a whale, that thou settest a watch over me?

Am I such a big thing, such a dangerous thing, that I ought to be watched like this, and perpetually hampered, and tethered, and kept within bounds? Ah, no! Job, you are neither a sea nor a whale, but something worse than either of them. So are we all, — more false than the treacherous sea, harder to be tamed than the wildest of God's creatures. God does set a watch over us, and well he may. But hear Job's complaint: —

[Job 7:13-15](#). *When I say, My bed shall comfort me, my couch shall ease my complaint; Then thou scarest me with dreams, and terrifiest me through visions: So that my soul chooseth strangling, and death rather than my life.*

Were you ever in this terrible place, dear friend? Some of us have been there, and we have used the very language of Job; and yet, for all that, we have been brought up again out of the utmost depths of despondency into the topmost heights of joy. Therefore, be comforted, ye poor prisoners. Through the bars and grating of your soul-dungeon, we would sing unto you this song, — the Lord, that has brought us forth, can bring you forth also, for “the Lord looseth the prisoners.” The God of Job is yet alive, strong as ever for the deliverance of such as put their trust in him.

[Job 7:16-17](#). *I loathe it; I would not live alway: let me alone; for my days are vanity. What is man, that thou shouldest magnify him? and that thou shouldest set thine heart upon him?*

Job seems to say, “I am too little for God to notice me; why does he make so much of me as to chasten me so sorely?”

[Job 7:18-19](#). *And their thou shouldest visit him every morning, and try him every moment? How long wilt thou not depart from me, nor let me alone till I swallow down my spittle?*

Blow followed blow in quick succession. Pain came fast upon the heels of pain till Job seems to have had no rest from his anguish. This is the mournful moaning of a man on a sick-bed, worn out with long-continued grief. Do not judge it harshly. You may have to use such words yourself, one day; and if you ever do, then judge not yourself hardly, but say, “I am only now where that eminent servant of God, the patriarch Job, once was, and the Lord who delivered him will also deliver me.”

[Job 7:20](#). *I have sinned; what shall I do unto thee, O thou preserver of men?*

We did not expect him to call God by that name; yet sorrow hath a quick memory to recall anything by which it may be cheered. “Thou Preserver of men,” says Job, “I have sinned: what shall I do?”

[Job 7:20](#). *Why hast thou set me as a mark against thee,*

“Drawing thy bow, and directing all thine arrows against my poor heart. Hast thou no butts that thou must needs make me thy target, and test thy holy archery upon me?”

[Job 7:20](#). *So that I am a burden to myself?*

Oh, what heavy words, “a burden to myself!”

[Job 7:21](#). *And why dost thou not pardon my transgression, and take away mine iniquity? for now shall I sleep in the dust; and thou shalt seek me in the morning, but I shall not be.*

Speaking after the manner of man, he seems to think that, if God does not pardon him soon, the pardon will come too late; for if God comes in mercy by-and-by, he will be dead and gone, and God may seek him, but he shall not be found. This is how men talk when they get a little off their head through the very extremity of grief. We, too, may perhaps talk in the same fashion, one day, so let us not condemn poor Job. Now let us read a few Verses in the 3rd chapter of the Gospel according to John, that we may be comforted. If any of you are labouring under a sense of sin, I would take you straight away to sin’s only cure.

This exposition consisted of readings from Job 7, and [John 3:14-17](#).

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Job Chapter 8

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Job Chapter 9

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CHAPTER 11

Verses 1-20

The words we are about to read were spoken by one of Job's three friends, — or what if I call them his three tormentors? These men did not speak wisely, and their argument was not altogether sound; but, for all that, in the instance before us, Zophar the Naamathite spoke that which was truthful. Although he made a great mistake in turning it against Job, yet what he said was in the main correct, and we may learn from it as we read it. Remember, dear friends, that whenever you read the words of these three men, you must take them with a good many grains of salt. They are not to be accepted as if they were God's Word, because they are not. Those three men were mistaken in many points, yet very much of what they said was weighty and valuable, and is still worthy of our careful consideration.

[Job 11:1-3](#). *Then answered Zophar the Naamathite, and said, Should not the multitude of words be answered? and should a man full of talk be justified? Should thy lies make men hold their peace? and when thou mockest, shall no man make thee ashamed?*

This was a very bitter and cruel speech, and Zophar was not using the language of friendship, or even of common courtesy. First, he charged Job with being a great talker, "a man full of talk." No doubt Job did speak well and eloquently; but to retort upon him that he was a man abundant in words, was a very cruel thing, especially when he was in such a condition of distress and suffering. Yet, dear friends, it is an evil thing to be men of tongue, and not of hand; it is a dreadful thing to be men — or, for the matter of that, women either — who are "full of talk," and therefore have no room for anything else. There are some people who seem to think that, simply by their volubility, they can carry all before them. In such a case, we may say with Zophar, "Should not the multitude of words be answered? and should a man full of talk be justified?" But he went beyond these questions, and charged Job with downright lying because he had pleaded his own innocence: "Should thy lies make men hold their peace?" Zophar also insinuated that Job fumed and frothed, as it were, and spoke folly, which he certainly did not do, for he spoke in solemn, sober earnest if ever a man did.

[Job 11:4](#). *For thou hast said, My doctrine is pure, and I am clean in thine eyes.*

Job did not say that; at least, he did not say it in so many words. He did endeavor to prove his own innocence of the false charges that were brought against him; but he never said that he was clean in God's eyes.

[Job 11:5-6](#). *But oh that God would speak, and open his lips against thee; And that he would shew thee the secrets of wisdom, that they are double to that which is!*

Oh, that God would enable you, dear friends, to see your sin, and make you perceive that there is a double meaning in his law, — a deep, underlying, spiritual meaning, as well as that which is apparent on the surface, so that a man may be guilty of transgression even when he thinks it is not so! Oh, that God would unveil the secrets of his wisdom so as to make you see that he is wiser than all his works, that his hidden wisdom is double that which you have been able to perceive in nature, or in providence, and infinitely greater than he has ever made to appear before men's eyes.

[Job 11:6](#). *Know therefore that God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth.*

That was a hard thing for Zophar to say to Job; but, still, it was true, and it is true in the case of all of us: "He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities." Even when a man sits down among the ashes, robbed of all his property, and bereaved of all his children, and when he has to scrape himself with a potsherd because of his many sore boils, even then it may be truly said to him, "God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth."

[Job 11:7](#). *Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection!*

What wonderful questions these are! How they ought to convict those who glibly talk of God as if they could measure him with a foot rule, and understood exactly what he ought to do and ought to be. We are constantly meeting with statements that such-and-such a thing, which is revealed in Scripture, cannot be true, because it is inconsistent with the modern idea of the benevolence of God. Our only answer to the cavil is, "Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?"

[Job 11:8-9](#). *It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know! The measure thereof is longer than the earth,*

and broader than the sea.

God is incomprehensible by any finite mind; and he is omnipotent, too.

[Job 11:10](#). *If he cut off, and shut up, or gather together, then who can hinder him!*

If he sees fit to destroy men, or for a while to make them prisoners; or if he pleases to gather them together, and multiply them like the hosts of heaven, who can hinder him?

[Job 11:11](#). *For he knoweth vain men he seeth wickedness also; will he not then consider it?*

Wickedness hidden under the vail of night, God sees as clearly as in the blaze of noon. Wickedness which never comes out of the heart, but tarries there, and does not lead into overt action, God sees it: "Will he not then consider it?" Of course he will.

[Job 11:12](#). *For vain man —*

That is just what man is by nature; the best of men are vanity — emptiness:

"For vain man" —

[Job 11:12](#). *Would be wise,-*

He pretends to wisdom; he wishes to be thought wise; he likes to wear a wise man's title: "Vain man would be wise," —

[Job 11:12](#). *Though man be born like a wild ass's colt.*

As untamed, as ignorant, as willful as a wild ass's colt, are we by nature. Zophar seems to think that he has sufficiently rebuked Job for pretending to be wise, and for complaining that God was dealing unjustly with him; so now he begins to admonish him to repent: —

[Job 11:13-18](#). *If thou prepare thine heart, and stretch out thine hands toward him; If iniquity be in thine hand, put it far away, and let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles. For then shalt thou lift up thy face without spot; yea, thou shalt be stedfast, and shalt not fear: Because thou shalt forget thy misery, and remember it as waters that pass away: And thine age shall be clearer than the noonday; thou shalt shine forth, thou shalt be as the morning. And thou shalt be secure, because there is hope; yea, thou shalt dig about thee, and thou shalt take thy rest in safety.*

It is a great mercy when God enables men to pursue their daily callings, and to take their nightly rest in safety; and it is a still greater mercy when they feel secure, whether they live or die, because they have a good hope concerning the hereafter. It is an unspeakable blessing when sin is washed

away, and a man can lift up his face to God without spot, and walk in the light of Jehovah's countenance all the day long.

[Job 11:19-20](#). *Also thou shalt lie down, and none shall make thee afraid; yea, many shall make suit unto thee. But the eyes of the wicked shall fail, —*

Carefully notice this very solemn prophecy, — the eyes that have looked upon sin with pleasure, — the eyes that have flashed with lascivious desire, — the eyes that have dared to look towards God with defiance or derision, — “the eyes of the wicked shall fail,” —

[Job 11:20](#). *And they shall not escape, —*

To what place could they escape from God, when he is everywhere? During the days when the Roman empire extended all over the world, people said that the whole earth was one great prison for Caesar's enemies; and the universe itself is a vast prison for those who are condemned of God. Where shall they go to avoid arrest? Whither shall they fly to get beyond God's reach? They cannot escape anywhere. There is neither hole nor corner, even in the bowels of the mountains, or in the flinty hearts of the rocks, where a sinner can hide himself from the hand of God: “They shall not escape,” —

[Job 11:20](#). *And their hope —*

The last thing that ever dies, “their hope” —

[Job 11:20](#). *Shall be as the giving up of the ghost.*

Like death itself, their hope shall be. Then, if “their hope shall be as the giving up of the ghost,” what hope is there for them? Let us not have our portion with them, else we shall be as hopeless as they are.

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CHAPTER 19

Verses 1-29

[Job 19:1-2](#). *Then, Job answered and said, How long will ye vex my soul, and break me in pieces with words?*

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

[Job 19:3](#). *These ten times have ye reproached me: ye are not ashamed that ye make yourselves strange to me.*

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

[Job 19:4](#). *And be it indeed that I have erred, mine error remaineth with myself.*

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

[Job 19:5-6](#). *If indeed ye will magnify yourselves against me, and plead against me my reproach: Know now that God hath overthrown me, and hath compassed me with his net.*

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

[Job 19:7](#). *Behold, I cry out of wrong, but I am not heard: I cry aloud, but there is no judgment.*

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

[Job 19:8](#). *He hath fenced up my way that I cannot pass, and he hath set darkness in my paths.*

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

[Job 19:9-10](#). *He hath stripped me of my glory, and taken the crown from my head. He hath destroyed me on every side, and I am gone: and mine hope hath he removed like a tree.*

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

[Job 19:11](#). *He hath also kindled his wrath against me, and he counteth me unto him as one of his enemies.*

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

[Job 19:12](#). *His troops come together, and raise up their way against me, and encamp round about my tabernacle.*

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

[Job 19:13](#). *He hath put my brethren far from me, and mine acquaintance are verily estranged from me.*

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

[Job 19:14-15](#). *My kinsfolk have failed, and my familiar friends have forgotten me. They that dwell in mine house, and my maids, count me for a stranger: I am an alien in their sight.*

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

[Job 19:16-17](#). *I called my servant, and he gave me no answer; I entreated him with my mouth. My breath is strange to my wife, though I*

entreated for the children's sake of mine own body.

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

[Job 19:18-20](#). *Yea, young children despised me; I arose, and they spake against me. All my inward friends abhorred me: and they whom I loved are turned against me. My bone cleaveth to my skin and to my flesh, and I am escaped with the skin of my teeth.*

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

[Job 19:21](#). *Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends; for the hand of God hath touched me.*

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

[Job 19:22](#). *Why do ye persecute me as God, and are not satisfied with my flesh?*

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

[Job 19:23-24](#). *Oh that my words were now written! oh that they were printed in a book! That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever!*

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

[Job 19:25](#). *For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth:*

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

[Job 19:26-28](#). *And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me. But ye should say, Why persecute we him, seeing the root of the matter is found in me?*

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

[Job 19:29](#). *Be ye afraid of the sword: for wrath bringeth the punishments of the sword, that ye may know there is a judgment.*

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

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CHAPTER 23

Verses 1-17

Job is in great physical pain through the sore boils that cover him from head to foot; he is still smarting under all the bereavements and losses he has sustained; and he is somewhat irritated by the hard speeches of his friends. We read, in the second chapter of this book, that “they had made an appointment together to come to mourn with him and to comfort him.” “Job’s comforters,” even to this day, are regarded as those whose room is preferred to their company. As the result of all the trials through which Job was called to pass, there is, in this chapter, somewhat of bitterness. We need not wonder at it; the wonder is that there is not more. You ought, in estimating a man’s actions or words, to judge of his circumstances at the time. Do not take Job’s words by themselves; but consider in what condition he was; think what you would have done if you had been in his place, and you will not censure him, as you might otherwise have done.

[Job 23:1-2](#). *Then Job answered and said, Even to day is my complaint bitter: my stroke is heavier than my groaning.*

He could not express all his pain. He felt that he did not complain too much. His stroke was heavier than his groaning. His words had bitterness in them; but he thought that they were justified by his affliction.

[Job 23:3](#). *Oh that I knew where I might find him!*

Job longed to find his God; he wanted to come to him. He had been slandered by men; so he turns from the court of injustice below to the divine Court of King’s Bench above, where he is sure of a righteous verdict: “Oh that I knew where I might find him!”

[Job 23:3](#). *That I might come even to his seat!*

To his mercy-seat, and even to his judgment-seat. Job was willing to appear even there.

[Job 23:4](#). *I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments.*

He felt that he dared plead before God. He was not guilty of the things laid to his charge; so he would be bold to speak even before God’s judgment-seat. If Job had known a little more of God, as he did before his life ended, he might not have talked so glibly about ordering his cause before him, and filling his mouth with arguments. We remember how he afterwards spoke to the Lord, “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in

dust and ashes.” Who among us would desire to come and argue our case with God without our heavenly Advocate?

[Job 23:5](#). *I would know the words, which he would answer me, and understand what he would say unto me.*

He was willing to hear God’s side of the argument, patient and anxious to understand the mind of God with whom he desired to plead. So far so good. There are some who do not wish to know what God would say unto them; so long as they may express their own passionate desires, they have no ear and heart waiting to hear the voice of God. Very beautiful is the next verse:

[Job 23:6](#). *Wilt he plead against me with his great power? No; but he would put strength in me.*

He has confidence in the Lord that, if he could have an audience with him, God would not use his power against him; but, on the contrary, would strengthen him in order that he might state his case. Do I speak to a troubled heart here? Come to God with your burden. He will not use his power against you; but he will help you to plead with him. Trembler, come and bow at his feet! He will not spurn thee, he will lift thee up. Despairing one, look to the Lord! He will not turn his wrath upon thee; but he will help thee to plead with him. “Will he plead against me with his great power? No; but he would put strength in me.”

[Job 23:7-9](#). *There the righteous might dispute with him; so should I be delivered for ever from my judge. Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: On the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him.*

Job had done his best to find his God. Forward, backward, to the right, and to the left, he had gone in all directions after him; but he could not find him. I know there are persons here tonight who are in that condition; and you will never rest, I hope, until you do find the Lord. He is not far from you. I trust that with many of you, tonight is the happy hour in which your long searching shall end in a delightful finding.

[Job 23:10](#). *But he knoweth the way that I take:*

If I do not know his way, he knows mine. If I cannot find him, he can find me. Here is my comfort: “He knoweth the way that I take.”

[Job 23:10](#). *When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.*

Here the true Job comes to the front. You get the gracious man once more on his feet. He staggered a little; but he stands firm now: "When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." So will you, my tried sister, my afflicted brother. The trial of your faith is but for a time; there will come an end to this furnace-work; and when God has tried you, tested you, and taken away your dross, he will bring you forth, and you will be pure gold, meet for the Master's use.

"In the furnace God may prove thee,
Thence to bring thee forth more bright;
But can never cease to love thee:
Thou art precious in his sight:
God is with thee,
God thine everlasting light."

[Job 23:11](#). *My foot hath held his steps, his way have I kept, and not declined.*

Happy Job, to be able to say that, and to speak the truth; but there is a touch of self about it which we cannot quite commend. Be holy; but do not claim to be holy. Be thou steadfast before God, firm in thine obedience to him; but do not mention it; for thy hope lies somewhere else. Yet we cannot condemn Job for declaring that he had kept God's way. His friends were pleading against him, so he felt that he must defend himself.

[Job 23:12](#). *Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food.*

Job was a happy man to be able to say that. I hope that many of you could say the same. If you were tried with great bodily pain and depression of spirit, you could say, through divine grace, "I have not turned away from God." These are days when we want men of principle; men who can put their foot down, and keep it down, men who cannot be turned aside. They call this firmness, "bigotry." It is, however, only another name for Christian manliness. If you dare to do right, and face a frowning world, you shall have God's commendation, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

[Job 23:13](#). *But he is in one mind, and who can turn him?*

God has one mind, and he will carry out what he wills. It is vain for any man to think of turning him from his eternal purpose.

[Job 23:13-14](#). *And what his soul desireth, even that he doth. For he performeth the thing that is appointed for me: and many such things are with him.*

You will find that men who are much tried fall back upon the granite foundation of the divine decree. God has ordained it, so they yield to it; they acquiesce in it because it is according to the eternal purpose of the Most High. Though we say little about it now, there may come a time when some of you will have to say, as Job does, “For he performeth the thing that is appointed for me: and many such things are with him.”

[Job 23:1](#). *Therefore am I troubled at his presence: when I consider, I am afraid of him.*

It is a bad sign when a man of God becomes afraid of God. Yet is there a holy awe which may degenerate into a servile fear which hath bondage; but even this may be the foundation of a holy confidence which will keep us in obedience to the Lord.

[Job 23:16](#). *For God maketh my heart soft, and the Almighty troubleth me:*

Are you saying that tonight? If so, I am glad you are here. I have, for many years, been compassed about with a large number of persons who come from the ends of England and Scotland, and from longer distances, too, in despair of soul, and seeking comfort; but I think that never in my life have I had more than I have had this week, persons unknown to me before, who are under conviction of sin, and feeling the hand of God heavy upon them. Hard tugs have I had to bring them out of Giant Despair’s Castle. The Holy Ghost alone can do this work; but he sometimes makes use of a sympathetic brotherly word to give light to those who are in the dark. I am praying that he may do so tonight; for there may be some here who say with Job, “God maketh my heart soft, and the Almighty troubleth me.”

[Job 23:17](#). *Because I was not cut off before the darkness, neither hath he covered the darkness from my face.*

He wished he had died before he came to such trouble, or that by some means such trouble had been turned away from him. May the Lord, if he sends you Job’s trouble, send you Job’s consolation! May he glorify himself by your patient endurance, if he lays upon you his heavy hand!

[JOB CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 24

Verses 1-25

[Job 24:1](#). *Why, seeing times are not hidden from the Almighty, do they that know him not see his days?*

“Why do they live so long? Why do they appear to have such prosperity?”

[Job 24:2-4](#). *Some remove the landmarks; they violently take away flocks, and feed thereof. They drive away the ass of the fatherless, they take the widow’s ox for a pledge. They turn the needy out of the way: the poor of the earth hide themselves together.*

“They are hard-hearted enough to rob even poor widows and orphan children.”

[Job 24:5](#). *Behold, as wild asses in the desert, go they forth to their work;*

—
Like wild asses, their work consists in going forth to do mischief.

[Job 24:5](#). *Rising betimes for a prey: the wilderness yieldeth food for them and for their children.*

For there are some so hard that they would skin a flint, and out of the wilderness would manage to get food. Yet such hard oppressors of others sometimes seem to prosper for awhile.

[Job 24:6-12](#). *They reap everyone his corn in the field: and they gather the vintage of the wicked. They cause the naked to lodge without clothing, that they have no covering in the cold. They are wet with the showers of the mountains, and embrace the rock for want of a shelter. They pluck the fatherless from the breast, and take a pledge of the poor. They cause him to go naked without clothing, and they take away the sheaf from the hungry; Which make oil within their walls, and tread their winepresses, and suffer thirst. Men groan from out of the city, and the soul of the wounded crieth out: yet God layeth not folly to them.*

He lets them alone, leaves them to do as they please. So it seems; but this is not the day of judgment, and this is not the place of final retribution. Now and then, God flashes forth his anger against some gross sinner or some national crime; but as for the most of men’s sins, he beareth with them till that tremendous day shall come, which draweth on apace, when he shall hang the heavens in sackcloth, and hold the last assize, and every man shall receive according to his works.

[Job 24:13-17](#). *They are of those that rebel against the light; they know not the ways thereof, nor abide in the paths thereof. The murderer rising with the light killeth the poor and needy, and in the night is as a thief. The*

eye also of the adulterer waiteth for the twilight, saying, No eye shall see me: and disguiseth his face. In the dark they dig through houses, which they had marked for themselves in the daytime: they know not the light. For the morning is to them even as the shadow of death: if one know them, they are in the terrors of the shadow of death.

These are the men who plunder secretly, who rob, yet cannot bear to be known as thieves.

[Job 24:18](#). *He is swift as the waters; their portion is cursed in the earth:*

There was no curse upon Job, and no curse can come near the true child of God; his scanty portion is still blest. But the large portion of the ungodly is cursed even while he is in the earth.

[Job 24:18-20](#). *He beholdeth not the way of the vineyards. Drought and heat consume the snow waters: so doth the grave those which have sinned. The womb shall forget him; the worm shall feed sweetly on him;*

What a sarcastic utterance! This man, who lorded it over others, — how glad the worm shall be to get at him! This fat worldling shall be a rich feast for the worms.

[Job 24:20](#). *He shall be no more remembered; and wickedness shall be broken as a tree.*

It shall snap off, and be brought to an ignominious end.

[Job 24:21-24](#). *He evil entreateth the barren that beareth not: and doeth not good to the widow. He draweth also the mighty with his power: he riseth up, and no man is sure of life. Though it be given him to be in safety, whereon he resteth; yet his eyes are upon their ways. They are exalted for a little while, but are gone and brought low; they are taken out of the way as all other, and cut off as the tops of the ears of corn.*

In the East, they generally reap their harvest by just taking off the tops of the ears of corn, and leaving the straw. Thus will the wicked be cut off.

[Job 24:25](#). *And if it be not so now, who will make me a liar, and make my speech nothing worth?*

Job challenges all men to contradict what he affirms, — that the righteous may be greater sufferers, and the wicked may for awhile prosper, but that God will, in the end, overthrow the ungodly, and establish the righteous.

This exposition consisted of readings from Job 23, 24.

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Job Chapter 25

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

Job Chapter 26

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER 27

Verses 1-23

Remember that Job's friends had accused him of having committed some great sin; which would account for his great sorrows. The good man is naturally very indignant, and he uses the strongest possible language to cast away from himself with horror the charges which they brought against him in the day of his grief.

[Job 27:1-4](#). *Moreover Job continued his parable, and said, As God liveth, who hath taken away my judgment; and the Almighty, who hath vexed my soul; all the while my breath is in me, and the spirit of God is in my nostrils, my lips shall not speak wickedness, nor my tongue utter deceit.*

He felt that; it would be wicked for him to confess to what he had never done; it would be deceit for him to acknowledge crimes which he had never committed. Therefore he most solemnly asseverates, by the living God, that he never will permit the falsehood to pass his lips. He had not transgressed against God in the way his friends insinuated, and he would not own that he had.

[Job 27:5](#). *God forbid that I should you: till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me.*

We are bound to keep to the truth. No man is permitted, with mock humility, to make himself out to be what he is not. Job was right, so far, in standing up, for the integrity of his character, for he was a man of such uprightness that even the devil could not find fault with him. He was such a holy man that God could say to Satan, "Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man,

one, that feareth God and escheweth evil?" And all that the devil could do was to insinuate that he had a selfish motive for his goodness. "Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that; he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face." Job was upright, yet we are never so right but what there is a mixture of wrong with our right. A man may very easily become self-righteous when he is defending his own character; there may be a lack of admissions of faults unperceived; there may be a blindness to faults that ought to have been perceived; and something of that imperfection, doubtless, was in the patriarch.

[Job 27:6](#). *My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go: my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live.*

There he went too far, for he had not yet seen God as he afterwards saw him. Before man, there was nothing with which he needed to reproach himself; but how he changed his tone when God drew near to him! Then he said, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." IF we knew more of God, we should think less of ourselves. If those who consider themselves perfect had any idea of what perfection is, their comeliness would be turned in them to corruption.

[Job 27:7-8](#). *Let mine enemy be as the wicked, and he that riseth up against me as the unrighteous. For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his so.*

That is a very solemn, searching question; if a man does try to play fast and loose with God, if he be a hypocrite, and if he should gain by his hypocrisy all that he tries to gain, namely, repute among men, "what is his hope when God taketh away his soul?" Then, his hope is turned to horror, for he has to stand before him who cannot be deceived, but who reads him through and through, and casts him away because he has dared to insult his Maker by attempting to deceive omniscience. Oh, may you and I never play the hypocrite's part! There cannot be a more foolish thing; and there cannot be a more wicked thing.

[Job 27:9](#). *Will God hear his cry when trouble cometh upon him?*

That is one of the tests of the hypocrite: "Will God hear his cry when trouble cometh upon him?" Will the hypocrite cry to God at all? Will he not

give up even his profession of religion when he loses his prosperity? And if he does cry, will God hear the double-tongued man?

[Job 27:10](#). *Will he delight himself in the Almighty? Will he always call upon God?*

These questions, while they condemn those who are hypocrites, are comforting to many a sincere heart. Dear friend, do you delight yourself in God? Do you really admire him, love him, and seek to glorify him? Then you are no hypocrite, for no hypocrite ever found delight in religion, and especially no hypocrite ever found delight in God himself. “Will he always call upon God?” No, there are certain times when he will cease to pray. Pleasure enchants him, and he will not pray; or perhaps he is so discouraged and despairing that he cannot pray. There are times when the hypocrite gives up praying, but the Christian cannot give it up; it is his vital breath, he must pray. No sorrow is so deep as to take him off it; no joy is so fascinating as to seduce him from prayer; but as for the hypocrite, “Will he always call upon God?” No, you may rest assured that he will not.

[Job 27:11](#). *I will teach you by the hand of God:*

Or, better, as the margin runs, “I will teach you being in the hand of God.” Being himself chastened, and experiencing the teaching of God, Job says to his friends, “I will teach you.”

[Job 27:11-14](#). *That which is with the Almighty will I not conceal. Behold, all ye yourselves have seen it; why then are ye thus altogether vain? This is the portion of a wicked man with God, and the heritage of oppressors, which they shall receive of the Almighty. If his children be multiplied, it is for the sword: and his offspring shall not be satisfied with bread.*

If God does not visit the hypocrite with punishment in his own person, it will certainly fall upon the next generation.

[Job 27:15-18](#). *Those that remain of him shall be buried in death: and his widows shall not weep. Though he heap up silver as the dust, and prepare raiment as the clay; he may prepare it, but the just shall put it on, and the innocent shall divide the silver. He buildeth his house as a moth, and as a booth that the keeper maketh.*

“He buildeth his house as a moth,” which makes its home in the cloth, but the servant’s brush knocks it all out, and destroys the moth’s children, too. “And as a booth that the keeper maketh.” The hypocrite’s house is no better than that little shanty which the keeper of a vineyard puts up with a

few boughs or mats, to sit under it from the heat of the sun. God saved us from being such poor builders as this! May we build a house that is founded on the rock!

[Job 27:19](#). *The rich man shalt lie down, but he shall not be gathered: he openeth his eyes, and he is not.*

He has grown rich by oppression, he has become great in the land by his hypocrisy; but he speedily goes down to the grave. God looks at him, and he is gone.

[Job 27:20](#). *Terrors take hold on him as waters, a tempest stealeth him away in the night.*

This is a parallel passage to that word of our Lord, “But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great.”

[Job 27:21](#). *The east wind carrieth him away, and he departeth: and as a storm hurleth him out of his place.*

These are your great ones, your proud ones, your strong men that fear nothing, and would insure their own lives to a certainty for the next twenty years; see how they go. Shadows are not more evanescent, a poor moth is not more easily crushed.

[Job 27:22](#). *For God shall cast upon him, and not spare: he would fain flee out of his hand.*

The man would escape from God if he could. It was Job’s glory, as we read just now, that he was in God’s hand; but the hypocrite would fain flee out of God’s hand, yet that is altogether impossible.

[Job 27:23](#). *Men shall clap their hands at him, and shall hiss him out of his place.*

Such ignominy shall be poured upon the hypocrite at last that all mankind shall endorse the sentence of God which condemns him; and shame and everlasting contempt shall be his portion. The Lord save all of us from such an awful doom, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

[JOB CONTENTS](#)

Job Chapter 28

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

Job Chapter 29

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

Job Chapter 30

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Job Chapter 31

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

Job Chapter 32

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER 33

Verses 1-33

This is a speech of young Elihu, who had sat quietly listening to the taunting words of the three “candid friends” of Job, and to the somewhat exasperated replies of the patriarch. At last, the young man breaks the silence, and with some dignity, and quite sufficient of self-content, he thus addresses himself to Job: —

[Job 33:1](#). *Wherefore, Job, I pray thee, hear my speeches, and hearken to all my words.*

“I am but a young man, but I speak because I cannot be quiet. An impulse moves me; I am as a vessel wanting vent. I desire to speak impartially; therefore, hear me, but hear all that I have to say; do not listen merely here and there to a part of my speech, but hearken to all my words.”

Sometimes, it is very necessary to beg our hearers not to run away with only one sentence, or even with one sentiment. “Hear my speeches, and hearken to all my words,” for there is a proportion in truth, and one truth has to be balanced with all the others. A statement may be all the better for being unguarded, more forcible because it stands alone; and yet it may need that another statement should be heard with it, lest it should be misunderstood. Wherefore the preacher also says to his hearer, “I pray thee, hear my speeches, and hearken to all my words.”

[Job 33:2](#). *Behold, now I have opened my mouth, my tongue hath spoken in my mouth.*

That is to say, “I speak with much solemnity, not as one who chatters without sense, or without due consideration, but I have opened my mouth deliberately, as one who has something to say; and I speak with my best powers of speech, as one who wishes to persuade those who hear him.”

[Job 33:3](#). *My words shall be of the uprightness of my heart: and my lips shall utter knowledge clearly.*

What a lesson this is to those of us who preach to others, — that we speak out of the uprightness of our heart, and feel that, however others may judge us, we are sincere before God in what we say! How necessary also is it, especially in these days, that we should speak plainly, so as to be easily understood! Some men never think clearly, and therefore they never speak clearly; and, oftentimes, the darkness of a man’s speech is only the result of the darkness of his mind; he has no clearly-defined notion of what he has to say. Let every young man who has to teach others resolve that this utterance of Elihu shall be his also, “My lips shall utter knowledge clearly.”

[Job 33:4](#). *The spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life.*

That is to say, “I am as much the creature of God as these three old gentlemen are, these three wise friends who have spoken so tartly. I am as much endowed with the Spirit of God as thou art, O Job, and therefore I speak to thee in his name.” Should not this be a lesson to every one of us to try and do all that we can for God? Every Christian may say, “‘The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life.’ Therefore let me use my very existence, the life that is breathed into me, for that Almighty Creator who has made me what I am.”

[Job 33:5](#). *If thou canst answer me, set thy words in order before me, stand up.*

He who speaks reason is ready to hear reason. It is only the unreasonable talker who will not allow others to have a word to say in reply. "If thou canst answer me," says Elihu to Job, "set thy words in order before me, stand up."

[Job 33:6](#). *Behold, I am according to thy wish in God's stead: I also am formed out of the clay.*

Job had wished that someone would stand up and speak for God, someone without the terror that seemed inseparable from the Infinite, someone without the power of Omnipotence, someone who would be more nearly his equal, with whom he could debate the questions which perplexed him, so Elihu says, "I am according to thy wish in God's stead: I also am formed out of the clay."

[Job 33:7-11](#). *Behold, my terror shall not make thee afraid, neither shall my hand be heavy upon thee. Surely thou hast spoken in mine hearing and I have heard the voice of thy words, saying, I am clean without transgression, I am innocent; neither is there iniquity in me. Behold, he findeth occasions against me, he counteth me for his enemy, he putteth my feet in the stocks, he marketh all my paths.*

Elihu did not make this excuse for Job, that he had been slandered by his friends, and that his statement of innocence was not so much absolute towards God as it was defensive towards men. Still, there is no doubt that Job had gone too far in this direction. Perhaps, for this very reason, his troubles had come upon him, because he was in a measure self-righteous. In some small degree, at any rate, he may have prided himself upon his personal excellence. Elihu does well, therefore, in all faithfulness, to point out the blot in what Job had said.

[Job 33:12-13](#). *Behold, in this thou art not just: I will answer thee, that God is greater than man. Why dost thou strive against him? for he giveth not account of any of his matters.*

This man seems to have the very spirit that rested upon the apostle Paul when he was arguing with an objector against the Lord's way of working, "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?" The greatness and grandeur of the Eternal should prevent our raising objections against anything that he does. Who are we, the moths of a moment, the creatures of an hour, that we should interrogate the Infinite and question our Maker? What he does must of necessity be right; though we cannot

understand how it is so, we must believe it, and meekly bow to the will of the Lord.

[Job 33:14-17](#). *For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed; then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction, that he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man.*

It is ever one great object of the divine dealings to make and keep us humble. It is strange that creatures so insignificant as we are should be perpetually infected with the foul disease of pride; this form of mental scarlet fever continually breaks out in puny man, and therefore God deals with him that he may “hide pride from man.”

[Job 33:18-19](#). *He keepeth back his soul from the pit, and his life from perishing by the sword. He is chastened also with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain:*

Pain of body is usually looked upon as a great evil, and doubtless it is so in some respects; but it wraps up within itself great mercy. There are some who can scarcely be taught at all except through physical pain; and if it were possible to abolish sickness and suffering, whither would men go in the wantonness of their strength? Does not this very affliction often chide man, and bid him think, and cause him to return to his Maker, when, otherwise, he would be as thoughtless as the beasts that perish?

[Job 33:20-24](#). *So that his life abhorreth bread, and his soul dainty meat. His flesh is consumed away, that it cannot be seen; and his bones that were not seen stick out. Yea, his soul draweth near unto the grave, and his life to the destroyers. If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to show unto man his uprightness: then he is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom.*

Happy is the messenger who comes with such a message as that. Such was the prophet Isaiah to Hezekiah when the king was sick unto death, such is the minister of God’s Word when he comes with glad tidings of redemption, and God through him says of the spiritually sick man, “Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom.”

[Job 33:25-28](#). *His flesh shall be fresher than a child’s: he shall return to the days of his youth: He shall pray unto God, and he will be favourable unto him: and he shall see his face with joy: for he will render unto man his righteousness. He looketh upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, and*

perverted that which was right, and it profited me not; He will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light.

See the easy terms of God's love and mercy. The man does but confess that he has sinned, he owns that he has perverted the right, he confesses that he has gained no profit thereby; and God, seeing him in such a state of heart as this, delivers his soul from going down to the pit, and his life shall see the light. What a gracious God we serve! How cruel to continue to offend him when he is so ready to forgive!

[Job 33:29-30](#). *Lo, all these things worketh God oftentimes with man, to bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living.*

The chastisement of sickness and the flagellation of pain whip the sinner back to him who alone can save him. These are the black dogs of the Great Shepherd wherewith he brings back wandering sheep till they come again under his crook, and he leads them into green pastures.

[Job 33:31-33](#). *Mark well, O Job, hearken unto me: hold thy peace, and I will speak. If thou hast any thing to say, answer me: speak, for I desire to justify thee. If not, hearken unto me: hold thy peace, and I shall teach thee wisdom.*

May the Lord graciously apply to all our hearts this instructive portion of Old Testament Scripture! There is a message in it to each of us as well as to the patriarch Job, to whom it was specially addressed.

Verses 6-33

This is part of the speech of young Elihu, who had listened with much patience, but also with great indignation, to the harsh speeches of Job's three friends and to Job's self-righteous answers.

[Job 33:6-7](#). *Behold, I am according to thy wish in God's stead: I also am formed out of the clay. Behold, my terror shall not make thee afraid, neither shall my hand be heavy upon thee.*

Job had wished that he could argue his case with the Lord himself. If God would only withdraw the terror of his presence from him, he would like to come even to his seat, and plead with him. "Oh!" said he, "that there were one who would stand between me and God, that I might plead with him!" "Here am I," answered Elihu, "I am the man you want. God has sent me, now come, and plead with me. There is no terror in me to make thee afraid; neither have I any heavy hand to crush you."

[Job 33:8-10](#). *Surely thou hast spoken in mine hearing, and I have heard the voice of thy words, saying I am clean without transgression, I am innocent; neither is there iniquity in me. Behold, he findeth occasions against me, he counteth me for his enemy.*

Elihu puts the case very plainly. “There, Job, you have said that you are perfectly innocent, and yet you are made to suffer. You have brought a charge against God, that he seeks occasion against you, and treats you, who have always been his faithful friend, as though you were his enemy. You said,” —

[Job 33:11-12](#). *He putteth my feet in the stocks, he marketh all my paths. Behold, in this thou art not just: I will answer thee, that God is greater than man.*

Here is the core of the whole matter. Whenever you and I begin to impugn the justice of God, we ought to remember who we are, and what he is. There is no comparison between us and the great God over all, blessed for ever; and for us to begin to charge him with injustice, or unkindness, is a desperately wicked action, of that we may be quite sure at the very outset.

[Job 33:13](#). *Why dost thou strive against him? for he giveth not account of any of his matters.*

It is not for us to summon God to appear before us, as if he were our servant, and we were his master, or to arraign him before our judgment seat, and to sit there as if the Holy One of Israel were a felon, who must answer for his crimes. It is high treason, and blasphemy against the Most High, for us to think of sitting in judgment upon him. This was Paul’s way of putting the matter when someone raised a question about the divine decree. Paul did not answer the objector, except by saying, “Nay; but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?” Let the moth contend with the flame, let the wax fight with the fire, let the stubble strive with the whirlwind, but as for us who are less than nothing let us have no disputes with God. The fact is, God’s dealings with us have an object, he treats us sometimes with stern severity for our good. We cannot always see the end from the beginning; but God has an end, and a gracious end, too, in all his dealings with his people.

[Job 33:14-22](#). *For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed; then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction, that he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide*

pride from man. He keepeth back his soul from the pit, and his life from perishing by the sword. He is chastened also with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain: so that his life abhorreth bread, and his soul dainty meat. His flesh is consumed away, that it cannot be seen and his bones that were not seen stick out. Yea, his soul draweth near unto the grave, and his life to the destroyers.

Yet in all this, God is dealing with man in love and mercy. Man is a strange creature; he will not go in the right way by being drawn, so full often he must be driven. There is a whip for a horse, and a bridle for an ass, a rod for a fool's back, and we are such fools that we must often feel that rod, and sometimes to a very painful extent, till our soul draweth near unto the grave, and our life to the destroyers.

[Job 33:23-24](#). *If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand to show unto man his uprightness: Then he is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom.*

Oh, what precious words! There is One with God, One of a thousand, the Chief among ten thousand, the Messenger of the covenant, the Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. When he comes in, and makes man to see God's wondrous mingling of justice and mercy, then God turns in infinite grace upon the starving, dying sinner, and says, "Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom."

[Job 33:25-28](#). *His flesh shall be fresher than a child's: he shall return to the days of his youth: He shall pray unto God, and he will be favourable unto him: and he shall see his face with joy: for he will render unto man his righteousness. He looketh upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not; He will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light.*

Some Thursday nights ago, there strayed into this place one who had long hated God, and who had openly expressed his hatred of him. He was much prayed for by friends, but he was desperate in his wickedness. He little dreamed, when he left his home, that he would come into this place; but so he did, and here in this house God met with him, and renewed his heart, and made him to rejoice in the God he once despised. Here was a fulfillment of this text, and I pray that it may be fulfilled again tonight.

[Job 33:29-33](#). *Lo, all these things worketh God oftentimes with man, to bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the*

living.

Mark well, O Job, hearken unto me: hold thy peace, and I will speak. If thou hast anything to say, answer me: speak, for I desire to justify thee. If not, hearken unto me: hold thy peace, and I shall teach thee wisdom.

[JOB CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 34

Verses 1-37

[Job 34:1-3](#). *Furthermore Elihu answered and said, Hear my words, O ye wise men; and give ear unto me, ye that have knowledge. For the ear trieth words, as the mouth tasteth meat.*

I wish that verse was always true, especially concerning those who hear what purports to be the gospel; I only wish they would test and try what they hear, just as, with their mouth, they taste what they eat. But, as there are some persons who will eat anything that is set before them, so there are some who will accept anything that they hear, without exercising any spiritual discernment whatever. "It is cleverly put," they say, and therefore they receive it; yet they would scarcely be foolish enough to eat unhealthy food simply because it was skillfully carved.

[Job 34:4-5](#). *Let us choose to us judgment: let us know among ourselves what is good. For Job hath said, I am righteous: and God hath taken away my judgment.*

Yes, Job had said something like that, yet not quite that. He had denied the charges of gross sin which his friends brought against him, and he had, in that sense, declared that he was righteous, and so he was. There may have been in Job a little of the spirit which Elihu here denounces; he may, perhaps, have thought that God had not dealt well with him, in letting him fall into so much trouble, seeing that he was a righteous man. This notion, Elihu will not permit to pass unchallenged. Mistaking Job's meaning, he denounces it, just as I have heard preachers sometimes give a description of Calvinism such as it never was, and then they have proceeded to burn the man of straw which they have themselves made. It is one of the easiest things in the world to misquote or misinterpret your opponent's statement, and then denounce it, and think you have confuted him, whereas you have

only dissipated the chimera of your own brain. Elihu proceeds to deal with Job in this fashion.

[Job 34:6-9](#). *Should I lie against my right ? my wound is incurable without transgression. What man is like Job, who drinketh up scorning like water? Which goeth in company with the workers of iniquity, and walked with wicked men. For he hath said, It profiteth a man nothing that he should delight himself with God.*

He did not mean that Job did really go into the company of the wicked; but that, in his saying that it had been no profit to him that he should delight himself with God,—which Elihu declares that Job said, though I do not remember that he ever did say so,—he was making himself the associate of ungodly men. Any of us would be doing so if we, in our sorrowful moments, should say that we had derived no profit from delighting ourselves with God. It would not be true; it would be a rebellious and wicked speech, and, in some degree, it would be an atheistic speech.

[Job 34:10](#). *Therefore hearken unto me, ye men of understanding : far be it from God, that he should do wickedness; and from the Almighty, that he should commit iniquity.*

That was well spoken. Let us never, even for a moment, imagine that God can do anything that is unrighteous or unjust. God is a sovereign, and therefore he may do as he wills with his own grace; but there is never any injustice in any of the acts of his sovereignty. He is infinitely wise, and just, and merciful, in all that he does. He does as he wills, but he never wills to do anything that could possibly be better done. His own will is the best that can be.

[Job 34:11-17](#). *For the work of a man shall he render unto him, and cause every man to find according to his ways. Yea, surely God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment. Who hath given him a charge over the earth? or who hath disposed the whole world? If he set his heart upon man, if he gather unto himself his spirit and his breath; all flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust. If now thou hast understanding, hear this: hearken to the voice of my words. Shall even he that hateth right govern?*

Do you suppose that it could be so,—that the Governor of all the earth should hate that which is right? This would be rank blasphemy.

[Job 34:17](#). *And wilt thou condemn him that is most just?*

Wilt thou, poor puny mortal, arraign the Most High, and dare to condemn him who is most just?

[Job 34:18-19](#). *Is it fit to say to a king, Thou art wicked? and to princes, Ye are ungodly? How much less to him that accepteth not the persons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor? for they all are the work of his hands.*

This is the same kind of argument as Paul used in writing to the Romans: “Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?” Shall the potter’s clay resist the power of the potter, who assuredly has the right to do what he wills with his own clay? And if we do not speak lightly against princes, much less should we speak against the King of kings and Lord of lords, whose infinite majesty filleth all things, What, after all, are princes, and rich men, and great men, in comparison with the great God who made them all? “They all are the work of his hands.”

[Job 34:20](#). *In a moment shall they die, and the people shall be troubled at midnight, and pass away: and the mighty shall be taken away without hand.*

An invisible power takes away the strength of which they boasted, and then, what does the prince become, with all his glory, or the warrior, with all his victories? What, but so much corruption that must be buried out of sight?

[Job 34:21-22](#). *For his eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings. There is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves.*

How gloriously is this great truth put! This Elihu was a man of real eloquence; what a weighty sentence is this! How worthy to be treasured up in the memory! “There is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves.” Not even in the grave can they be concealed from the eye of God; and if it were possible for them to hide beneath the skirts of death himself, yet would God perceive them, and drag them forth to judgment.

[Job 34:23](#). *For he will not lay upon man more than right; that he should enter into judgment with God.*

For, if man were ill treated, and more were laid upon him than ought to be, he would have cause to enter into judgment with his Maker. But God will never compromise his own eternal holiness after such a fashion as this.

He will not lay upon man more than is right. You who are greatly afflicted, and in sore distress, ought to believe this; and if the Spirit of God shall give you a full conviction of the truth of it, it will afford you great comfort. The waves of your distress will come just as far as God wills, but at his bidding they must stay, as stays the sea in the fullness of its pride when Jehovah says to it, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further." Therefore, leave thy case in his hands, for he will not lay upon thee more than is right.

[Job 34:24-28](#). *He shall break in pieces mighty men without number, and set others in their stead. Therefore he knoweth their works, and he overturneth them in the night, so that they are destroyed. He striketh them as wicked men in the open sight of others; because they turned back from him, and would not consider any of his ways: so that they cause the cry of the poor to come unto him, and he heareth the cry of the afflicted.*

It is a dreadful thing for princes and great men when the poor begin to cry unto God against them. God will soon take up that quarrel; for, while the cries of mere politicians and partisans are unheeded by him, the cry of the afflicted always commands his attention, and he will, in due time, rectify all that is wrong.

[Job 34:29](#). *When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?*

This is a most comforting question; for, if God gives quietness to the spirit, nobody can really trouble you. When Christ has once spoken peace to our heart, and given us a holy calm, then are we glad because we be quiet, and who is he that can raise a storm in our soul again? "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding," also passeth all distraction. It cannot be broken by all the devils in hell. Oh, how blessed is this assurance!

[Job 34:29](#). *And when he hideth his face, who then can behold him?*

If God will not be seen, who can possibly see him? If he grows wroth with a man, and leaves him, what can that man do? When even his own beloved people no longer see his face, what joy can be theirs? What can make day when the sun is gone? What can make joy when Christ is gone?

[Job 34:29-30](#). *Whether it be done against a nation, or against a man only: that the hypocrite reign not, lest the people be ensnared.*

God has ways of dealing with his children by which he weeds out hypocrites, lays them low, and does not suffer them to have rule over his people.

[Job 34:31](#). *Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any more:*

That is the spirit of the true-born child of God: “Father, I know that what I have suffered is a chastisement from thy hand, and I accept it as such. ‘I will not offend any more,’ I quit the sin that grieved thee.”

[Job 34:32](#). *That which I see not teach thou me:*

“Show me wherefore thou contendest with me. Point out to me the evil which thou wouldest have me put away.”

[Job 34:32-35](#). *If I have done iniquity, I will do no more. Should it be according to thy mind? he will recompense it, whether thou refuse, or whether thou choose; and not I: therefore speak what thou knowest. Let men of understanding tell me, and let a wise man hearken unto me. Job hath spoken without knowledge, and his words were without wisdom.*

This man is getting proud and conceited, I think. He spoke well when he was defending God against all charges and complaints; but now that he turns upon Job, the patriarch is a wiser man and a better man than he is. Elihu is not fit to unloose the latches of Job’s shoes, yet he begins to accuse him. It sometimes happens that dogs bark at their masters, yet the masters are not to be blamed; and it is not always the best man who reproves others. Sometimes, a very foolish man will be the loudest in his rebukes of those who are wiser and better than himself, and will find fault with those whom he ought to commend. It was so in the case of Elihu and Job.

[Job 34:36-37](#). *My desire is that Job may be tried unto the end because of his answers for wicked men. For he addeth rebellion unto his sin, he clappeth his hands among us, and multiplieth his words against God.*

Well, thank God, we are not going to be judged by Elihu, nor by any other of our fellow-creatures; to our own Master we stand or fall, and if we trust in him, he will make us to stand even in the great day of judgment itself, blessed be his holy name!

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PSALM 2

Verses 1-12

[Psalms 2:1-3](#). *Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.*

The conspiracy was both strong and influential, The kings and the rulers combined against Jehovah and against his Christ. They were very determined; they set themselves with resolute purpose; they took counsel together. They were full of a horrible enthusiasm; they raged; they thought the work as good as done, but they imagined a vain thing. The fight was against Jehovah, and against his Anointed, the Christ, the Messiah. What came of it all? Did they break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from them? Listen: -

[Psalms 2:4](#). *He that sitteth in the heavens shalt laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.*

For what can mortals be as compared with the Eternal? The fire can readily enough consume the tow. Shall men set themselves in opposition to omnipotence, and hope to prosper? And when God determines to glorify his anointed Son, shall worms of the dust prevent him from doing so? What can come of all their opposition? God simply laughs at them, Jehovah has them in derision.

[Psalms 2:5](#). *Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure.*

He scarcely needs to lift his hand, he has only to speak; and when Jehovah speaks in wrath, his words are thunderbolts. Men's hearts are indeed troubled when God's words come hot with anger into their spirits. This is what God said:-

[Psalms 2:6](#). *Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.*

“You have raged, you have deliberated, you have resolved; but it is all nothing. There is my Son, the crowned King.” And such is the Anointed tonight; the Christ is on the throne, let his enemies say what they will, and he must reign, nothing can prevent it. He must be King of kings and Lord of lords, for thus is it written concerning him.

[Psalms 2:7](#). *I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.*

This is the seal of the Anointed. He is the Son of the Highest, the only begotten Son of the Father, who says to him, “Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.”

[Psalms 2:8](#). *Ask of me, and I shalt give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.*

Christ is asking of his Father; even he cannot have what he desires without asking for it. Prayer is so essential to the progress of the kingdom

of Christ that even Christ himself must ask. But then God has promised to give to Christ the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth to be his possession. This is the great strength of all missionary enterprise. Dear friends, we may be quite sure that the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord when we read such a text as this: "I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." If men will not yield to the Lord when he is made known to them, if they resist the drawings of divine love, what will happen? Listen:-

[Psalms 2:9-10](#). *Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces, like a potter's vessel. Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth.*

"Ye rulers, ye magistrates, ye senators, ye governors of the earth, be wise, be instructed."

[Psalms 2:11](#). *Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.*

"If you are wise, you will obey the superior King; you will yield obedience to the great Lord of all."

[Psalms 2:12](#). *Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the Way, when his wrath is kindled but a little.*

The kings and rulers are bidden to do this; let each one of us do the same, let us give the kiss of homage to him whom God has made to be our King, and take him to be our Lord and Ruler for ever and ever.

[Psalms 2:12](#). *Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.*

It is so; those of us who have tried it can bear witness that it is so, there is no life like a life of trust in God. The nearest approach to heaven that we can live in this mortal body is a life of simple confidence in the Lord Jesus Christ. Now let us read concerning our Lord's first coming and appearance amongst the sons of men. Turn to the Gospel according to Matthew, at the third chapter

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 2, and Matthew 3.

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PSALM 3

Verses 1-8

These may be called very properly morning and evening Psalms. The third Psalm is the morning Psalm. A psalm of David when he fled from Absalom, his son. A dark hour that for David, preceded by the shadows of his own sin, and now deepened by the horrible hatred of his own favorite child, who conspired to take his kingdom and his life.

[Psalms 2:1](#). *LORD how are they increased that trouble me!*

As if he could not measure his troubles. He stands amazed. He makes his appeal to God.

[Psalms 2:2-3](#). *Many are they that rise up against me. Many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God. Selah.*

That is the worst of all, when they begin to ridicule his religion. He was a man who had said much of his faith in God; and in former days he had done great marvels by trusting in the living God; and now one and another dared to say openly that God had cast him off.

[Psalms 2:3](#). *But thou, O LORD, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head.*

The word in the Hebrew is a bigger word than the word shield. It is a buckler — a kind of guard above, around, beneath, an all-surrounding defense. “Thou, Lord, art a shield for me. They cannot harm me. They cannot kill me. I am still guarded by God; and, what is more, thou art my glory. Though my glory is taken away, yet I glory in thee. Whatever else I have not, I have a God, a God that I dare glory in too, for there is no such God as he is. And thou art the lifter up of my head.” My head is still above water. I do not yet sink, and my head shall rise again. Though I bow it down like a bulrush now, I shall one day praise him. I know that I shall, for he is the health of my countenance.

[Psalms 2:4](#). *I cried unto the LORD with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill. Selah.*

He means that he loved to pray alone, but to use his voice in prayer. I have heard many Christians say that they can pray better when they can hear their own voices; they are better able to collect their thoughts. The voice is not necessary to prayer. It is the mere body of prayer. Still, a right healthy body may help the soul, and sometimes the use of the voice may help the spirit. David says that he cried to God; and then it happened to him, as it always happens to us: “He heard me out of his holy hill.”

[Psalms 2:5](#). *I laid me down and slept;*

Far from the palace, and from the place of worship where he loved to meet with God.

[Psalms 2:5](#). *I awaked; for the LORD sustained me.*

I was kept through the night watches; through restless anxiety I slept. Now God sustains our hearts, even when we are asleep, for else we should not sleep. We should be restless and wakeful. But God gives us a peace ere we fall asleep, which abides with us as a blessed balm of rest, and so we sleep.

[Psalms 2:6-7](#). *I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about. Arise, O LORD save me, O my God: for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly.*

They were like fierce lions threatening to devour him. They had already rent him in malice. God came and smote them on the jaw, so that they lost their strength to injure him.

[Psalms 2:8](#). *Salvation belongeth unto the LORD: thy blessing is upon thy people. Selah.*

That is a sweet morning hymn. Sound Calvinistic doctrine that. "Salvation belongeth unto the Lord." It is he that saves man. It is he that delivers those that are saved. And here is the speciality and peculiarity of his grace.

"Thy blessing is upon thy people." Oh! to be remembered with them! Then, even if an Absalom should persecute us, the blessing is not withdrawn, for this is entailed upon the children of God.

"Thy blessing is upon thy people."

Now for the evening hymn.

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 3 and [Psalms 4:1-6](#).

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PSALM 4

Verses 1-6

[Psalms 4:1](#). *Hear me, when I call, O God of my righteousness: thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress; have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer.*

Past experience is a sweet solace in the hour of trouble. “Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress.” Think of what God has been to you, you tried ones, for he will be the same still. And can he have taught you to trust in his name, And thus far have brought you to put you to shame? Is this God’s way — to be gracious to his people, and then to turn against them? God forbid. Pray, then, with the grateful memory of all his loving-kindness. “Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress. Have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer.”

[Psalms 4:2](#). *O ye sons of men, how, long will ye turn my glory into shame? how long will ye love vanity, and seek after leasing? Selah.*

How long will ye take to lies? How long will you abuse a character which deserves not your censure? How long will you pour contempt upon God, whom you ought to serve? But know He talks to them as if they did not know, while they thought themselves the most knowing people in the world.

[Psalms 4:3](#). *That the LORD hath set apart him that is godly for himself:*

He has marked him out to be his own peculiar treasure. “The Lord’s portion is his people. Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.” Now if God has marked out his people to be his own, he will defend them. He will guard them against every adversary. They shall not be destroyed.

[Psalms 4:3](#). *The LORD will hear when I call unto him.*

The sweet assurance that prayer will prevail is one of the best comforts in the cloudy and dark day.

[Psalms 4:4](#). *Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah.*

Tremble and sin not. Unhappily, there are many that sin and tremble not. They reverse the text. A trembling saint is often all the more saint because he trembles. Tremble and sin not. If there is not a mixture of prayer with our hope and our confidence, it is like meat without salt in it. It is apt to grow corrupt in prosperous sunny weather. Oh! for the fear of God in our hearts! Stand in awe, and sin not. Commune with your own heart. A man ought to be the best of company to himself. It is one reason why we should be well acquainted with the Word of God — that if ever we are left alone, we may be good companions to ourselves. “Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still.” Hush that babel. Let God speak. Get to your bed, away from the noise of the streets and the roll of the traffic. “Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still.” Some men

cannot bear stillness. The quiet of their own hearts disturbs them. There must be something very rotten in the state of the man's life who loves not some seasons of solitude. Some of us are less alone when we are alone, and most at home even when others count themselves abroad. "Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still."

[Psalms 4:5](#). *Offer the sacrifices of righteousness,*

Bring your prayers, your praises. Present to God your hearts, your love, your trust.

[Psalms 4:5-6](#). *And put your trust in the LORD. There be many that say, Who will shew us any good?*

Gaping about for some good thing; thirsting — they know not what they are thirsting for. "Who will show us any good?" Come from the east, or the west, or the north, or the south; only bring us something that promises pleasure, and we are your men. There be many that say, "Who will show us any good?" But we say not so. Our saying is another sort.

[Psalms 4:6](#). *LORD, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.*

Is not that what many of you are saying tonight? You know what you want. You know that there is nothing else that will satisfy you. "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us." We are not well. Lord, we ask thee that it may be well between our souls and thee.

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 3 and [Psalms 4:1-6](#).

Verses 1-8

[Psalms 4:1](#). *Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness: thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress; have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer.*

Good men want to be heard when they pray, they are not satisfied with merely praying, they must have God's answers to their supplications. See how David pleads the past mercy received from God: "Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress." Cannot my own heart look back to God's lovingkindness to me in days gone by? Oh, yes! Then, as he is the same God, what he has done in the past is an argument for what he will do in the future. There are some of us here who can adopt the psalmist's language, and say, "Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress; have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer."

[Psalms 4:2](#). *O ye sons of men, how long will ye turn my glory into shame?*

How long will you slander me, how long will you slander God, how long will you turn the gospel into ridicule, how long will you resist the Spirit of God?

[Psalms 4:2](#). *How long will ye love vanity, and seek after leasing?*

That is, after falsehood, after lying? Why do men seek after falsehood?

What attraction can it have for them? Why, only this attraction, that it suits a fool's heart to feed on falsehood.

[Psalms 4:3](#). *But know that the LORD hath set apart him that is godly for himself:*

You cannot hurt him, for God has hedged him about. You may say what you please against him, but God loves him, and will take care of him.

[Psalms 4:3](#). *The LORD will hear when I call unto him.*

What a sweet assurance! O brethren, the mercy-seat is always open to us! It will be a blessed thing if every one of us can say, with David, "The Lord will hear when I call unto him."

[Psalms 4:4](#). *Stand in awe, and sin not:*

This is good advice to ungodly men; let them feel aright the awe of God presence, and they must turn from sin. Holy reverence is a great preservative from sin.

[Psalms 4:4](#). *Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still.*

Hold private communion with yourself, in a private place, at a private hour. "Be still." We are far too noisy, most of us talk too much. It would often make men wiser if they were stiller. If a still tongue does not make a wise head, yet it tends that way.

[Psalms 4:6](#). *Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the LORD.*

This is a capital rule for the whole of life. Serve God, and trust in him; do what is right, and rest in the God of right.

[Psalms 4:6](#). *There be many that say, who will shew us any good?*

We all want to see anything that is really good, we do not care who shows it to us, even if it be the devil himself. "Who will shew us any good?" That question may have another meaning, for there are some who have no desire for spiritual good, for such good as God calls good.

[Psalms 4:6](#). *LORD, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.*

David began the Psalm with a personal petition, "Hear me when I call," but now he begins to glow in spirit, and as his prayer burns more vehemently he prays for others also: "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy

countenance upon us.” This is our highest joy, this is our greatest good, to walk in the light or God’s countenance. If we have the favour of God, and know that we have it, we need ask for nothing else, for every other blessing is assured to those who have the favour of God.

[Psalms 4:7](#). *Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.*

The harvest and the vintage were the two seasons of greatest joy in the East, they shouted “Harvest Home” with gladness that the fruits of the earth had again been ingathered, and they drank the new wine, and danced for joy; but David says to the Lord, “Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased. “When God puts gladness in the heart, it is real gladness, for God is not the Giver of a sham joy; and it is lasting gladness, for God does not give temporary gifts. David says, “Thou hast put gladness in my heart,” and then he compares it with the gladness of the sons of men, and he says that his joy was greater than theirs when their earthly stores were increased. Boaz went to sleep on the threshing-floor, but he that sleeps upon the bosom of God has a far softer bed than that.

[Psalms 4:8](#). *I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety.*

He who has Jehovah as his God is at home even when he is abroad, he is well guarded even when he has none upon earth to protect him, and he can go to sleep in calm confidence when others would be disturbed in mind and too timid to close their eyes.

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 4, 5.

[PSALMS CONTENTS](#)

PSALM 5

Verses 1-12

[Psalms 5:1](#). *Give ear to my words, O LORD, consider my meditation.*

Sometimes we pray right off, as David did when he cried to the Lord, “Hear me when I call.” At other times, we sit down to meditate, and think over what we want to say to the Lord in prayer, as David did when he said, “ ‘O Lord, consider my meditation.’ What I have considered do thou consider.” A well-considered prayer is very likely to succeed with God.

[Psalms 5:2](#). *Hearken unto the voice of my cry,-*

“When I have not confidence or comfort enough to present a well-ordered prayer to thee; but, like a child in pain, cry unto thee, ‘Hearken unto the voice of my cry,’”-

[Psalms 5:2](#). *My King, and my God:*

What! will a king hearken to a cry? Men generally prepare elaborate petitions when they come into the presence of royalty; but, although the Lord is far greater than all earthly sovereigns, he is far more condescending than they are.

[Psalms 5:2](#). *For unto thee will I pray.*

I trust that we all pray; I am sure that all believers do; but let us pray more, let us pray much more than we have done and let us each one truly say to the Lord, “Unto thee will I pray.” He is a King, so serve him with your prayers. He is God, so adore him with your prayers, and if you can put both your hands on him, and say, as David did, “My King, and my God,” what abundant motives you have for abounding in prayer to him

[Psalms 5:3](#). *My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD*

“When the dew is on all nature, and on my spirit too, then shalt thou hear my voice in prayer. Before I go out into the world, my first thoughts shall be of thee.” Never see the face of man, beloved, until you have seen the face of God.

[Psalms 5:3](#). *In the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up.*

Adjust your prayer as the archer fits his arrow on the bow, look up as you shoot it, and keep on looking up and looking out for an answer to your supplication. You cannot expect God to open the windows of heaven to pour you out a blessing if you do not open the windows of your expectation to look for it. If you look up in asking, God will look down in answering. It is well always to take good aim in prayer; some prayers are like random shots, they cannot be expected to hit the target; but David’s prayer was well aimed, and he expected it to prevail with God: “In the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up.”

[Psalms 5:4](#). *For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee.*

In both of these Psalms there is a clear line drawn between the righteous and the wicked, this is a line which still needs to be kept very clear, and we must all seek to know on which side of that line we are.

[Psalms 5:5-6](#). *The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity. Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing: the LORD will abhor the bloody and deceitful man.*

These are strong words, but not too strong, God is not tolerant of evil and those who are most like him in other respects will be like him in this matter also.

[Psalms 5:7](#). *But as for me, I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy:*

“I will be like a child who goes in and out of his father’s door as often as he pleases because he is at home. I will not go there on my own merits, but ‘in the multitude of thy mercy.’”

[Psalms 5:7](#). *And in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple.*

There was no temple on earth when David wrote this Psalm, but God was his temple; and so the pious Jew opened the window, and looked towards Jerusalem, so do we look towards God upon the throne of grace in heaven, and seek to worship him in the beauty of holiness.

[Psalms 5:8](#). *Lead me, O LORD, in thy righteousness because of mine enemies; make thy way straight before my face.*

David does not say, “Make my way straight,” he does not want to have his own way, but he wants to walk in God’s way. Thus sweet submission blends with a desire for perfect obedience: “Make thy way straight before my face.”

[Psalms 5:9](#). *For there is no faithfulness in their mouth;-*

You cannot expect ungodly men to speak that which is right: “there is no faithfulness in their mouth;”-

[Psalms 5:9](#). *Their inward part is very wickedness; their throat is an open sepulcher;*

Pouring out foul, putrid gas. They cannot speak without using filthy or blasphemous expressions, or if they do, there is falsehood lurking behind their words, for deceit and evil of all kinds are in their hearts.

[Psalms 5:9](#). *They flatter with their tongue.*

Always beware of people who flatter you, and especially when they tell you that they do not flatter you, and that they know you cannot endure flattery, for you are then being most fulsomely flattered, so be on your guard against the tongue of the flatterer.

[Psalms 5:10](#). *Destroy thou them, O God; let them fall by their own counsels; cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions; for they*

have rebelled against thee.

“ It does not matter what they do against me; but, O Lord, ‘they have rebelled against thee.’” David speaks here like a judge pronouncing sentence upon the guilty,-not out of malice, but out of loyalty and devotion to God,

[Psalms 5:11-12](#). *But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice: let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them: let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee. For thou, LORD, wilt bless the righteous; with favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield.*

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 4, 5.

[PSALMS CONTENTS](#)

PSALM 6

Verses 1-10

Here the psalmist asks for a visit from God, for he is sick at heart, heavy and depressed. Be very thankful if that is not your case; but if it is, be very grateful that here is a prayer ready-made for you. Here you are taught how to cry to God, and what to expect from him. If you are very sick and sad, you are not worse off than David was. Send for David’s Physician; you cannot have a better doctor than the royal Physician. He who waited on King David is prepared to wait on you.

[Psalms 6:1](#). *O LORD, rebuke me not in thine anger,*

“Rebuke me; it will do me good; I need it; but not in anger. Be gentle and tender with me: ‘Rebuke me not in thine anger.’”

[Psalms 6:1](#). *Neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.*

“Chasten me; it may be that the rod will be very curative to me; but let not the chastening be given in thy hot displeasure. Be not very angry with thy poor sinful servant. If thou dost not turn away thy rod, yet turn away thy wrath. It is a sweet prayer. Some people cry to God about their sickness; it is much better to cry to God about the cause of it; that is to say, if it be a chastisement for sin, get rid of the sin, and the rod will then be removed.

[Psalms 6:2](#). *Have mercy upon me, O LORD for I am weak: O LORD, heal me; for my bones are vexed.*

“Have mercy upon me, O Lord; for I am weak.” This was a sweet reason for David to urge: “For I am weak.” He could not say, “For I am worthy.”

He would not have dared to say that. He could not say that when he said, “Have mercy,” for mercy is for the unworthy. Justice is for the good; mercy is for those who are guilty. “Have mercy upon me, O Lord; for I am weak: O Lord, heal me; for my bones are vexed.” Plead the greatness of your disease as a reason for the remedy. Do not come with your self-righteousness; that will hinder you. Come with your sorrow and your sin, your weakness and your pain, and plead these before God.

[Psalms 6:3](#). *My soul is also sore vexed:*

That is worse than the bones being vexed. “The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?”

[Psalms 6:3](#). *But thou, O LORD, how long?*

There is the pith of the prayer. David is troubled because God is away from him; he has lost communion with his Lord; he has got out of fellowship with his God, and here comes the most necessary cry of all: —

[Psalms 6:4](#). *Return, O LORD, deliver my soul: oh save me for thy mercies' sake.*

Will not that prayer suit you who are here tonight, you who are full of sin, and are heart-broken about it, and dread the wrath to come? I put this prayer into your mouths, and pray the Holy Spirit to put it into your hearts: “Oh save me for thy mercies' sake.”

[Psalms 6:5](#). *For in death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?*

As much as to say, “If thou lettest me die, thou wilt lose one singer out of thy earthly choir; but if thou wilt let me live, I will remember thee; I will praise thee; I will give thee thanks.” Do you feel like saying tonight, “Lord, if thou shalt destroy me, thou wilt gain nothing by it; but if thou wilt save me, there will be one who will give thee thanks for ever”? I have told you sometimes of that old woman who said, “If the Lord does save me, he shall never hear the last of it.” And you and I can also say that if he saves us, he shall never hear the last of it; we will praise him throughout eternity for his great salvation.

[Psalms 6:6](#). *I am weary with my groaning; all the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my tears.*

David was in a very sorry case when he wrote these words. So great was his pain, so acute his sorrow, that all the sluices of his eyes were pulled up, and he seemed to float his bed in tears, and to be like George Herbert when he wrote: —

“O who will give me tears? Come, all ye springs,
Dwell in my head and eyes: come, clouds and rain:
My grief hath need of all the watery things,
That nature hath produced. Let every vein
Suck up a river to supply mine eyes,
My weary, weeping eyes, too dry for me,
Unless they get new conduits, new supplies,
To bear them out, and with my state agree.”

[Psalms 6:7](#). *Mine eye is consumed because of grief;*

He had almost wept his eyes out; they grew red with his weeping, so that he could not see.

[Psalms 6:7](#). *It waxeth old because of all mine enemies.*

His eyesight grew dim, like that of an old man. A cataract of grief had put a cataract of blindness into his eyes.

[Psalms 6:8](#). *Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity*

He wants his God to come to him, so he bids God’s enemies clear out. If we keep company with the wicked, we cannot invite God to our house, and expect him to come. “Depart from me,” says David, “all ye workers of iniquity.” “You who are singing what you call a jolly song, be off with you. You who are merry with your jokes against religion, begone far from me.”

[Psalms 6:8](#). *For the LORD hath heard the voice of my weeping.*

“And if he has heard my tears, I do not want you to be here. I cannot associate with God’s enemies now that he has heard the voice of my weeping.” Is not that a beautiful expression, “The voice of my weeping”? Why, there was no sound, was there? Yet there are songs without words, and there are voices without sounds.

[Psalms 6:9](#). *The LORD hath heard my supplication; the LORD will receive my prayer.*

“I thought at first that he would not take my petition; but I see he stretches out his right hand, he receives my prayer; and if he receives my prayer, I shall soon receive his answer.”

[Psalms 6:10](#). *Let all mine enemies be ashamed and sore vexed: let them return and be ashamed suddenly.*

Now let us read the eighth Psalm, in which David expresses great wonder that God, whom he had asked to visit him, should deign to do so. I think I see him sitting with his window open. It is night, and he is feeling

better; and he bids them throw open the window, and he sits and looks at the stars, glad of the cool, fresh air.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Psalms 6:8](#).

[PSALMS CONTENTS](#)

Psalm Chapter 7

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

PSALM 8

Verses 1-9

8:1. *O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens.*

They are very high, but thy glory is higher than the heavens.

[Psalms 8:2-4.](#) *Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger. When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?*

He, whose voice rolls the stars along, who makes those bright worlds to fly like sparks from the anvil of his omnipotence, how can he stoop so low as to regard his fallen creature, man, who is so small, so insignificant?

[Psalms 8:5-6.](#) *For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet:*

Man is God's viceroy. He reigns over God's works in God's name. Let him not set up to be a king, and try to usurp the honour of his great Lord, the Emperor, the Universal Governor.

[Psalms 8:7-8.](#) *All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.*

What a king man is! Let him not be cruel to the beasts of the field; let him not be a tyrant; God did not make him for that purpose. Let his reign be

generous and kind; and if the animals must suffer, yet spare them as much suffering as possible. O man, be thou a generous viceroy, for thou art under a most generous King, who is himself the happy God, and who delights in the happiness of all his creatures!

[Psalms 8:9](#). *O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!*

Thus does the psalmist finish as he began the psalm, by praising the name of the Lord.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Psalms 6:8](#).

[PSALMS CONTENTS](#)

PSALM 9

Verses 1-20

This Psalm has a dedication which is very difficult to understand: “To the chief Musician upon Muthlabben. A Psalm of David.” Either “Muthlabben” is the tune to which the Psalm was to be sung, or some musical instrument that is now forgotten, or else it alludes to Ben, who was one of the Levitical singers mentioned in [1 Chronicles 15:18](#). In all probability, however, the true translation of the title is, “A Psalm on the death of the son,” or “on the death of the champion,” and it is thought by some that it was composed by David after the death of giant Goliath. If it be so, I think you will see, as we read the Psalm, that it well proclaims the victory which God had wrought.

[Psalms 9:1](#). *I will praise thee, O Lord, with my whole heart; I will shew forth all thy marvellous works.*

It will be well if we also resolve that we will praise the Lord. Most people have something or someone to praise, so let us select the Lord, even Jehovah, as the subject of our song. Let us resolve that we will praise him continually, for it may be difficult sometimes to do it. The heart may be very heavy; it may even be inclined to rebellion and murmuring, but let us make this strong resolution, in the power of God’s grace: “I will shew forth all thy marvellous works.” Here is room for great variety of praise, and here are abundant topics for praise, for there is no work of God which is not marvellous, and worthy of being praised with our whole heart. So, Lord I will not be dumb. Thou hast given me a tongue, I am not like the brute

beasts that cannot speak; my tongue is the glory of my frame, so with it I will show forth all thy marvellous works.

[Psalms 9:2](#). *I will be glad and rejoice in thee: I will sing praise to thy name, O thou most High.*

Get thee up, then, my soul, out of the dark places of thy despondency. Rise, my drooping spirit, to something higher and better. If thou canst not be glad in anything else, be glad in thy God, — be glad that thou hast a God, and such a God, and that he is thy God still. Whatever else thou mayest have lost, thou hast not lost him. “I will be glad and rejoice.” The reduplication of the words indicates a double joy, — a double gladness, as the apostle says, “Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice.” Be glad twice over, for you have double cause for rejoicing in the Lord.

[Psalms 9:3](#). *When mine enemies are turned back, they shall fall and perish at thy presence.*

As much as to say, “The presence of God is quite enough to make my adversaries flee, — yea, and utterly to cut them off.” As John Wesley said, “The best of all is, God is with us;” and if God be with us, it matters little to us who are against us.

[Psalms 9:4](#). *For thou hast maintained my right and my cause; thou satest in the throne judging right.*

One of our noblemen has this for his motto, “I will maintain it;” but the Christian has a far better one: “Thou hast maintained my right.” If David sang thus after he had hurled the stone from his sling into Goliath’s skull, he might well magnify the name of the Lord, who had maintained the rights of his people, and put the uncircumcised champion of the Philistines to confusion and death.

[Psalms 9:5-6](#). *Thou hast rebuked the heathen, thou hast destroyed the wicked, thou hast put out their name for ever and ever. O thou enemy, —*

You can conceive of David, standing on the prostrate form of his fallen foe, and looking on that gigantic countenance and those mighty limbs, crying out, “O thou enemy,” —

[Psalms 9:6-7](#). *Destructions are come to a perpetual end: and thou hast destroyed cities, their memorial is perished with them. But the Lord shall endure for ever: he hath prepared his throne for judgment.*

“Thou hast destroyed cities,” but thou couldst not destroy God. When thou didst defy the armies of other nations, thou couldst easily put them to rout, but when thou didst defy the living God, then there was an end of thee,

for thou couldst not overcome him, nor overcome his people. Blessed be God for this, our faith is founded upon a rock that never shall be removed, and our confidence is fixed upon One who can never fail us, and whose truth must stand fast for ever.

[Psalms 9:8-10](#). *And he shall judge the world in righteousness, he shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness. The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee:*

The basis of faith is knowledge, and there is no knowledge like that which comes from experience. If you know the name of God as Jehovah, — the self-existent and ever-living God, — you will have good reason for trusting him; and then, if you know his many precious names, — such as Jehovah-Tsidkenu, the Lord our Righteousness, Jehovah-Nissi, the Lord my banner; Jehovah-Jireh, the Lord will provide, Jehovah-Shalom, the peace-giving God, and Jehovah-Shammah, the God who is there where his people are — yea, if any one name of God be fully understood by you, you will put your trust in him.

[Psalms 9:10-12](#). *For thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee. Sing praises to the LORD, which dwelleth in Zion: declare among the people his doings. When he maketh inquisition for blood, he remembereth them:*

When the great Coroner's inquest shall be held upon all who have wrongly suffered, the commission will open by an enquiry concerning the blood of the martyrs: "When he maketh inquisition for blood, he remembereth them." His suffering ones, who laid down their lives for the truth's sake, shall find that their blood was precious in his sight.

[Psalms 9:12](#). *He forgetteth not the cry of the humble.*

Is there not consolation in these words for some of you? You have been humbled, and brought down from your high place; now then, is your time to cry; and when you do so, you will prove that "he forgetteth not the cry of the humble." There are many, who give heed to the petitions of their needy fellow-creatures, and feel their force, for a time; but they are engaged in business, or occupied in other ways, and they soon forget. Other things crowd out the needy one's petition, and so he is left unhelped. But it is never so with God: "He forgetteth not the cry of the humble." Notice, in the next verse, how David avails himself of that truth. He seems to say, "Is it

true that God does not forget the cry of the humble? Then I will cry unto him, and my humble cry shall go up to his ear, and to his heart.”

[Psalms 9:13](#). *Have mercy upon me, O Lord; —*

What a blessed prayer that is, — a prayer useful on all occasions, — under a sense of sin, or under a load of sorrow, — burdened with labour, or crushed with despondency. It is a prayer which is like the cherubim’s sword, which turned every way; you may use it as you will: “Have mercy upon me, O Lord;” —

[Psalms 9:13](#). *Consider my trouble which I suffer of them that hate me, thou that lifted me up from the gates of death:*

What a lift that is, — lifted up from the gates of death into life, and ultimately into heaven! What an almighty God our Lord proves himself to be at a dead lift! When every other arm is paralyzed, he comes to us, and lifts us up from the gates of death.

[Psalms 9:14](#). *That I may shew forth all thy praise in the gates of the daughter of Zion:*

From the gates of death to the gates of Zion, is the lift which God gives to his poor suffering people.

[Psalms 9:14-15](#). *I will rejoice in thy salvation. The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made:*

If you picture David with the carcass of the giant before him, the Philistines put to ignominious flight, and the Israelites in full pursuit after them, you can understand his saying, “The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made.”

[Psalms 9:15-16](#). *In the net which they hid is their own foot taken. The LORD known by the judgment which he executeth: the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands. Higgaion. Selah.*

The probable meaning of these words is, “Consider and pause.” They are musical rests, perhaps; but they also suggest to us how well it is, in our reading of the Scriptures, sometimes to stop a while, and inwardly digest the words that we have read.

[Psalms 9:17](#). *The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.*

Even if they are not outwardly as wicked as other men are, yet their forgetfulness of God is the highest form of injustice to him; it is treason against the majesty of heaven; it is robbing God of what is his right; it is a combination of everything that is evil.

[Psalms 9:18-20](#). *For the needy shall not alway be forgotten: the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever. Arise, O LORD, let not man prevail: let the heathen be judged in thy sight. Put them in fear, O LORD: that the nations may know themselves to be but men.*

They boast that they are men, and that they quit themselves like men. Yet let them know that, although they are men, they are only men, with all the infirmities and imperfections of men, and that there is a God who will, in due time, let men know that they are but men, and that the best of men are but men at their best.

[Psalms 9:20](#). *Selah.*

Pause again, think over what we have been reading, and lift up your heart in prayer to God, seeking the aid of the Holy Spirit to apply the truth to your soul.

[PSALMS CONTENTS](#)

Psalm Chapter 10

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

Psalm Chapter 11

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

PSALM 12

Verses 1-8

[Psalms 12:1](#). *Help, LORD for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men.*

The Psalm speaks of a very discouraging time, and records a very dreary fact, but the psalmist is wise, and turns to God with that short, sententious prayer, "Help, Lord."

[Psalms 12:2-3](#). *They speak vanity every one with his neighbour: with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak. The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things:*

They will not be able to continue speaking falsely and proudly for ever; a shovelful of earth from the grave-digger's spade will silence them, and a terrible display of God's justice will make them speechless for ever.

[Psalms 12:4-5](#). *Who have said, With our tongue will we prevail; our lips are our own: who is lord over us? For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the LORD I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him.*

That is all it is, only a puff, — the biggest brag of the wicked, the most tremendous threat against the Lord's people, is but a puff after all; and God will set his people high above all those who puff at them.

[Psalms 12:6-8](#). *The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever. The wicked walk on every side when the vilest men are exalted.*

Now let us read in Jeremiah's prophecy, chapter **8**. Remember, dear brethren, that Jeremiah had the very sorrowful task of warning a people who would not give heed to his warnings. He prophesied evil, — evil which began to come upon the people even while he prophesied, yet they would not turn to God. I sometimes think Jeremiah was the greatest of all the prophets, because, in the teeth of perpetual opposition, with no measure of success whatever, he continued to be faithful to God and to deliver the message with which he was sent, weeping the while over people who would not weep for themselves.

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 12.; and Jeremiah 8, and [Jeremiah 9:1](#).

[PSALMS CONTENTS](#)

PSALM 13

Verses 1-6

[Psalms 13:1-2](#). *How long wilt thou forget me, O LORD? for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? how long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?*

When you and I have to spread our complaints before God, we are not the first who have done so. When we complain of God's forsaking us, we

are not alone. There was a greater than David who, even in the article of death, cried, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

[Psalms 13:3](#). *Consider and hear me, O LORD my God: lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death;*

When it is dark, very dark, we get drowsy. Sorrow induces sleep. Remember how the Saviour found the disciples sleeping for sorrow. Therefore David asks for light. Light will help him to keep awake, and he fears to sleep, so he prays, “Lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death.”

[Psalms 13:4-5](#). *Lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed against him; and these that trouble me rejoice when I am moved.*

But what a precious “but” this is! You can hear the chain rattle as the anchor goes down to hold the vessel.

[Psalms 13:5-6](#). *I have trusted in thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation. I will sing unto the LORD, because he hath dealt bountifully with me.*

What a climb there is, in this Psalm, from the abyss of sorrow up to the summit of joy! “I will sing unto the Lord because he hath dealt bountifully with me.” I hope many of us know what this blessed change means. If any of you are in great sorrow tonight, may my Lord and Master lighten your eyes!

This exposition consisted of readings from PSALMS 12, 13, and 14.

[PSALMS CONTENTS](#)

PSALM 14

Verses 1-7

[Psalms 14:1](#). *The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.*

He was a fool to think it. He was not fool enough, however, to say it except in his heart. Fools have grown more brazen-faced of late; for now, they not only say it in their heart, but they say with their tongues, “There is no God.” Oh, no; I have made a mistake! They do not call them “fools” now; they call them “philosophers.” That, however, is often exactly the same thing.

[Psalms 14:1](#). *They are corrupt,*

It is always so. When they will have no God, they will have no goodness “They are corrupt.” That is the secret of infidelity. The psalmist has put his finger on it: “They are corrupt.”

[Psalms 14:1-2](#). *They have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good. The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God.*

David represents God looking from the battlements of heaven upon our fallen humanity; and at the time when he looked, he could see none that understood him, or sought him. By nature we are all in this condition. Until the grace of God seeks us, we never seek God. Even God looked in vain. He was no stern critic; he was no hypercritic: “The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God.”

[Psalms 14:3](#). *They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one.*

“That was in old Testament times,” says one. If you turn to the Epistle to the Romans, you will find that Paul quotes it as being true in his day. It is always true, and it always will be true, apart from the grace of God: “There is none that doeth good; no, not one.”

[Psalms 14:4](#). *Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge?*

Are they all so foolish?

[Psalms 14:4](#). *Who eat up my people as they eat bread, and call not upon the LORD.*

They think nothing of God’s people. They could swallow them at a mouthful, they so despise them. Notice, that, whenever a man despises God, he soon despises God’s people; it is only natural that he should do so. Meanwhile, he himself will not call upon the Lord.

[Psalms 14:5](#). *There were they in great fear:*

What, these very people who would not call upon God! Were they in great fear? Yes, God can bring great fear upon the men who seem most bold. It is noticed that the boldest blasphemers, when they become ill, are generally the most timid persons. These are the people who begin to cry, and give up what they boasted of, when they get into deep waters: “There were they in great fear.”

[Psalms 14:5](#). *For God is in the generation of the righteous.*

He is with his people, he always will be with his people, and when he makes bare his arm, fear takes possession of his enemies.

[Psalms 14:6](#). *Ye have shamed the counsel of the poor, because the LORD is his refuge.*

They mocked at the idea of a mans trusting in God for his daily bread, or trusting in God for his eternal salvation; but, mock as men may, there is no other refuge for a soul but God. When the floods are out, there is no safety but in the ark with God. Oh, that men would trust in him!

[Psalms 14:7](#). *Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! when the LORD bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad.*

May that time soon come! Amen.

This exposition consisted of readings from PSALMS 12, 13, and 14.

[PSALMS CONTENTS](#)

Psalm Chapter 15

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

PSALM 16

Verses 1-11

Psalms 16:1. *Preserve me, O God: for in thee do I put my trust.*

Notice how the psalmist urges the prevailing plea of faith. A trusted God will be a preserving God. If thou, believer, canst truly say that thou art trusting God in any time of trouble or danger, thou wilt be safe enough in his keeping.

Psalms 16:2-3. *O my soul, thou hast said unto the LORD, Thou art my Lord: my goodness extendeth not to thee; but to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, is whom is all my delight.*

“I cannot do thee any good, thou art too great to need anything from me; but I may be the means of blessing to thy people, thy saints may reap some little benefit from what I do. They are the company I keep, they are the choicest friends I know, and if thou wilt but help me to do something for thee which shall bring blessing to them, I shall indeed rejoice”

Psalms 16:4. *Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god: their drink offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names*

into my lips.

We must be faithful to God, to the God revealed to us in the Book of God, the God of the Old Testament of the New Testament, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. We must keep to him, not make another god after our own imagination. It is practical idolatry even to conceive of God otherwise than he is revealed in Holy Scripture. This we must not do, but say, concerning the God of the Bible, “This God is our God for ever and ever.”

Psalms 16:5. The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot.

One of the great houses of nobility has for its motto the words, “I will maintain it.” But David’s is a better one: “Thou maintainest my lot.” God is the best Defender that his people can ever have.

Psalms 16:6. The lines are fallen into me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage.

Many of us have proved this to be true in our experience. May we continue gratefully contented and more than contented, delighted with whatever God appoints for us!

Psalms 16:7-8. I will bless the LORD, who hath given me counsel: my reins also instruct me in the night seasons. I have set the LORD always before me?

“In my acts by day, and my thoughts by night,”

Psalms 16:8. Because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

Now across the sacred page there comes the wondrous revelation of a glorious One who speaks in the very words that are recorded here. Though, possibly, we have not recognized him, these words that follow apply specially to Jesus Christ our Lord.

Psalms 16:9. Therefore my heart is glad,

Because, in the night watches, he had sought his Father, and found help in him, he could say, “Therefore my heart is glad.”

Psalms 16:9-10. And my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell;

Or, rather, Hades, the abode of the dead.

Psalms 16:10. Neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

Now David was gathered to his fathers, and his body saw corruption, as the apostle Peter rightly observed, so it is clear that he is not speaking of himself here, not in the first place, at any rate, but of “great David’s greater

Son,” our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: “Neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.”

Psalms 16:11. Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hands there are pleasures for evermore.

[PSALMS CONTENTS](#)

PSALM 17

Verses 1-15

[Psalms 17:1](#). *Hear the right, O LORD, attend unto my cry, give ear unto my prayer, that goeth not out of feigned lips.*

Good men are often slandered and misunderstood; and, at such times, the first verse of this Psalm will well fit their lips: “Hear the right, O Lord.” And, at all times, it is a great blessing when a supplicant can say to God, “Give ear unto my prayer, that goeth not out of feigned lips.” It must be a dreadful thing to pray with lips that do not speak the truth. When men’s thoughts are far away from their prayers, and they are muttering pious words but their heart is absent, what a mockery it must be in the sight of God! A dead prayer, — who will own it? It is like the child that was overlaid in the days of Solomon, which neither of the two mothers would own to be hers, Beware of dead prayers. You may dress them up as finely as you like; but, if there is no life in them, what good are they?

[Psalms 17:2](#). *Let my sentence come forth from thy presence; let thine eyes behold the things that are equal.*

It is the appeal of a slandered man to the highest court; he takes his case into the Court of King’s Bench, and asks God himself to give the verdict concerning what he had done. It is a good case that will bear to be so investigated.

[Psalms 17:3](#). *Thou hast proved mine heart; thou hast visited me in the night; thou hast tried me, and shalt find nothing; I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress.*

Happy is the man who is not afraid for God to come to him suddenly in the night, or to pounce upon him, as it were, at any hour of the day, for, whenever he comes, he will find his servant so acting that he will not mind who examines his conduct. He is keeping his lip, purposing that it shall not

transgress God's law, and he is ruling his whole body in like manner. Only the grace of God can enable us to do this.

[Psalms 17:4](#). *Concerning the works of men, by the word of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer.*

Notice that verse, young man! There is much-needed teaching there for you. There are many "paths of the destroyer" in this wicked city of London, and all over the world; and it is only by taking heed to our ways, according to God's Word, that we can hope to escape from them. How pleasant those "paths of the destroyer" often appear to be! How smooth and how alluring they are! All sorts of supposed delicacies and beauties will tempt you to go that way, and the foolish heart readily inclines to these indulgences; but happy is the man whose judgment is enlightened by God's Word so that he avoids it, and passes by "the paths of the destroyer."

[Psalms 17:5](#). *Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not.*

"I know that I am in thy way; but, O Lord, hold me up! I am like a horse that needs a careful driver, else I shall trip and fall, in rough places or in smooth, 'Hold up my goings in thy paths,' for I may fall even there. There are the sins of my holy things, so 'hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not.'"

[Psalms 17:6-12](#). *I have called upon thee, for thou wilt hear me, O God: incline thine ear unto me, and hear my speech. Shew thy marvellous lovingkindness, O thou that savest by thy right hand them which put their trust in thee from those that rise up against them. Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings, from the wicked that oppress me, from my deadly enemies, who compass me about.*

They are enclosed in their own fat: with their mouth they speak proudly. They have now compassed us in our steps: they have set their eyes bowing down to the earth; like as a lion that is greedy of his prey, and as it were a young lion lurking in secret places. Many godly men have such cruel enemies as David had, so they will do well to pray as he did: —

[Psalms 17:13-15](#). *Arise, O LORD, disappoint him, cast him down: deliver my soul from the wicked, which is thy sword: from men which are thy hand, O LORD, from men of the world, which have their portion in this life, and whose belly thou fillest with thy hid treasure: they are full of children, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes. As for me,—*

"What do I possess? What is my portion? Am I full of substance, like the men of the world, or have I little of this world's wealth? It is of small

consequence, for, ‘as for me,’” —

[Psalms 17:15](#). *I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.*

That is our portion. God grant that we may prize it more and more!
Amen.

[PSALMS CONTENTS](#)

PSALM 18

Verses 1-19

[Psalms 18:1](#). *I will love thee, O Lord, my strength.*

“I do love thee, and I will love thee yet more and more. I bind myself to thee for the future as well as the present.”

[Psalms 18:2](#). *The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.*

Note how David delights to heap up poetic imagery to describe his God.

They who glory in the Lord would fain speak worthily of him; and because there is no one object in nature that can fully set him forth, they mention many, as David does here. Like him, if we would convey even a faint idea of what God is to us, we must think of all things that are strong, and worthy of our confidence, and putting them all together, we must say that our God, our strength, in whom we trust, is all this, and much more,

[Psalms 18:3](#). *I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies.*

Prayer brings salvation. Prayer must, however, be mingled with praise, for prayer and praise make up the breath of the Christian life. Have I not often reminded you that we breathe in the air of heaven by prayer, and then breathe it out again in grateful praise?

[Psalms 18:4-5](#). *The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid. The sorrows of hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me.*

“They were before me, behind me, all around my path whichever way I turned.”

[Psalms 18:6](#). *In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him,*

even into his ears.

What a difference there is between this living God of David, — our living God, — and that impersonal nonentity which, nowadays, is regarded by many as God. The god of the pantheist, — what is he? A nobody and a nothing; but our God made the heavens; and our God heareth the prayer of all who truly cry unto him.

[Psalms 18:7](#). *Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because he was wroth.*

The cry of one of his oppressed children stirred him to anger. Nothing moves the heart of God like an injury done to his people. You remember how the prophet Zechariah wrote to the captive Jews in Babylon, “Thus saith the Lord of hosts, He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye.”

[Psalms 18:8-9](#). *There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it. He bowed the heavens also, and came down; and darkness was under his feet.*

In this wonderful poetic description, Jehovah is represented as descending from his throne at the cry of one of his children in distress.

[Psalms 18:10](#). *And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind.*

So swift is prayer to reach the ear of God, and so swift is God to come and answer his people’s prayers.

[Psalms 18:11](#). *He made darkness his secret place; his pavilion round about him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies.*

Like an Oriental king, who travels beneath his royal canopy, the Lord is pictured as coming to earth with the bursting clouds and opening heavens as the pavilion of the Deity.

[Psalms 18:12](#). *At the brightness that was before him his thick clouds passed, hail stones and coals of fire.*

These are some of the weapons with which he assails the adversaries of his people. With this dread artillery, he smote Pharaoh of old, when he rained wrath upon the land of Egypt, and fire mingled with the hail, and the fire ran along upon the ground.

[Psalms 18:13-14](#). *The LORD also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave his voice; hail stones and coals of fire. Yea, he sent out his arrows, and scattered them; and he shot out lightnings, and discomfited them.*

God himself came forth on his people's behalf, and fought for them from heaven. As we read that "the stars in their courses fought against Sisera," so did God make the very tempests in the skies to be like an invincible legion, sweeping before it the enemies of his anointed servant.

[Psalms 18:15-18](#). *Then the channels of waters were seen, and the foundations of the world were discovered at thy rebuke, O LORD, at the blast of the breath of thy nostrils. He sent from above, he took me, he drew me out of many waters. He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them which hated me: for they were too strong for me. They prevented me in the day of my calamity:*

They went before him, they blocked his way.

[Psalms 18:18-19](#). *But the LORD was my stay. He brought me forth also into a large place; he delivered me, because he delighted in me.*

Oh, how sweetly this record continues! Never was there a poem more lofty in its diction. Even Milton can not equal the language of this Psalm. This inspired writing rises superior to all human compositions, even if regarded only from the poetic point of view. But what must have been the psalmist's experience when he was delivered after this wonderful fashion? And if God has delivered you and me in a quieter and gentler way, yet he has quite as surely delivered us; and blessed be his name from this time forth, and even for evermore!

Verses 1-20

[Psalms 18:1](#). *To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David, the servant of the Lord, who spake unto the LORD the words of this song in the day that the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul: And he said,*

Notice that, though David was a king, he does not say so, but he prefers the higher title, "The servant of Jehovah." He served his God by his song. Oh, that all who led our psalmody would serve God in it! It should always be with deep devotion that we sing the praises of God. "Who spake unto the Lord the words of this song." He did not speak them to us; he spoke them to the Lord. Singing is peculiarly an address unto God; but neither prayer nor praise should be addressed to men. David "spake unto the Lord the words of this song, in the day that the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies." It is always well to sing when a deliverance is yet new; if we do not praise the Lord in the day of our deliverance, we are not likely to praise him many days afterwards. We remember how it is written that, when the

Lord delivered Israel at the Red Sea, “Then believed they his words; they sang his praises.” So do thou time thy psalm as God times his mercies.

[Psalms 18:1](#) . *I will love thee, O LORD, my strength.*

Not only, “I do love thee,” but “I will love thee.” Some resolutions are rash, and should not be made; but this is a resolution that we may well make. We are bound to make it if we have experienced the lovingkindness of the Lord. If God be our strength, then in the strength of God we may say, “I will love thee, O Lord. I will love thee, if others do not. Whatever else I may have to love, I will love thee. My relation to thee shall never be a cold one: ‘I will love thee.’ My whole nature shall go out towards thee.”

[Psalms 18:2](#). *The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer;*

“My rock in which I hide; my fortress in which I am secure; my deliverer who in a thousand ways brings me out of every peril.” What a text those two words would make! I would like to preach from them: “My deliverer.” Why, that is a name that runs through the whole story of redemption, and the whole history of providence. it is a title which we may use toward God in heaven as well as upon earth: “My deliverer.” And now, as the psalmist advances in his song, he gives a very sweet title to the Lord,

—
[Psalms 18:2](#). *My God,*

At first, the Lord was to him, “Jehovah “-a name of awe and majesty; but now on covenant terms with God, he uses a name of bold affectionateness, and near approach: “My God.”

[Psalms 18:2](#). *My strength,*

That is the second time he has used that title; it is one that will bear repeating again and again: “My strength.”

[Psalms 18:2](#). *In whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.*

What a blessing it is that we can look upon God under so many aspects, and in every aspect feel him to be ours! “My God, my strength, my buckler, my salvation, my high tower.” To set those personal pronouns side by side with every blessed metaphor, and to call God ours under every emblem which we can heap together, this is the way to be indeed cheered and comforted. Calvin says, on this verse, that the saint is armed from head to foot, and even above his head, for he has given to him the horn of salvation to lift on high. God is everything to us, beloved. We want nothing outside of him; if we think we do want it, it is better to want it than to have it.

[Psalms 18:3](#). *I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised:*

David first said, “I will love,” now he says, “I will call.” The “I wills” of the Psalms have furnished various writers with an admirable subject; and they may supply you with a profitable line of meditation: “I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised.” “I will mix praise with my prayer. There is no praying like that; if you have prayer in one hand, have praise in the other. The mixture of these two perfumes will make an exceedingly sweet incense to present unto the Lord. To praise and pray, to pray and praise, is an admirable way of living. Have I not often told you that it resembles our breathing? By prayer we breathe in, and by praise we breathe out.

[Psalms 18:3](#). *So shall I be saved from mine enemies.*

Saved singing, saved praying; what a happy way to be saved,—calling upon God, and magnifying his name! Now follows a marvelous passage descriptive of the psalmist’s deliverance, one of the most wonderful pieces of poetry ever composed in any language. David begins by describing his previous position.

[Psalms 18:4](#). *The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid.*

Death had tied him round with the ropes of pain; they compassed him about. He seemed like one who was shipwrecked, struggling for his life; or he stood like a hunted stag in the midst of a pack of hounds.

[Psalms 18:5](#). *The sorrows of hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me.*

He could not stir a step without falling into a trap of some sort or other. What an awful

picture this is! I can hardly imagine that the case could be painted in much blacker colors. None but God could help him, it is evident; for his

sorrows were the sorrows of death. The floods that surged around him were the floods of ungodly men; and there are no wild beasts so much to be dreaded as ungodly men. They can do more harm to us than can lions in their dens. David’s sorrows were the sorrows of hell, and the snares that lay in his pathway were the snares of death.

[Psalms 18:6](#). *In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God:*

He puts together the two names, “Jehovah” and “my God.” He says that he called upon Jehovah, and he cried unto his God. He began with calling,

and he went on to crying. The longer we pray, the more intense our prayer becomes. David prayed thus in his distress. Every way except one was shut up, so that he could not escape; but there was a way open upward. Our enemies can never block up that way; you can always run the blockade, my brethren, if you know the way of sailing upward. You can never be shut out of the port of prayer, you will always find a harbour of refuge by crying unto God.

[Psalms 18:6](#). *He heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears.*

The music from all the harps of the redeemed and from the songs of cherubim did not so engross those blessed ears that they could not hear David's cries. A child's cry will get to a father's ear. It was so with the psalmist; his was a cry full of anguish, and it entered into the ears of God. It did not go to the saints, and round about through human mediators; but it went direct to God's ears.

[Psalms 18:7](#). *Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because he was wroth.*

Nothing touches God's heart like an injury done to a child of his. "He was wroth," and he did but stamp his foot, and the solid earth began to rock and tremble. He who laid the

foundations of the universe can soon shift its corner-stones if he pleases; and even the hills that send their roots so deep are easily moved by him.

[Psalms 18:8](#). *There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it.*

Oriental imagery representing the indignation of the Most High. He is not subject to passions like ours, but he is thus described in order that we may understand his action. It is a high strain of poetry to teach us how God is moved by the affliction of his people. As when the hot breath comes from a man's nostrils, so is it represented as if a smoke came from God's nostrils; and as when a man opens his mouth to speak in anger, God is represented as so speaking that a fire issued from his mouth to devour the enemies of his people.

[Psalms 18:9-10](#). *He bowed the heavens also, and came down: and darkness was under his feet. And*

he rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind. He trod on the arch of the sky, and bent it beneath his divine weight. The cherubim are represented as standing over the mercy-seat, as though

waiting there to perform errands of mercy; and the Lord is here said to ride upon a cherub, and to fly upon the wings of the wind. God comes swiftly for the deliverance of his people. Thou countest him slow ; but he is not slow in the fulfillment of his promises as men count slowness. When thou shalt understand all things,-if ever that shall be,—thou wilt see how speedily he flew to thy rescue.

[Psalms 18:11](#). *He made darkness his secret place; his pavilion round about him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies.*

Nobody can see God in the sunlight; but faith can see him in the dark, and can realize that the darkest providences are but the pavilion of Jehovah's love.

[Psalms 18:12](#). *At the brightness that was before him his thick clouds passed, hail stones and coals of fire.*

The psalmist heaps together all the terrors of nature to show how God stirreth all things up for the rescue and the defense of his people. Over the head of all this blackness and these flames of fire you hear a voice

[Psalms 18:13](#). *The Lord also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave his voice; hail stones and coals of fire.*

Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! See how readily, when the Lord comes forth as a man of war (Jehovah is his name), he scattereth all his adversaries.

[Psalms 18:14-15](#). *Yea, he sent out his arrows, and scattered them; and he shot out lightnings, and discomfited them. Then the channels of waters were seen, and the foundations of the world were discovered at thy rebuke, O Lord, at the blast of the breath of thy nostrils.*

He had not to stretch out his hand: it was but his breath that shook the earth, and set the heavens on fire.

[Psalms 18:16](#). *He sent from above, he took me, he drew me out of many waters.*

The psalmist saw another Moses, whose name signified. "I drew him out of the water"; and this is one of the names of Christ. Out of many waters was he drawn, our glorious covenant Head, and all his people are to be baptized into his name.

[Psalms 18:17](#). *He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them which hated me: for they were too strong for me.*

They were not too strong for God, and it almost seems as if he would not have come upon the scene if they had not been too strong for David.

While David could fight them, he might fight them; “but what if they were too strong for me,” saith he, “he delivered me.” Oh, what a glorious thing it is to be put where you cannot help yourself, because then it shall be written, “he delivered me”! Let the heroes of the earth boast of all their mighty deeds; as for us, we will glory even in infirmity, for then the power of God doth rest upon us.

[Psalms 18:18-19](#). *They prevented me in the day of my calamity: but the LORD was my stay. He brought me forth also into a large place; he delivered me, because he delighted in me.*

There is another wonderful text for a sermon: “He delivered me.” The first I gave you was “my deliverer.” Now here is the explanation of his assuming that title: “He delivered me, because he delighted in me.”

[Psalms 18:20](#). *The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me*

For David had been slandered; they laid all manner of evil to his charge, and God therefore came forth for his defense, because his heart was right with the Lord. It was God’s grace that made him right, and the grace that had preserved him from sinning now delivered him from being slandered.

Verses 1-35

[Psalms 18:1](#). *I will love thee, O LORD, my strength.*

What a blessed “I will”: “I will love thee”! He does love the Lord, and he declares that he will continue to do so. He feels that he must do so, for the Lord has been his strength. There are many aspects under which the love of our heart is most justly and fitly given to God, and this is one of them. If the Lord has been the strength of our heart, then let our heart love him.

[Psalms 18:2](#). *The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.*

How David heaps up the epithets! When the believer once begins to praise the Lord, there is no end to it. He can never even satisfy himself; much less can he hope to rise to the height of this great argument. Notice how many of those little pronouns there are. Luther used to say that the very marrow of divinity lies in the pronouns. Certainly, the sweetness—the honey of it lies here. Let me read the verse again, putting the emphasis on the pronouns: “The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my

God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.”

[Psalms 18:3](#). *I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies.*

Calling upon him in prayer, and rendering praise to him, “so shall I be saved from mine enemies. You remember how the army of Jehoshaphat marched forth into the valley of Berachah, singing and praising the Lord; and they had no need to strike a blow, for the Lord gave them a glorious victory, when they began to sing and to praise; and we might have more victories if we had more praise and more prayer. Now David goes on to tell us what had happened to him, and what happened to the children of Israel when they came up out of the land of Egypt, and went into the wilderness.

[Psalms 18:4-5](#). *The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid. The sorrows of hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me.*

That is, “went before me,” “lay in my pathway.” Did you ever have a window opened in your heart, so that you could see all the ruin of your nature,-all the possibilities of evil that lay asleep within your soul? Did you ever feel, as you gazed upon that sight, as if you were looking over the edge of the bottomless pit? Ah, then! you have been just in the condition which the psalmist here describes: “The sorrows of hell compassed me about: the snares of death lay in my pathway.”

[Psalms 18:6](#). *In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried unto my God; he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears.*

That is a wonderful expression: “My cry came before him, even into his ears.” That is, of course, speaking after the manner of men, and we cannot speak in any other manner. God appeared to hear David’s cry as you and I hear a thing when we say, “It seemed to ring in my ears, I could not get rid of the sound of it.” What happened then?

[Psalms 18:7](#). *Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because he was wroth.*

The Lord was wroth with those who had made his child cry, as a father is angry with one who injures a beloved child of his, or as a mother is wroth with one who puts her babe to pain. The Lord made the earth to tremble because he was angry at the oppressors of his servant.

[Psalms 18:8](#). *There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it.*

That is David's graphic and striking representation of the indignation of God on his behalf.

[Psalms 18:9](#). *He bowed the heavens also, and came down: and darkness was under his feet.*

This is a wonderful description of the interposition of God on behalf of his people. The scene referred to by David is probably the destruction of the Egyptians at the Red Sea, and the deliverance of the children of Israel from their cruel enemies.

[Psalms 18:10](#). *And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind.*

So swift is prayer to reach the heart of God; and so swift is God to come to the help of his people.

[Psalms 18:11-12](#). *He made darkness his secret place; his pavilion round about him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies. At the brightness that was before him his thick clouds passed, hail stones and coals of fire.*

For all the dread artillery of heaven shall be used for the defense of the faithful. God will hold nothing in reserve when his people are in danger.

[Psalms 18:13](#). *The LORD also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave his voice; hail stones and coals of fire.*

What made God speak in those terrible tones? It was the faint and feeble cry of his poor servant down below. Can you and I make thunder? Yes, we can. If we can thunder at the gates of heaven by prayer, God will thunder in the heavens in his omnipotence; he will quickly respond to his children's cries. The first Christians, who were employed in the Roman armies, were called the thundering legion, because it was said that, once upon a time, when they prayed, God sent a thunderstorm to destroy their enemies; and, truly, a living Church of God, that is full of prayer, may be called a thundering legion.

[Psalms 18:14](#). *Yea, he sent out his arrows, and scattered them; and he shot out lightning's, and discomfited them.*

What a wonderful picture this is,-as if the Eternal had taken down his bow, and aimed his shafts of lightning against the foes of his people!

[Psalms 18:15](#). *Then the channels of waters were seen, and the foundations of the world were discovered at thy rebuke, O LORD, at the blast of the breath of thy nostrils.*

At the Red Sea, Moses sang, “Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters; “but, here, David does not represent God as sending forth a great wind, but as if, in his eagerness to help his servant, his very nostrils gave forth such a mighty blast as made the sea to divide, so that “the channels of the waters were seen.” It is one of the most vivid pieces of poetry that ever fell from the pen of inspired or uninspired man.

[Psalms 18:16-17](#). *He sent from above, he took me, he drew me out of many waters. He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them which hated me: for they were too strong for me.*

When a child of God is in such a condition that he cannot help himself, and he cries to his Heavenly Father, then the Lord always helps him. Our proverb says, “God helps those that help themselves;” that is true, but there is something better than that. God helps those who cannot help themselves. That proves the greatness of his mercy, which endureth for ever. David said of his foes, “They were too strong for me,” but they were not too strong for the Lord to overthrow.

[Psalms 18:18](#). *They prevented me in the day of my calamity: but the LORD was my stay.*

“I leaned on him; I rested on him; I relied on him; and so I was made peaceful, calm, quiet, confident in him: ‘The Lord was my stay.’”

[Psalms 18:19](#). *He brought me forth also into a large place; he delivered me, because he delighted in me.*

What sayest thou to that, believer? That God delights in thee,-that he finds something in thee, which he has put there by his grace, which is the object of his complacency? Is it not your likeness to his dear Son, whom he loves so much that, wherever he sees his image, there his love flows forth?

[Psalms 18:20](#). *The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me.*

For when God gives a man holiness, he will give him happiness. Holiness and happiness usually go together; and if, for a while, they seem to be divided, they shall soon be united again.

[Psalms 18:21-24](#). *For I have kept the ways of the LORD, and have not wickedly departed from my God. For all his judgments were before me, and I did not put away his statutes from me. I was also upright before him, and I kept myself from mine iniquity. Therefore hath the LORD recompensed me*

according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in his eyesight.

The godly never see any merit in their own works, they never have any trust in them for salvation; yet they cannot help observing, with pleasure, that, when God enables them to walk uprightly, he sooner or later delivers them. If you come into any trouble because you fear God, and serve him, you will come out of it again; ay, and come out of it like the three holy children came out of the furnace, with not so much as the smell of fire remaining upon you.

[Psalms 18:25-26](#). *With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful; with an upright man thou wilt shew thyself upright; with the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt shew thyself froward.*

If a man walks in a froward way, and opposes God, he will soon find that God treats him in a similar fashion. Sinners shall surely smart for their sin. Rebels shall yet sing another tune, however loudly they may boast today, and scoff at God and his people.

[Psalms 18:27](#). *For thou wilt save the afflicted people;*

There is comfort there for any of you who are his people, and who are under his afflicting hand.

[Psalms 18:27](#). *But wilt bring down high looks.*

Pride excites the indignation of Jehovah; it is to the humble that he has regard.

[Psalms 18:28](#). *For thou wilt light my candle the LORD my God will enlighten my darkness.*

Plead that promise if you are in the dark at this moment. If you are God's child, he will bring you out into the light ere long.

[Psalms 18:29](#). *For by thee I have run through a troop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall.*

God's warriors have to fight in various ways, and in all they must quit themselves like men, and ascribe all their triumphs to their Lord.

[Psalms 18:30](#). *As for God, his way is perfect: the word of the LORD is tried: he is a buckler to all those that trust in him.*

No armor of proof or shield of brass so well secures the warrior as the covenant God of Israel protects his warring people. He is himself the buckler of trustful ones.

[Psalms 18:31](#). *For who is God save the LORD? or who is a rock save our God?*

Where can lasting hopes be fixed? Where can the soul find rest? Where is stability to be found? Where is strength to be discovered? Surely, in the Lord Jehovah alone can we find rest and refuge.

[Psalms 18:32-35](#). *It is God that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect. He maketh my feet like hinds' feet, and setteth me upon my high places. He teacheth my hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms. Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation: and thy right hand hath holden me up, and thy gentleness hath made me great.*

I think you will see that David has given us, in this Psalm, the reasons why he began by saying, "I will love thee, O Lord, my strength."

Verses 1-50

[Psalms 18:1-3](#). *I will love thee, O LORD, my strength. The LORD is my rock and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength in whom I will trust; my buckler, and my horn of my salvation, and my high tower. I shall call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies.*

At first he says, "I will love thee" then, "I will trust thee," now he says "I will call upon thee," and that calling upon God is specially in the sense of praising him; and when you have just experienced a divine deliverance, how full your spirit is of sacred gratitude!

[Psalms 18:4-7](#). *The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid. The sorrows of hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me. In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears. Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because he was wroth.*

God was angry with Saul and with all David's persecutors because they hunted that good man like a partridge upon the mountains. The prayer of the poor suppliant called down the anger of God upon his adversaries.

[Psalms 18:8](#). *There went up a smoke out of his nostrils and fire out of his mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it.*

This is a wonderful picture of the anger of God. The Hebrews always connected manifestations of anger with the nose and mouth just as they ascribed various passions and feelings to the different members of the body. So David says, "There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured." Does someone ask, "Can prayer move God in this way?" Yes, it seems so. Of course, David had to speak after the manner of

men; there is no other way in which men can speak, so he describes God as being thus stirred by the cry of his poor child when it came up into his ears. Nothing brings a man's temper into his face like an injury done to his child, and God, as a father, cannot endure to have his children hurt. "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye."

[Psalms 18:9-10](#). *He bowed the heavens also, and came down: and darkness was under his feet. And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind.*

So quick is God to come to the deliverance of his persecuted people.

[Psalms 18:11-13](#). *He made darkness his secret place; his pavilion round about him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies. At the brightness that was before him his thick clouds passed, hail stones and coals of fire. The LORD also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave his voice; hail storms and coals of fire.*

Behold the dread artillery of heaven as God turns his terrible guns against the enemies of his people, and pours out hot shot from his lofty bastion: "hail stones and coals of fire."

[Psalms 18:14-15](#). *Yea, he sent out his arrows, and scattered them; and he shot out lightnings, and discomfited them. Then the channels of waters were seen, and the foundations of the world were discovered at thy rebuke, O LORD, at the blast of the breath of thy nostrils.*

The psalmist is evidently describing the passage of the Red Sea, and likening the descent of God to his individual help to that memorable descent of God to the rescue of his entire people. And indeed, God is as great in his help to one as in his help to all; he is never little. When God helps you, my brother, he is a great God, and greatly to be praised, as greatly so as when he comes to the rescue of an entire nation. Therefore sing unto the Lord, whose arm is lifted up for you, even for you, as truly as it was lifted upon Israel when he brought them out of Egypt "with a strong hand, and with a stretched-out arm, and with great terror."

[Psalms 18:16](#). *He sent from above, he took me, he drew me out of many waters.*

The Lord made another Moses of him. Pharaoh's daughter gave the name of Moses, that is, one drawn out, to the child who was brought to her, "because," she said, "I drew him out of the water."

[Psalms 18:17](#). *He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them which hated me; for they were too strong for me.*

Is that the reason why God interposed on David's behalf? Then let all his weak children find comfort in the fact that, when our enemies are too strong for us, God will come and deliver us. Let us be thankful for burdens that are too heavy for us to bear, and cast them upon the almighty shoulders that can easily sustain them. If we could do without God, we should do without God; but as we cannot, God will come to us, and help and deliver us.

[Psalms 18:18-19](#). *They presented me in the day of my calamity: but the LORD was my stay. He brought me forth also into a large place; he delivered me, because he delighted in me.*

What a sense of divine love God's gracious deliverance brings! Perhaps David would never have known how greatly God delighted in him if he had not been in such dire distress, and had not had such a great deliverance.

[Psalms 18:20-24](#). *The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me. For I have kept the ways of the LORD, and have not wickedly departed from my God. For all his judgments were before me, and I did not put away his statutes from me. I was also upright before him, and I kept myself from mine iniquity. Therefore hath the LORD recompensed me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in his eyesight.*

If God gives you grace to be honest, and upright, and true, and steadfast in the time of temptation, you may be quite sure that he will deliver you; in fact, he has already wrought the greater part of your deliverance in thus keeping you from sin. The worst thing that a trouble can do for a Christian man is to carry him off his feet, and make him forsake his integrity.

[Psalms 18:25-27](#). *With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful; with an upright man thou wilt shew thyself upright; with the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure; and with the forward thou wilt shew thyself forward. For thou wilt save the afflicted people; but wilt bring down high looks.*

If your faith cannot endure testing and trying, it is but poor faith. It will not do to die with if it will not do to live with. But if you cry to the Lord, and he enables you in the time of your distress to be faithful to him then he will certainly give you deliverance sooner or later.

[Psalms 18:28-30](#). *For thou wilt light my candle: the LORD my God will enlightened my darkness. For by thee I have run through a troop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall. As for God, his way is perfect:*

If you practice self-reliance, but not God-reliance, you will be sure to fail. What poor strength that is which does not come from God! Is it worthy of the name of strength at all? Is it not impotence and impudence combined? May God keep us from imagining that we can do anything apart from him! At the same time, may his gracious Spirit work in us the sure confidence that we can do everything he bids us do when he is our Helper! David had that confidence, for he goes on to sing, —

[Psalms 18:30-37](#). *The word of the LORD is tried: he is a buckler to all those that trust in him. For who is God save the LORD? or who is a rock save our God? It is God that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect. He maketh my feet like hinds' feet, and setteth me upon my high places. He teacheth my hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms. Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation: and thy right hand hath holden me up, and thy gentleness hath made me great. Thou hast enlarged my steps under me, that my feet did not slip. I have pursued mine enemies, and overtaken them: neither did I turn again till they were consumed.*

Remember that this is a soldier's song,-a song under the old covenant when men might fight as they may not fight now. We must, therefore, spiritualize this ancient war-song as we read it.

[Psalms 18:38-45](#). *I have wounded them that they were not able to rise: they are fallen under my feet. For thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle: thou hast subdued under me those that rose up against me. Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies; that I might destroy them that hate me. They cried, but there was none to save them: even unto the LORD, but he answered them not. Then did I beat them small as the dust before the wind: I did cast them out as the dirt in the streets. Thou hast delivered me from the strivings of the people; and thou hast made me the head of the heathen: a people whom I have not known shall serve me. As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me: the strangers shall submit themselves unto me. The strangers shall fade away, and be afraid out of their close places.*

So it came to pass that the Philistines were afraid of David, and he delivered his people from the attacks of all invaders, and brought them that blessed peace which Solomon enjoyed with them.

[Psalms 18:46-50](#). *The LORD liveth, and blessed be my rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted. It is God that avengeth me, and subdueth the people under me. He delivereth me from mine enemies: yea, thou liftest*

me up above those that rise up against me: thou hast delivered me from the violent man. Therefore will I give thanks unto thee, O LORD, among the heathen, and sing praises unto thy name. Great deliverance giveth he to his king; and sheweth mercy to his anointed, to David, and to his seed for evermore.

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PSALM 19

Verses 1-14

This Psalm teaches us the excellence of the two revelations which God has made to man. The first is the revelation which he has made in nature, and the second is that which he has made in his inspired Word. The psalmist first sings of God as he displays himself in his works in creation: —

[Psalms 19:1](#). *The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork.*

So much is this the case that it has been well said that “an undevout astronomer is mad.” There are such traces of the Infinite and the Omnipotent in the stars, and especially the more thoroughly they are studied, and the science of mathematics is brought to bear upon them, in order, in some degree, to guess at the incalculable distances and mighty weights of the starry orbs, that a man must perceive in them traces of the divine handiwork if he is only willing to do so: “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork.”

[Psalms 19:2](#). *Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.*

Every day speaks to the following one, even as the day that went before it spoke to it, and each day has its own message. Its history is an echo of the voice of God, and if man had but ears to hear, he would perceive that the things which happen from day to day proclaim the presence and power of God. And even night, with her impressive silence, reveals the Most High in the solemn hush and stillness. In the great primeval forests, the winds seem, with songs without words, to declare the presence of the Most High. There is something there, in the stillness of the night, as weird-like and so solemn, which has made unbelief retreat, and caused faith to lift up her eye, and see

more in the heavens at night than she had seen by day: “Night unto night sheweth knowledge.”

[Psalms 19:3-4](#). *There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.*

Though nature does not speak, yet its words go to the ends of the earth; and, silently, they sing the praises of God. To the inner ears of an enlightened man, there is a measure of spiritual teaching ever going on.

[Psalms 19:4-6](#). *In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun, which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.*

All this is emblematical of the spread of the gospel; so Paul tells us in the Epistle to the Romans: “Their souls went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.” Our Lord Jesus, up-springing from the couch whereon he slept awhile, has sent his light even to the ends of the earth.

“Nor shall his spreading gospel rest,
Till through the world his truth has run, —
Till Christ has all the nations blest,
That see the light, or feel the sun.”

There are brighter days yet to come to us. The strength of Christ, as he daily runs the gospel race, has not diminished, indeed, he puts it out yet more and more, and the day shall come when, as the full sunlight makes the perfect day, so shall the full revelation of the gospel to the eyes of all men fill the whole earth with the praises of God. Now let us read concerning the Book of God. We have read about his works, now let us read about his words.

[Psalms 19:7](#). *The law of the LORD is perfect, —*

“The doctrine of the Lord (as it may be read,) is perfect,” —

[Psalms 19:7](#). *converting [or, restoring] the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure,*

Oh, what a mercy that is! What could our souls do with ifs and buts and perhapses? But the teachings of God’s Word are certain, positive, infallible.

[Psalms 19:7](#). *Making wise the simple.*

No matter how foolish, how childlike, we may be to begin with, so long as our minds are free from gunning and craftiness, and as are simple and

sincere, this Book will make us truly wise.

[Psalms 19:8](#). *The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart:*

You know they do. Oftentimes has your heart leaped for joy when the statutes of the Lord have been made known to you.

[Psalms 19:8-11](#). *The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned:*

Do you not find it so, — that, oftentimes, a test of scripture comes to your mind just at the moment when you were about to suffer spiritual shipwreck? When you would have done something that would have caused you lifelong grief and vast damage, the Word of God has stepped before you with the flaming danger signal, and you have been stopped in time.

[Psalms 19:11](#). *And in keeping of them there is great reward.*

Not, for keeping of them, for it is not of debt; but, “in keeping of them.” It is always best to do as God bids you. You never forget a duty, or refuse to do it, without suffering loss, and every mistake you make, with regard to your Lord’s will, is a damage to yourselves. The keeping of his commands is most soul-enriching. The most profitable business that a child of God can carry on in the business of obedience to his Lord’s commands: “In keeping of them there is great reward.”

[Psalms 19:12](#). *Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults.*

The man who searches his heart most will yet leave some sin undiscovered;

and he who says, “I have no sin; I am living without sin,” has surely never seen into his own heart at all, he must be an utter stranger to the condition it is in. Let this be the prayer of each one of us: “Cleanse thou me from secret faults.”

[Psalms 19:13](#). *Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins;*

“Let me never dare to do what I know to be wrong. Let me not say, ‘I will go just so far, and then stop.’ Let me not tempt the Holy Spirit of God. Oh, let me never tempt the devil to tempt me, and put myself into a dangerous position under the notion that God will keep me if I am his child: ‘keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins;’” —

[Psalms 19:13](#). *Let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.*

You will never go into apostasy if you are watchful against presumption. Those men who, like Judas, commit the great transgression, and utterly perish, are men who knew nothing about watching their own hearts, but who presumed, and were sinfully bold and self-confident, and so came to an ill end. You know where John Bunyan says Heedless and Too Bold went to; and there are many like them.

[Psalms 19:14](#). *Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight; O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.*

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PSALM 20

Verses 1-9

The 20th Psalm is a prayer for the king going forth to the conflict, — a prayer for David; better still, a prayer for great David's greater Son. The 21st Psalm is a song of victory for the returning conqueror, it is a Te Deum, as the king has triumphed, and has returned from the conflict to enjoy the congratulations of his loyal subjects.

[Psalms 20:1](#). *The LORD hear thee in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee; —*

This is a prayer for David, a prayer for Jesus, and a prayer for every child of God: "Jehovah hear thee in the day of trouble." What dost thou want? Remember that the Lord gives thee this promise, "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." "The name of the God of Jacob defend thee." The God that took care of Jacob when he slept with a stone for his pillow; the God that guarded him when he was a stranger in a strange land, and brought him home again; the God that wrestled with him at Jabbok, the God that made all things work for him, instead of against him, as he feared, — "the name" — the character, the attributes, the glory — "of the God of Jacob defend thee;" —

[Psalms 20:2](#). *Send thee help from the sanctuary, —*

"Help from the holy place, help from the sprinkled blood, help from the mercy-seat, help from the golden pot that had the manna, help from Aaron's

rod that budded, help from him that shone between the cherubim, — send thee help from the Holy of Holies,” —

[Psalms 20:2](#). *And strengthen thee out of Zion; —*

That is to say, with his own power, his own glory, which he manifests in the midst of his people.

[Psalms 20:3](#). *Remember all thy offerings, and accept thy burnt sacrifice; Selah.*

This God did to his dear Son, and this he is prepared to do to all his people. Whenever we give anything to the cause of God, we ought to do it with all that solemnity and all that willingness which was seen in God’s own people in the olden time; remembering that it is to him we bring it; and the chief point for our consideration is, “Will he accept it?”

[Psalms 20:4](#). *Grant thee according to thine own heart, and fulfill all thy counsel.*

We cannot pray this for everybody. We do pray it for Christ, and we pray it for the Lord’s sanctified people, that he may grant them the desire of their heart, and fulfill their counsel.

[Psalms 20:5](#). *We will rejoice in thy salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up our banners: the LORD fulfill all thy petitions.*

What a wonderful prayer this is! May it be granted to each of you! “The Lord fulfill all thy petitions.”

[Psalms 20:6-9](#). *Now know I that the LORD saveth his anointed; he will hear him from his holy heaven with the saving strength of his right hand. Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God. They are brought down and fallen: but we are risen, and stand upright. Save, LORD:*

Or, “Hosanna.”

[Psalms 20:9](#). *Let the king hear us when we call.*

Now turn to the Psalm of victory. It corresponds very beautifully with the litany which we have just been reading.

This exposition consisted of readings from PSALMS 20. and 21.

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PSALM 21

Verses 1-13

[Psalms 21:1](#). *The king shall joy in thy strength, O LORD and in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice!*

See how greatly Christ rejoices, how full his heart is of gladness as he sees God's power put forth, and God's salvation accomplished among men.

[Psalms 21:2-3](#). *Thou hast given him his heart's desire, and hast, not with holden the request of his lips. Selah. For thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness:*

That is to say, "Thou goest before him," as you have seen, in pictures, some great conqueror preceded by those who strewn his path with roses, so has God strewn the pathway of Christ with innumerable blessings.

[Psalms 21:3](#). *Thou settest a crown of pure gold on his head.*

Is he not of royal race? Has he not achieved a mighty conquest? Is he not King of kings and Lord of lords?

[Psalms 21:4](#). *He asked life of thee, and thou gavest it him, even length of days for ever and ever.*

"Thou gavest him a resurrection from the dead as our Mediator, and as such he lives."

[Psalms 21:5](#). *His glory is great in thy salvation:*

It is the distinguishing mark of God's salvation that Christ's glory is great in it. In the beginning, and the middle, and the end of it, everywhere you see the name of Jesus written large in letters of light. In his salvation, the Father has glorified his Son.

[Psalms 21:5-8](#). *Honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him. For thou hast made him most blessed for ever: thou hast made him exceeding glad with thy countenance. For the king trusteth in the LORD, and through the mercy of the most High he shall not be moved. Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies:*

That very hand that was nailed to the tree shall find out all the adversaries of the cross.

[Psalms 21:8](#). *Thy right hand shall fall out those that hate thee.*

"Hide wherever they may, thou wilt find them out. They may stand in the high places, and defy thee; but thou wilt hurl them down."

[Psalms 21:9](#). *Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger:*

"Not only shall they be cast into the fire, but they shall themselves be as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger. They shall torment themselves, and shall be their own destruction."

[Psalms 21:9-11](#). *The LORD shall swallow them up in his wrath, and the fire shall devour them. Their fruit shalt thou destroy from the earth, and their seed from among the children of men. For they intended evil against thee: they imagined a mischievous device, which they are not able to perform.*

But that did not diminish their sin. When a man has devised an evil tiring,

even if he cannot carry it out, he is guilty of it.

[Psalms 21:12](#). *Therefore shalt thou make them turn their back, when thou shalt make ready thine arrows upon thy strings against the face of them.*

As if God would single out the enemies of Christ to be targets for his arrows, and fill them with the darts of his displeasure; who would wish to be in such a plight as this?

[Psalms 21:13](#). *Be thou exalted, LORD, in thine own strength: so will we sing and praise thy power*

This exposition consisted of readings from PSALMS 20. and 21.

[PSALMS CONTENTS](#)

PSALM 22

Verses 1-9

[Psalms 22:1](#). *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*

What a dolorous cry! How terrible it must have been to have heard that cry, but how much more terrible to have uttered it! For the dear Son of God, the Well-beloved, with whom the Father is always pleased, to be forsaken of his God, was indeed grief unfathomable.

[Psalms 22:1](#). *Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?*

It seems as if the Saviour's voice, and almost his mind, had failed him, for he calls his prayer "roaring" likening himself to a wounded beast. When any of you cannot pray, or think you cannot, remember these words of your Lord. If he, the ever-blessed Son of God, speaks of his own prayer as a "roaring", what must ours be! You know that Isaiah spoke of his own prayer as being like the chattering of a crane or a swallow, or the mourning of a dove, as if there were no articulate utterance about it; but to the ear and eye

of God, there is music in a sigh, and beauty in a tear. As our Lord had to pray like this, do not wonder if we, sometimes, should feel that God has forsaken us. If there were such dark clouds for Christ there may well be some for us also.

[Psalms 22:2](#). *O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent.*

If we remember Gethsemane, and think how Jesus prayed there, even to an agony and a bloody sweat, shall we wonder if, sometime, our prayers seem to be put on one side, and we do not immediately receive answers of peace to them? Yet, you see, our Lord kept on crying to God both day and night.

[Psalms 22:3](#). *But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.*

Settle it in your hearts that, whatever God does, he is holy. Never harbour a thought against his, never imagine that he is hard, or unjust, or unfaithful.

That cannot be, so, if the worst comes to the worst, never let your faith have any question upon this point.

[Psalms 22:4-5](#). *Our fathers trusted in thee; they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded.*

Look back, and see how God helped our ancestors. Recall how, in the past ages, the Lord always was the Deliverer of all those that trusted in him. Was a righteous man ever finally forsaken of God? Since the world began, has not the Lord, sooner or later, appeared to deliver his children? It is wonderful to hear our Divine Master pleading in this fashion; but most wonderful of all is that next verse: —

[Psalms 22:6](#). *But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.*

There is a little red worm which seems to be nothing else but blood when it is crushed, it seems all gone except a blood-stain; and the Saviour, in the deep humiliation of his spirit, compares himself to that little red worm. How true it is that “he made himself of no reputation” for our sakes! He emptied himself of all his glory; and if there be any glory natural to manhood, he emptied himself even of that. Not only the glories of his Godhead, but the honours of his manhood he laid aside that it might be seen that, “though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor.”

[Psalms 22:7-8](#). *All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head saying, He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.*

Or, as the passage is quoted in Matthew, “Let him deliver him now, if he will have him.”

[Psalms 22:9](#). *But thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother’s breasts.*

This is a very wonderful thing. I do not think we remember as we ought that, for years after our birth, we could do nothing to help ourselves, yet we were taken care of even then. He who has passed safely through his infancy need not be afraid that God will not help him through the rest of his life, and if we should live so long that we to a second infancy, the God who carried us through the first will carry us through the second. He has already done so much for us that we are bound to trust him for all the future. Now let us see, as I reminded you just now, how this passage is referred to in the Gospel according to Matthew.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Psalms 22:1-9](#); and [Matthew 27:33-44](#).

Verses 1-31

Stand and look up at Christ upon the cross, and look upon these words, as his. He himself is the best exposition of this wondrous psalm.

[Psalms 22:1-2](#). *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent.*

Gethsemane!—there is the key—a prayer unanswered at that time: “If it be possible, let this cup pass from me.” It was not possible. He must drink it. “In the night season I am not silent.”

[Psalms 22:3](#). *But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.*

No hard thoughts of God, even when he was forsaken. A forsaken Christ still clings to the Father, and ascribes perfect holiness to him.

[Psalms 22:4-6](#). *Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded. But I am a worm, and no man: a reproach of men, and despised of the people.*

How low did Christ descend for our sakes not only low as man, but lower still! Never was godly man forsaken of God, and yet Jesus was; so he is lower than we are while he hangs upon the tree “a reproach of men, and despised of the people.”

[Psalms 22:7-8](#). *All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him, let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.*

Was not this just what they said at the cross? Ah, little did they know that he saved others; himself he could not save, because a matchless love held his hands there, as with diamond rivets.

[Psalms 22:9-10](#). *But thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts. I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother's belly.*

He remembers his wonderful birth. He was God's, indeed, from the very first.

[Psalms 22:11](#). *Be not far from me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help. They have all gone. Peter and all the rest have fled. There is none to help.*

And there stand the Scribes and Pharisees, and the great men of the nation.

[Psalms 22:12-14](#). *Many bulls have compassed me; strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round. They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion. I am poured out like water,*

All dissolved—nothing could hold together—quite spent and gone.

[Psalms 22:14](#). *And all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax:*

He felt the inward sinking fever brought on him by the wounds he had upon the cross. “My heart is like wax.”

[Psalms 22:14-16](#). *It is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd: and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws: and thou hast brought me into the dust of death. For dogs have compassed me:*

There they are—the cruel multitude—thrusting out the tongue and hooting at him. “For dogs have compassed me.”

[Psalms 22:16](#). *The assembly of the wicked have inclosed me:*

The hind of the morning is now surrounded by the dogs. He cannot escape.

[Psalms 22:16-17](#). *They pierced my hands and my feet. I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me.*

Horrible, to the tender, modest soul of Jesus, were those vile stares of the ribald multitude as they gazed upon him.

[Psalms 22:18-22](#). *They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture. But be not thou far from me, O LORD: O my strength, haste thee to help me. Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog. Save me from the lion's mouth: for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns. I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.*

The sun that was darkened, now shines again.

The Saviour's griefs are o'er.

A calm is spread over his mind. He is about to say, "It is finished!" and his heart is comforted. We leave that passage there.

[PSALMS CONTENTS](#)

PSALM 23

Verses 1-6

I hope we all know this Psalm by heart, may we also know it by heart-experience! It is a sweet pastoral song just suited to our Sabbath evening worship. There is here no din of arms, no noise of war; but there is a delicious hush, only broken by the gentle tinkling of the sheep-bell. God give us that sweet rest tonight!

[Psalms 23:1](#). *The LORD is my shepherd;*

All true rest begins with Jesus, as all the comfort of the sheep is provided for their by their shepherd.

"The Lord is my shepherd." Is it so? Canst thou look up, poor defenseless sheep, and say, "The Lord is my shepherd"? Then comes the blessed inference: —

[Psalms 23:1](#). *I shall not want.*

I do not want, I cannot want; I never shall want with such a Shepherd as I have. He will provide for me; nay, more, God himself is my provision. All I need I have, for "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." I cannot provide for myself, but I shall not want. Famine may come, and others who have no God to go to, may pine and perish, but in the worst season I shall not want, for "The Lord is my shepherd."

[Psalms 23:2](#). *He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:*

I am so weak that I even need God's help to enable me to lie down, but "He maketh me to lie down." Yes, the rest of the soul is so hard to attain that nobody ever does reach it except by the power of God. He who made the heavens must make us to lie down if we are really to rest. What delightful rest it is when we lie down in his pastures, which are always green! Did you ever find them dry? Our Shepherd makes us not only to feed, but so to feed that we lie down in the midst of the pastures. There is more than we can eat, so the Lord makes a couch of it for us: "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:"

[Psalms 23:2](#). *He leadeth me beside the still waters.*

There is, first, contemplation: "He maketh me to lie down." Then there is activity. "He leadeth me." There is also progress, and there is provision for our advance in the heavenly way: "He leadeth me." He leadeth me beside the waters of quietness, not by the rushing torrents of excitement, nor by the place of noisy strife. "He shall not strive, nor cry, neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets." "He leadeth me beside the still waters." Not, he drives, or drags; but he himself leads, going first to show the way. It is for me to follow, happily to follow, where "He leadeth me beside the still waters."

[Psalms 23:3](#). *He restoreth my soul:*

He can do it at once. He restoreth now. He is a restoring God. "He restoreth my soul." He brings my wandering spirit back when I forsake his ways; and having done that, he leads me, even more carefully than before, for a second time we have the psalmist's declaration, "He leadeth me."

[Psalms 23:3-4](#). *He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil:*

Though death's shadow hovers all around me, and damps my spirit, though I feel as though I must die, and cannot bear up under present trial any longer, "Yea, though I walk," for I do walk I will not quicken my pace, I will not be in a flurry, I will not run for it. Though death itself shall overshadow me, I will keep up my walk with God. Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." There is none, therefore I will not fear any. We often feel more afraid through our fear itself than through any real cause for fear. Some people seem to be ever on the lookout for fear where there is none. Do not you see any, nor let any enter your heart; gay with the psalmist, "I will fear no evil:" —

[Psalms 23:4](#). *For thou art with me;*

Should a sheep fear when the shepherd is with it? What cause has it to fear if that Shepherd is omniscient, omnipotent, and full of tenderness?

[Psalms 23:4](#). *Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.*

Thy rule and thy correction: thy rod, with which I sometimes am made to smart; thy staff, with which I am supported. These are my comforts; why should I fear? Are you drinking in all this precious truth, dear friends? Are you feeling it in your soul's deepest experience? This Psalm is very good to read, but it is far better to write out from your own experience. Make it a song of your own; not merely a song in the Book, but a song for yourselves.

[Psalms 23:5](#). *Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies:*

There is a fight going on, and there are enemies all around. You do not generally have tables set in the hour of battle; but God keeps his people so calm amid the bewildering cry, so confident of victory, that even in the presence of their enemies a table is spread with all the state of a royal banquet. "Thou preparest a table." There is a doth on the table, there are the ornaments on it, and there are all the accompaniments of a feast: "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies." They may look on if they like; they may grin, they may wish they could devour, but they cannot sit down at the table, and they cannot prevent me from sitting down at it. Let them blow their trumpets, let them fire their guns: "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies." It is the very acme of security and repose that is here described. I know of no expression, not even that of lying down in green pastures, that is more full of restfulness than this: "Thou preparest table before me in the presence of mine enemies."

[Psalms 23:5](#). *Thou anointest my head with oil;*

At some feasts, they poured perfumed unguents on the heads of the guests, so God will leave out nothing that is for the joy and comfort of his people. "Thou anointest my head with oil." You shall have delicacies as well as necessities; you shall have joy as well as safety; you shall be prepared for service as well as preserved from destruction.

[Psalms 23:5](#). *My cup runneth over.*

I have not only what I wish, but I have more; not only all I can hold, but something to spare: "My cup runneth over." If this is the case with your cup, dear friend, let it run over in thankful joy, and if you have more of this

world's substance than you need, ask the poor and needy to come and catch that which flows over.

[Psalms 23:6](#). *Surely* —

This is another of the psalmist's inferences, and a very sure one. He does not say, "Peradventure," but, "Surely"

[Psalms 23:6](#). *Goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:*

Here is a prince of the blood royal of heaven attended by two body guards, — goodness and mercy, — which keep close behind him. These are the grooms that ride on the horses of salvation: "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me." "Goodness" — to provide for me; "mercy" — to blot out my sin. "Goodness and mercy shall follow me,"—not only now and then, but, "all the days of my life." When I get gray-headed and feeble, and have to lean heavily upon my staff, these twin angels shall be close behind to bear me up, and bear me through.

[Psalms 23:6](#). *And I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.*

Even while I am here in this world, I will be—"No more a stranger or a guest But like a child at home," dwelling with God; and by-and-by, in the fullest sense, "I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." I always compare this Psalm to a lark. It begins on the ground among the sheep, but up it goes till you may hear its blessed notes echoing among the stars: "I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." It has its nest in the grass of the green pastures; but it flies up like the strains of sweetest music rising even to the skies: "I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." God grant that this may be the portion of every one of us, for his great name's sake! Amen.

[PSALMS CONTENTS](#)

PSALM 24

Verses 1-10

[Psalms 24:1](#). *The earth is the LORD'S, and the fullness thereof,*

And therefore it is also the believer's. The real fullness of the earth belongs to the Christian. "The meek shall inherit the earth."

[Psalms 24:1-2](#). *The world, and they that dwell there in. For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods.*

So, child of God, you are in your Father's house even while you are down here on earth. Still, that question in the next verse is very suggestive. Albeit that the earth is the Lord's, yet we do not want to stop in it for ever.

[Psalms 24:3](#). *Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?*

This is the portion of the Lord's people to ascend the hill of the Zion that is above, to enter the New Jerusalem, and to stand in the immediate presence of God. But who shall ever be able to do that?

[Psalms 24:4-5](#). *He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully; he shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the blood of his salvation.*

The man who will go to heaven is the clean man, the man who has been washed from his sins in the blood of the Lamb; and he is clean just where he was most likely to be foul, he has "clean hands." Grace has enabled him to touch the things of the world without receiving a stain from them, and to touch holy things without defiling them. This expression — "clean hands" — refers to his outward life; but he is also clean inside, for he has "a pure heart." If a man were clean as to his actions, but not clean as to his motives, he would not be fit to enter heaven, but the man described here is a true man. He has not followed after vanity, neither has he uttered a lie, but he has followed the truth, and he has spoken the truth. He is the man whom God will bless, but he has no righteousness of his own, so we read that "he shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation." So he needed to be saved, and he needed a righteousness better than his own, and this God will give him.

[Psalms 24:6](#). *This is the generation of them that seek him, that see thy face, O Jacob. Selah.*

It is a wonderful thing that Jesus Christ should take his people's name but he does. He gives his Church his own name in that remarkable passage in [Jeremiah 33:16](#), "This is the name wherewith she shall be called The Lord our righteousness;" and now, to make the union complete, he takes her name as his own, and Christ is here called Jacob.

[Psalms 24:7-10](#). *Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates, even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory. Selah.*

Now, if Christ is our Shepherd in the meadows down here where he makes us to lie down in the green pastures of his grace, he will also be our Shepherd in the heavenly pastures up there on the hill-tops of glory, where the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed us, and shall lead us unto living fountains of waters, and we shall delight for ever to “follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.”

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 23, 24.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 25

Verses 1-22

[Psalm 25:1](#). *Unto thee, O LORD, do I lift up my soul.*

It is down; and I would fain lift it up; yet I am powerless to do so if I am left to myself. When the soul cleaves to the earth, who but God can lift it up? Yet it must be our desire and object to seek to lift up our soul unto God.

[Psalm 25:2](#). *O my God, I trust in thee: let me not be ashamed, let not mine enemies triumph over me.*

Whatever happens to me, I trust in thee. Down goes the anchor; that ship will never drift far out to sea. “O my God, I trust in thee.” Can you say that, dear friends? Then, if you are in the dark, you are as safe as if you were in the light, for still this anchor holds: “O my God, I trust in thee.” “Let not mine enemies triumph over me.” They will do so, if they can get me back into the world. If they can seduce me from the paths of holiness, what shouts of joy there will be in the camp of the enemy! “Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe.”

[Psalm 25:3](#). *Yea, let none that wait on thee be ashamed: let them be ashamed which transgress without cause.*

When good men are in earnest on their own account, they soon begin to pray for others; and the evil which they dread for themselves, they are sure to dread for their brethren. David first prayed, “Let me not be ashamed;” and then he added, “Let none that wait on thee be ashamed.” The only shame that is worth having is a blessed shame,— the shame of true repentance, which sorrows over past sin, of which it is ashamed. Alas!

there will be an eternal shame, which shall cover those who choose the ways of sin.

[Psalms 25:4](#). *Shew me thy ways, O LORD teach me thy paths.*

That is the prayer of one who is tigh of the Spirit, for, by nature, our desire is to have our own way; and if we can have our own way, we are satisfied. But when the Lord has taught us better, our prayer is, “Shew me thy ways, O Lord; teach me thy paths.”

[Psalms 25:5](#). *Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day.*

We need not only to have the path shown to us, but to be led into it, for we are like babes just learning to walk, we must have a finger that we may hold, or a hand that we may lean upon: “Lead me in thy truth, and teach me.” That is the second time that David has prayed for the Lord to teach him; and as long as we are here, we also shall each one need to pray, Teach me. What is a disciple but as learner? His daily cry must be, “Teach me: for thou art the God. of my salvation.” There is another grip of the hand of faith. I have taken thee to be my salvation, O my God! I trust nowhere else, “On thee do I wait all the day,” expecting everything from thee,—tarrying thy leisure, but tarrying hopefully, expecting to be blessed.

[Psalms 25:6](#). *Remember, O LORD, thy tender mercies and thy lovingkindnesses; for they have been ever of old.*

Thy saints knew them before I was born, and I have known them since I have been born again. By the constancy of thy kindness to me hitherto, continue still to bless me, for art thou not an unchanging God?

[Psalms 25:7](#). *Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to thy mercy remember thou me for thy goodness’ sake, O LORD.*

In this verse and the preceding one, there are three “remembers”— erst, that God would remember his tender mercies and his lovingkindnesses; next, that he would not remember our sins and our transgressions; and, then, that he would remember us according to his mercy and goodness.

This last request may remind us of the prayer of the dying thief, “Lord, remember me;” and it may serve for us as a repenting prayer: “According to thy mercy remember thou me for thy goodness’ sake, O Lord.”

[Psalms 25:8](#). *Good and upright is the LORD: therefore will he teach sinners in the way.*

If good men endeavor to make others good, much more will the good God do so. A good man will seek to lead sinners in the right way; and, much more will our good Saviour, and God, and Helper do so. Only let us be willing to be taught, and come to him confessing our ignorance, and.

asking to be led and instructed. This Psalm, you see, dear friends, is all about teaching; and as David needed instruction, so also do we. The next verse deals with the same subject:

[Psalms 25:9](#). *The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way.*

Not the proud man, but the meek,— the learners,— the teachable ones; those who, like little children, are willing to believe what they are told upon true authority. Oh, that we all may be among the meek! The tender-mouthed horse is easy to drive; but some people are so stubborn and obstinate that they are “as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle.” Oh, that we were sensitive to the slightest touch of the divine hand, and always ready and anxious to be instructed by the Lord.

[Psalms 25:10](#). *All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies.*

Do you believe that, you who have been sorely tried? If you are resting in covenant love, and find your hope in covenant blood and covenant promises, you must believe that everything God does to you is done in mercy and truth. Ay, though he strikes till every blow of the rod leaves a blue wound behind, yet we rejoice in these tokens of his fatherly love and desire for our highest good, for he has said, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.” The word “love” in that passage conveys the idea of a very tender and ardent affection.

[Psalms 25:11](#). *For thy name’s sake, O LORD, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great.*

Those who are not taught of God pray very differently from that, for their prayer is, “O Lord, pardon mine iniquity, for it is little;” but he who is graciously instructed confesses the greatness of his guilt, and out of that he draws a plea for mercy, for is not God a great God, and is it not greatly to his glory to pardon great sinners; and when they are pardoned, are they not filled with a great love, and a great zeal, so that they are greatly serviceable to their Lord and toaster?

[Psalms 25:12](#). *What man is he that feareth the LORD? him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose.*

True reverence for God, a holy fear of him, is a quality that God delights to see; and wherever he finds it, there he gives further instruction.

[Psalms 25:13](#). *His soul shall dwell at ease; and his seed shall inherit the earth.*

The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant.

Are you one of those trembling ones who fear to offend God? Well, I daresay that you sometimes envy those who are very boisterous in their joy. Do not envy them; you have something better in having that holy, filial fear that trembles at God's Word; and you shall have the secret of the Lord with you, and he will show you his covenant.

[Psalms 25:14-15](#) *The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant. Ine eyes are eyes toward the LORD for he shall pluck my feet out of the net.*

When they get into it, he will pluck them out of it. When Satan seems to cast a net over me, God will come and pull me out. There is force in that word "pluck"— denoting swiftness and energy; perhaps, also, there is a little idea of roughness, but God's roughness is true tenderness.

[Psalms 25:16](#). *Turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me; for I am desolate and afflicted.*

If you pass that dish round, there are some who will not help themselves from it, for they are not "desolate and afflicted." But I know that there are some, even here, who are both "desolate and afflicted." Be sure, dear friends, that you make this prier your own: "Turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me; for I am desolate and afflicted."

[Psalms 25:17-18](#). *The troubles of my heart are enlarged: O bring thou me out of any distresses. Look upon mine affliction and my pain;*

And what follows? "Take the affliction and the pain away"? No.

[Psalms 25:18](#). *And forgive all my sins.*

David will be quite content if God will but look with pitying eyes upon his sufferings; but, as for his sins, he must be clean rid of them, he cannot be happy until he has the answer to this petition, "Forgive all my sins."

[Psalms 25:19](#). *Consider mine enemies; for they are many; and they hate me with cruel hatred.*

The better the man, the more bitterly is he hated by the ungodly. It is not by holiness that you will escape the hatred of the world, it is by that very thing that you will arouse its malice. Do not wish to have it otherwise; but remember your Lord's own words, "Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets." But,

“Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man’s sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets.” If we live near to God, and are truly the seed of the woman, the seed of the serpent will be constantly nibbling at our heel; some little viper or other will be sure to be there. As the great serpent seeks to do us injury, so will his seed.

[Psalms 25:20](#). *O keep my soul, and deliver me: let me not be ashamed; for I put my trust in thee.*

Do you notice how David gets back to his key-note? Almost at the beginning of the Psalm, he said, “O my God, I trust in thee;” now he says “I put my trust in thee.” Let faith in God be the key-note of your life-psalm.

At another time, David wrote, “Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.” That is the motto for all Christians,—“Trust, trust, TRUST.” When there is nothing to be seen, when you are in thick Egyptian darkness, let Job’s confident declaration be the resolve of your spirit, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.”

[Psalms 25:21](#). *Let integrity and uprightness preserve me; for I wait on thee.*

The child of God cannot hope to pass through the world safely unless he is careful to keep his integrity and his uprightness. There are some who profess to be Christians, who try to get on in trade by various tricks, and they hope to win the favor of men by just bending a little to their ways. Never do so, beloved; if you give way an inch, you will have to give way a yard or a mile before long.

[Psalms 25:22](#). *Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles.*

God did so to Israel himself. Jacob, whose name was also Israel, said, “All these things are against me;” yet God redeemed him out of his troubles; and so will the Lord do for all his people in due time, glory be unto his name, world without end! Amen.

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PSALM 26

Verses 1-12

No doubt this Psalm was written by David when his cruel persecutor Saul, the more effectually to stab at him, spread false reports concerning his character. When the wicked can use no other weapons, they always have their quivers full of slanderous reports. Let us learn here that the best of men must expect to be misrepresented, and to have the worst of crimes laid to their charge. Let us learn, also, from the example of David, to carry our case to the highest court at once, not to meddle with the lower courts of earth, but to go at once to the Court of King's Bench in heaven, and there plead our cause before the eternal throne.

[Psalms 26:1](#). *Judge me, O LORD*

As if he turned away from all other judges, bribed and false as they had proved themselves to be in his ease, and put himself on trial before God: "Judge me, O Lord; "-

[Psalms 26:1](#). *For I have walked in mine integrity: I have trusted also in the LORD therefore I shall not slide.*

He pleads two things: first, the outward life and second, the inward faith, which, as it is the main-spring and source of the outer life of integrity, is also the more important of the two. Remark, that as the case is between himself and his accusers he pleads his life, for though we are justified before God by faith and not by works, yet before men we must be justified by our works, rather than by our faith. It is in vain for me to plead my faith when I am slandered. The only answer that can effectually shut the mouth of the adversary, is to point to a blameless life. Hence in this case he not only brings his faith before his God, but he also brings the fruit of his faith. Note, the inference which he draws from God's mercy to him in enabling him to walk uprightly and to trust him-" therefore I shall not slide." He rests for the future upon his God. His position was slippery, his enemies were always busy trying to trip up his heels, but saith he-" I shall not slide."

[Psalms 26:2](#). *Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart.*

This is a wonderful verse. One would hardly dare to pray it. Here are three kinds of trial. According to the etymology of the Hebrew the first is the trial by touch-" Examine me "; the next is the trial by smell- " Prove me "; and the next is the trial by fire-" Assay my reins and my heart." You see how anxious he is really to have the matter decided by God. "Lord, search me through and through; thou knowest I am not a hypocrite." Now who dares to say this but that true man of God whose soul is wholly fixed upon

the Lord? The reins and the heart are mentioned because those were believed to be the seat of the affections, and when the affections are right the whole man is right. The heart is the fountain from which issue streams of life, and if the fountain be pure, the streams cannot be impure; hence he asks chiefly that the examination may be directed to his reins and to his heart.

[Psalms 26:3](#). *For thy lovingkindness is before mine eyes:-*

Right straight before his eyes, he had God's lovingkindness. Some people appear to have their miseries, their sorrows, their sins, before their eyes but happy is that believer who always has God's lovingkindness before him! Come, my brother, forget for a little while the burden of your business cares; now for a little season let the sickness that is in your house be left in the hand of your God, and let his lovingkindness be before your eyes. Lovingkindness-pull the word to pieces. Remember the ancientness of it, the constancy of it, the variety of ways in which it shows itself, and the lavish bounties which it bestows upon you. Do not turn your back to God's goodness, but now, right straight before you set the lovingkindness of your God.

[Psalms 26:3](#). *And I have walked in thy truth.*

By which he may mean two things, first that he endeavored to hold fast to truth both in doctrine and in practice; or, secondly, that by God's truthfulness in giving him the promised grace, he had been enabled to walk uprightly.

[Psalms 26:4](#). *I have not sat with vain persons,-*

I never took counsel with them; they never were my choice companions.

[Psalms 26:4](#). *Neither will I go in with dissemblers.*

He makes a vow for the future that all crafty, lying, and foolish men shall never have his companionship.

[Psalms 26:5](#). *I have hated the congregation of evil doers, and will not sit with the wicked.*

By which he does not mean that he does not associate with them in any way for we must needs go out of the world if we will not have communion with sinners; but he means that he did not seek their company, found no pleasure in it, and never went in it to abet them in their evil deeds.

[Psalms 26:6](#). *I will wash mine hands in innocency:*

Pilate did this, but alas! the water was very dirty in which he washed his hands. This was an old Jewish rite when a man was found murdered; if the

people in the valley in which he was found would be free from the crime of murder they took a heifer, slew it, and then washed their hands in water over the head of the victim. They were then clear. So here he says- “ I will wash mine hands in innocency: “

[Psalms 26:6](#). *So will I compass thine altar, O LORD:*

He is innocent far as men are concerned, but he still confesses that he is a sinner, for he goes to God’s altar. Perfect men need no altars. It is the sinner that needs a sacrifice. So let the saint ever know that though he can plead innocency against the charges of men yet before God, his hope lies in the blood-besprinkled altar of which Jesus Christ is the great High Priest.

[Psalms 26:7-8](#). *That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all thy wondrous works. LORD, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth.*

I am sure many of us can say this, that when the Sabbath comes round, it is the best day of all the week, and that hour in the week-night when we can get to the house of God-what an inexpressible relief is that! It is to us like a green oasis in the midst of the sandy desert. There are no beauties in nature and no changes to be perceived in traveling that I think can ever compensate for the loss of the constant means of grace, after all God’s house is the fairest spot of earth. Zion, I will prefer thee above my chief joy! If I forget thee let my right hand forget her cunning. “I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where shine honour dwelleth.”

[Psalms 26:9-10](#). *Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men: in whose hands is mischief, and their right hand is full of bribes.*

See, he so loves God’s house that he cannot bear the thought of being shut in with sinners; and this is our comfort, that if we have loved God’s house on earth we shall dwell in his house for ever.

[Psalms 26:11](#). *But as for me, I will walk in mine integrity: redeem me, and be merciful unto me.*

See again, my beloved, how in the Christian’s practice good works and faith are seen happily blended. He declares that he will walk in his integrity, but still, still note, he prays as one that is conscious of a thousand imperfections-“Redeem me and be merciful unto me.” We do rest on Christ alone, but still we desire to walk in holiness with as much exactness as though our salvation depended upon our good works.

[Psalms 26:12](#). *My foot standeth in an even place: in the congregations will I bless the LORD.*

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PSALM 27

Verses 1-14

Very much of the language of David used here, I trust, we can make our own. May the Spirit of God lead us to understand, by experience, what he has written.

[Psalms 27:1](#). *The LORD is my light and my salvation;*

I find no comfort anywhere else but in him, and expect salvation from none but himself. “The Lord is my light and my salvation.”

[Psalms 27:1](#). *Whom shall I fear! the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid!*

Who can stand against him? What strength can resist his strength? What darkness can baffle his light? What foes can prevent his salvation?

[Psalms 27:2](#). *When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell.*

“They wanted to destroy me altogether — to eat me right up.” If they did not destroy me, it was not from want of heart to do it, nor even from want of power, for there were many of them. But I had not to fight, for they fell before they reached me. “They stumbled and fell.”

[Psalms 27:3](#). *Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident.*

Let them come on. They fell before: they will fall again. Let them come on. God was strong enough to meet them and overthrow them once. He will do it again. Therefore, why should we fear? Ah! dear brethren, those that have had the most experience of the divine fullness will rest most confident that nothing can harm them.

[Psalms 27:4](#). *One thing have I desired of the LORD that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple.*

He only wished to be always like a child at home — live in God’s house — no temporal structure; but wherever he was he wished to feel that he was near to God — that all places were the mansions of the great Father, so that

he might always have his eye fixed upon the beauty of the Lord, and his ear always open to listen to the voice of the Lord. Ah! if we can once get ourselves wholly given up to God, it will take our thoughts off the various oppositions we can meet with, and we shall no more be afraid.

[Psalms 27:5-6](#). *For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock. And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the LORD.*

It is a blessed resolution, not always easily carried out, but still it ought to be. Our life ought to be singing. It used to be sinning: it ought now to be singing, since the sin has been put away. Oh! happy are the men that know their God. If the whole world lye full of storms, yet may they rest in peace. Get near to God: acquaint thyself with him, and be at peace. The remedy for all trouble is dwelling near to God.

[Psalms 27:7-8](#). *Hear, O LORD. when I cry with my voice: have mercy also upon me, and answer me. When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, LORD will I seek.*

Are we always mindful of divine monitions? When the still small voice in the heart says, “Seek ye my face,” brothers and sisters, do we always at once respond and say, “Thy face, Lord, will I seek”? I am afraid we are often as the horse and the mule, which have no understanding, and need to have the bit, and the bridle, and the rod. But happy are those who have a sensitive nature — quickly feel the movements of the Spirit of God.

[Psalms 27:9-10](#). *Hide not thy face far from me; put not thy servant away in anger: thou hast been my help: leave me not, neither forsake me. O God of my salvation. When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up.*

He prayed, you see, and it looked a little unbelieving when he said, “Leave me not, neither forsake me.” But it was not so, for at once he confessed that he did not think that God would leave him, even when our father and mother, who are the last to leave us, should do so. “Then the Lord will take me up.”

[Psalms 27:11-14](#). *Teach me thy way, O LORD, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies. Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies: for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty. I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the*

LORD in the land of the living. Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say on the LORD.

I suppose he meant that last sentence to be his own personal recommendation, derived from his own experience. “Wait, I say, on the Lord.” He had tried it — proved its wonderful power — as the restorative to his heart, and so he says, “Wait, I say, on the Lord.”

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PSALM 28

Verses 1-6

Psalms 28:1. Unto thee will I cry, O LORD my rock: be not silent to me: lest, if thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit.

Oh! if God did not hear prayer, we should become like dead men — ay, like lost men. Our fall or despair would be terrible indeed. “Lest, if thou be silent to me, I become Like them that go down into the pit.”

Psalms 28:2. Hear the voice of my supplications, when I cry unto thee, when I lift up my hands toward thy holy oracle.

Is that the way you pray, dear friend? I know there are some that, if they have uttered certain good words — got through a form of prayer — are perfectly satisfied. As to whether God hears them or not, that does not trouble them. But if you are a true child of God, it will be your main thought in prayer, “Will he hear me? Will he hear me? Will he answer me.” And you will think nothing of a prayer at all unless you have the comfortable, believing persuasion that yore’ prayer has reached the ear and heart of God. Oh! believe us, for some of us do know, by experience, that prayer is a real thing. It is no repetition of words. It really is the heart speaking into the ear of God; and God does graciously respond when prayer is truly offered.

Psalms 28:3. Draw me not away with the wicked, and with the workers of iniquity, which speak peace to their neighbours, but mischief is in their hearts.

We are often afraid lest we should get numbered with them.

“Oh! were it not for grace divine,
Their fate so dreadful had been mine.”

“Gather not my soul with sinners,” is the prayer of many a godly man. When he looks within and sees the sin that is there, and what he deserves from the hand of God, apart from the blood and righteousness of Christ, he begins, indeed, to pray, “Draw me not away with the wicked. O Lord, do not let me wander into doctrinal error or into errors of life, or into laxity of behavior, or into backslidings, but keep me fast, for unless thou hold me fast: —

“I feel I must, I shall, decline,
And prove like them at last.’
Draw me not away with the wicked.”

Psalms 28:4. Give them according to their deeds, and according to the wickedness of their endeavors: give them after the work of their hands; render to them their desert.

And a just mind feels that such ought to be the case. God is a judge, and he will punish sin, and gracious men do not wish that it should be otherwise. Even to that terrible side of God’s character, which is seen in his vengeance upon the ungodly, the Christian trains the loving eye. He is not reconciled to half a God, or to a God with half the attributes of God, namely, love and tenderness: but he loves God as he finds him. He loves that. God who is a consuming fire. I should be afraid if I could not love God under any aspect in which he is presented to me, because just as I should feel that I did not love a man truly if I said, “In such a character I cannot endure him,” I should feel that there was some difference between him and me. We must love God in every character — upon the throne of justice, as well as upon the seat of love.

Psalms 28:5-6. Because they regard not the works of the LORD, nor the operation of his hands, he shall destroy them, and not build them up. Blessed be the LORD, because he hath heard the voice of my supplications.

Can you say this? Excuse me putting the question again and again to all now present, for it is a very vital question. If you never knew what answered prayer means, God help you to begin to pray, “Blessed be the Lord, because he hath heard the voice of my supplications.”

This exposition consisted of readings from Colossians 3; Colossians 4:1-4. Psalms 28:1-6.

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Psalm Chapter 29

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

PSALM 30

Verses 1-12

May the Holy Spirit, who inspired the writer of this Psalm, now lead us into its inner meaning! It is entitled “A Psalm and Song at the dedication of the house of David; “or, rather, “A Psalm; a song of dedication for the House. By David.” It was a song of faith, since David did not live to witness the dedication of the temple, for which he had planned in his heart, and for which he had laid by in store. Though he knew that he would not be permitted by God to build it, he took delight in writing a Psalm which might be sung at the opening of the temple. Thus it begins: —

[Psalms 30:1](#). *I will extol thee, O LORD for thou hast lifted me up, and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me.*

“I will exalt thee, for thou hast exalted me. I will lift up thy praise, because thou hast lifted up my spirits. I will bless thee, for thou hast blessed me,” Our song of praise should be the echo of God’s voice of love. “Thou hast not made my foes to rejoice over me.” You remember that this was one of the three things put to David as a chastisement for his great sin in numbering the people: “Wilt thou flee three months before thine enemies, while they pursue thee? “He here praises the Lord that such calamity as that did not come upon him.” Thou hast not made my foes to rejoice over me.” Sorrows averted should be the occasion of grateful songs of thanksgiving.

[Psalms 30:2](#). *O LORD my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me.*

The king and the people had been sorely smitten with darkness on account of his sin, but the Lord, in mercy, bade the destroying angel sheathe his sword when he “was by the threshing-place of Araunah the Jebusite,” — the very place which afterwards became the site on which the temple was built. It was well, therefore, at its opening, to praise the God who heals his people. We ought to praise the Lord more than we do for our recovery from sickness. Employ the physician if you will, but, when healing comes to you, magnify the Lord for it, and ascribe the glory of it to his holy name.

[Psalms 30:3](#). *O LORD, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave: thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit.*

Here is a double mercy to sing of, — not dead, and not damned. Life spared is something for which to praise the Lord, but to have the soul saved from going down to the pit is a cause of still greater thanksgiving. Oh praise the name of the Lord, ye who love him, and trust in him, for he has delivered you from going down into the pit!

[Psalms 30:4](#). *Sing unto the LORD, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.*

David seems to say to the saints, “Do not let me sing alone, but all of you join in the chorus.” He does not invite reprobates to praise the Lord, but he says, “Sing unto Jehovah. O ye saints of his.” I think it is very wrong to have the praises of God sung in public by ungodly men and women, as there sometimes are; the singing should not be left to a godless choir. Oh, no; “sing unto the Lord, all ye saints of his,” for you only can sing sincerely unto him. “Give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness,” — at the very memory of him; at the remembrance of the whole of him, for that is his holiness, his wholeness, the entire, perfect character of God. O saints below, sing as they do in heaven, for their song is “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty.

[Psalms 30:5](#). *For his anger endureth but a moment;*

Notice that the words “endureth but” are inserted by the translators, and very properly so; but see how the passages reads if you leave them out: “For his anger a moment,” That is long enough for him to display it, for it is his strange work; and long enough for us to endure it, for it might crush us if it lasted longer.

[Psalms 30:5](#). *In his favour is life:*

Life came to Jerusalem, in David’s day, as soon as God smiled upon it; and life comes to us as soon as we taste of his favor, even though we have been ready to die of despair.

[Psalms 30:5](#). *Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.*

As the dews are appropriate to the night, so is weeping seemly for us when Jesus hides his face from us. The children of the bride-chamber may well mourn when the heavenly Bridegroom is taken from them, but it is only for a night. Morning will end our mourning. Our night-sorrow is for the night, but our joys are for a day that will know no evening.

[Psalms 30:6](#). *And in my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved.*

It is a pity to say too much; very few people fall into the opposite fault of saying too little. It is always a pity to be counting with certainty upon the future, and presuming, because of the hopefulness of the present, that this state of things will last for ever David was not wise when he said, in his prosperity, “I shall never be moved.”

[Psalms 30:7](#). *LORD, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong: thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled.*

When God is at cross purposes with his people, they are troubled at once.

There is no need for blows, no need for angry words: “Thou didst hide thy face; and I was troubled.” That is enough for a child of God; let him but miss the light of God’s countenance, and it breaks him down at once.

[Psalms 30:8](#). *I cried to thee, O LORD and unto the LORD I made supplication.*

What should the child of God do, when he is in trouble, but cry? And to whom should he cry but to his Father?

[Psalms 30:9](#). *What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit? shall the dust praise thee? Shall it declare thy truth?*

So his prayer was an argument, and that is the very bone and sinew of prayer, — to reason and argue with God. He seems to put it thus, — “Lord, if I lose my soul, thou wilt be a loser, too, for thou wilt lose a singer out of thy choir, one who would be glad enough to praise thee, and whose very life it is to magnify thee. Oh, do not cut me down! When I am dead, when I am lost, there can be no praise to thee from me, so spare me, my gracious God?”

[Psalms 30:10](#). *Hear, O LORD, and have mercy upon me: LORD, be thou my helper.*

What a handy prayer this is, a prayer to carry about with you wherever you go! “Lord, be thou my Helper.” That is a minister’s prayer when he was going to preach. That is a Sunday-school teacher’s prayer when going to the class. Is not that a prayer for the sufferer when the pain upon him is very severe? “Lord, be thou my Helper.” Art thou working for him? Art thou cast down in soul? This prayer will suit thee: “Lord, be thou my Helper.”

[Psalms 30:11](#). *Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness.*

What a transformation scene in answer to prayer! Notice that David does not say, “I hope that thou hast,” but he puts it thus, “Thou hast — thou hast,” He is quite sure about it; and, being sure of this great mercy, he gives God all the glory of it. What a wonderful change it is! Not merely from mourning into peace, but into delight, — delight expressed by dancing; not merely from sackcloth into ordinary areas, but from the sackcloth of sorrow in the satin of gladness. God does nothing by halves; he not only chases away the night, and gives us twilight, but he goes on to gladden us with the full glory of noontide; and sell this he does with a, definite end and purpose:

[Psalms 30:12](#). *To the end that my glory-*

Or, “my tongue” —

[Psalms 30:12](#). *May sing praise to thee, and not be silent.*

God ought to have praise from us. It is the quit-rent which we pay as tenants to the great Lord of all; let us not rob him of his revenue.

[Psalms 30:12](#). *O LORD my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever.*

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PSALM 31

Verses 1-24

[Psalms 31:1](#). *In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust;*

This is a good beginning; this is the fulcrum which will give us the necessary leverage for lifting any weight of sorrow or trouble that may be burdening us: “In thee, O Jehovah, do I put my trust.” Can each of us truthfully say that to begin with? If so, we may go on with David to the petitions that follow: —

[Psalms 31:1](#). *Let me never be ashamed: deliver me in thy righteousness.*

It would be to us the shame of shames if God, in whom we put our trust, could fail us. Then, indeed, might the scoffers say, “Where is now their God?” and what should we then be able to say of the righteousness of God? He has pledged himself that he will never fail nor forsake anyone of his people; so, if he ever did fail them, what would become of his honour?

[Psalms 31:2](#). *Bow down thine ear to me;*

“Listen to me, O Lord! Stoop down out of thy glory to catch the faint accents of my sorrowing, almost expiring spirit.”

[Psalms 31:2](#). *Deliver me speedily:*

“My case is urgent, Lord, for I am in deep distress. Delay will be dangerous, and may be even fatal: ‘Deliver me speedily:’ “

[Psalms 31:2](#). *Be thou my strong rock, for an house of defense to save me.*

David was so accustomed to hide in the rocks of Engedi, and similar fastnesses, that we do not wonder that he found such a comparison as this come naturally to his mind: “Be thou my strong rock, for an house of defense to save me.”

[Psalms 31:3](#). *For thou art my rock and my fortress;*

Why did David just now pray God to be to him what he here says that God is? It was, surely, in order that he might know experimentally what he already knew doctrinally; he wanted the truth, in which he already believed, to be proven in his own experience, so he prayed to the Lord, “Be thou my strong rock, . . . for thou art my rock and my fortress;” —

[Psalms 31:3](#). *Therefore for thy name’s sake —*

“For thy glory’s sake, for thy honour’s sake,” —

[Psalms 31:3](#). *Lead me, and guide me.*

“Lead me, as a child needs to be led. Guide me, as a traveler in a foreign land needs to be guided. I need thee both to lead and to guide me.”

[Psalms 31:4](#). *Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me: for thou art my strength.*

Sometimes the believer gets so entangled that he sees no way of escape. He is caught like a bird in the fowler’s net, and he is so surrounded by it that he cries to the Lord, “Pull me out of the net.” He feels that he can only be delivered by the putting forth of God’s power, and that is the reason why he adds, “O Lord, use thy strength on my behalf; give a desperate tug, and pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me; for thou art my strength.”

[Psalms 31:5](#). *Into thine hand I commit my spirit:*

The dying words of Jesus may well be the living words of each one of his redeemed people. We ought continually to commit our spirit into our great Father’s hands, for there is no other place that can be so safe and blessed as between the strong, almighty, never-failing hands of the eternal God.

[Psalms 31:5](#). *Thou hast redeemed me, O LORD God of truth.*

Redemption is such a blessed ground for confidence in God. Even the ordinary redemptions, such as David had experienced when the Lord had

redeemed him out of the hand of his enemies, and redeemed him out of troubles of many kinds, were great sources of consolation to David; but what shall we say of that rich, full, free redemption which Christ accomplished for his people upon Calvary's cross? Think you that God will not keep those whom he has purchased with the blood of his own dear Son? Will he suffer those to perish who have cost him so dearly? Oh, no! none shall pluck them from his hand. This is a sound argument that David uses: "Into thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth."

[Psalms 31:6](#). *I have hated them that regard lying vanities:*

That is, those that trusted in their idol gods, which he calls by this contemptuous name, "lying vanities." David was not very respectful to false religions; he called them vanities and lies, and said, "I have hated them that regard them;"

[Psalms 31:6-7](#). *But I trust in the LORD. I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy: for thou hast considered my trouble; thou hast known my soul in adversities;*

" 'Thou hast considered my trouble;' — thou hast looked at it, weighed it, understood it." When a wise man gives his consideration to a thing, we respect his judgment; but what shall we say of the consideration of God? This is a wonderful expression: "Thou hast considered my trouble; thou hast known my soul in adversities." "When I hardly knew myself, and could not make out what I was or where I was, thou hast known all about me; and thou hast known me when I was in rags and tatters, when I was so down at the heel that nobody else would own me, thou didst not discard me: 'Thou has known my soul in adversities;' " —

[Psalms 31:8-10](#). *And hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy: thou hast set my feet in a large room. Have mercy upon me, O LORD, for I am in trouble: mine eye is consumed with grief, yea, my soul and my belly. For my life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing:*

That is better than spending our years in sinning; yet it is a painful experience when every breath seems to be drawn with a pang, and the effort to live is itself a struggle, as it is in certain trying diseases.

[Psalms 31:10-11](#). *My strength faileth because of mine iniquity, and my bones are consumed. I was a reproach among all mine enemies, but especially among my neighbours,*

They were the nearest to him, and therefore could smite him the most keenly.

[Psalms 31:11](#). *And a fear to mine acquaintance:*

They did not like to own him even as an acquaintance; they were afraid of him. Yet what a light this verse throws upon David's previous declaration, "Thou has known my soul in adversities"!

[Psalms 31:12](#). *I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind;*

The very man, in whose honour, in the former times, the women out of all the cities of Israel sang, "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands," now had sorrowfully to say, 'I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind.'

[Psalms 31:12](#). *I am like a broken vessel.*

"Men think me of no more value than a piece of broken crockery that is flung away on the dunghill as utterly useless."

[Psalms 31:13](#). *For I have heard the slander of many: fear was on every side:*

The very best of men have had to smart under the wounds caused by that cruel, accursed thing slander. No quality of purity, no degree of piety, can screen a man from the tongue of slander; in fact, as the birds peck most at the ripest fruit, it is often the best of men who are most slandered.

[Psalms 31:13-14](#). *While they took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my life. But I trusted in thee, O LORD: I said, Thou art my God.*

That is a grand utterance of the psalmist; now he is coming back to the point where he began; the Psalm is now in harmony with its keynote.

[Psalms 31:15](#). *My times are in thy hand:*

My times are not in the hands of my enemies; they cannot hurt me without God's permission.

[Psalms 31:15-16](#). *Deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me. Make thy face to shine upon thy servant:*

Oh, for the shinings of God's face! How blessed and glorious they are! I is heaven on earth to dwell within the circle of that light; and if we get out of the range of those rays, what joy can we have?

[Psalms 31:16](#). *Save me for thy mercies' sake.*

That is a prayer for a sinner, and a prayer for a saint; a prayer for every day in the year: "Save me for thy mercies' sake."

[Psalms 31:17](#) — **19.** *Let me not be ashamed, O LORD for I have called upon thee: let the wicked be ashamed, and let them be silent in the grave. Let the lying lips be put to silence; which speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous. Oh, how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee;*

Then, be off good courage, you tried ones; think of all the god things that are laid up in store for you, the treasures that are put away for the present.

Nor is this all: “How great is thy goodness,” —

[Psalms 31:19.](#) *Which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!*

So there is goodness in the present as well as goodness in the future, goodness wrought out as well as goodness stored up.

[Psalms 31:20.](#) *Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man: thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.*

There is nothing much worse than the strife of tongues. A pack of wolves would not be half so bad as a pack of tongues let loose upon a man. Wolves do but tear the flesh; but tongues devour a man’s character, and eat up his very life. Oh, how blessed it is to be kept secretly in God’s royal pavilion from the strife of tongues!

[Psalms 31:21.](#) *Blessed be the LORD for he hath showed me his marvelous kindness in a strong city.*

He has kept me in safety, and preserved me from every foe, blessed be his holy name!

[Psalms 31:22-23.](#) *For I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes: nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto thee. O love the LORD, all ye his saints;*

It seems as if David felt that he could not love the Lord sufficiently by himself, so he calls upon all the saints to bring their hearts full of love, and yield their treasure unto God.

[Psalms 31:23.](#) *For the LORD preserveth the faithful, and plentifully rewardeth the proud doer.*

He gives him a sharp blow with the back of his hand, but he gives to the righteous a full-handed mercy.

[Psalms 31:24.](#) *Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the LORD.*

Your heart is faint, but the Lord will put strength where now there is weakness; wherefore “be of good courage.” Cowardice weakens, fear saps a man’s strength; so “be of good courage,” for your strength shall be equal to your day, and you shall yet win the victory, “all ye that hope in the Lord.”

[PSALMS CONTENTS](#)

PSALM 32

Verses 1-11

“A Psalm of David, Maschil”: that is to say, an instructive psalm:

“Maschil.” I suppose that David wrote it after he had been forgiven and restored to divine favor. I think we may read it as a part of our own experience, either of conversion or when restored after backsliding.

[Psalms 32:1-2](#). *Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.*

Twice he says “blessed.” He had felt the weight of sin; he had been sore troubled, and now that Nathan is sent to him with the word of pardon, “The Lord hath put away thy sin, though shalt not die,” he counts himself doubly blessed — blessed, not the man who has never sinned; blessed is he who, having sinned, is forgiven; not the man who has no sin, but whose sin is covered. Wonderful word! Both in English and Hebrew, it sounds very much alike. The sacred “Kophah.” the cover which covers sin so that sin is hidden, even from the eye of God himself! A wondrous deed! Blessed is the man who knows that divine covering! “Blessed,” says he “is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.” All along, after David’s sin, he became very crafty and very cunning, full of guile. You know the dodges that he had resorted to, to cover up his sin; he tried to play some of his tricks on God himself, but he felt it was a mischievous and foolish thing to do: he was uneasy, he was unhappy. We have sometimes heard it said that after David sinned, he remained insensible for nine months, until he received the divine rebuke; but it was not so. He remained very sensitive, very depressed, very unhappy, and he was trying this way and that to cover up his sin and guile. He could not do it; he ought to make a clean breast of it, and confess it before God, and give up his crooked ways, and his ideas of excusing himself, and when he had

done that, when he had given up his guile and his guilt, too, then he got the double blessing: “Blessed, blessed!” If there are any of you who are treading crooked ways with God and man, give them up. I know of nothing that will make you give them up like knowing free, full, perfect pardon through the precious blood of Christ, and the free grace of God. The two things go together, guilt and guile; the two things go out of us together; when guilt is pardoned, guile is killed. Now hear how David felt while he was conscious of his sin, and yet was not right with God.

[Psalms 32:3](#). *When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long.*

A wanton glance, and the sin with Bathsheba. Where was the pleasure of it when it cost him all this? Such groaning that his very bones get old as if they were rotten, and his heart was heavy as if he wished to die. “For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me.” God was dealing with him; God with his hand pressing him heavily, forcing his sin home upon him, making him say, “My sin is ever before me.” Oh! the misery of sinning to a child of God. Do not dream that we can ever have any pleasure in sin; the worldling may, but the believer never can. To him it is a deadly viper, that will fill his veins with burning poison.

[Psalms 32:4](#). *For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah.*

When he tried to pray, it was a dried-up prayer; he tried to make a psalm, but it was a dried-up song; he tried to do some good, for he was still a good man, but it was all withered without the Spirit of God. His moisture was gone out of him, turned into the drought of summer, and summer in David’s country was a very droughty thing indeed. Every human thing despaired, the grass seemed to turn to dust; it was so with him. If you go into sin, this is what will happen to you. If you are a true child of God, you will have all the joy of God taken from you, all the moisture of your heart dried up, and you will be like a parched, withered thing. “Selah”: time to stop, time to have a pause in the music; he was on so bass a key, he had need now to screw up the harp strings and rise to something a little sweeter.

[Psalms 32:5](#). *I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah.*

He must come to confession, full, spontaneous, unreserved; there must be a resolution. “I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord”; a

firm determination to hide nothing, to see the sin yourself, and to tell the Lord that you do see it, and to confess it with great grief and sorrow. What a wonderful word that is: “I said, I will confess, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.” God took away the sin: ay, the very pith and marrow of it, “the iniquity of my sin.” Take the bone away, and the marrow of the bone too; “thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin” — it has all gone, wholly gone; by one stroke of God’s divine grace the sinner was pardoned. Selah again

[Psalms 32:6](#). *For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him.*

“For this” (because of this and for this blessing) “shall everyone that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found.” The pardoning God must be sought. There is an attraction in the greatness of his mercy. They that are godly, even though they have offended and gone astray, must come back and seek for pardon in a time when thou mayest be found. “Surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him.” The godly man is safe when the floods are out. There are times when great waters prevailed in David’s country; the brooks sometimes turned to rivers and came down with a rush when they were least expected; and here he says that, when such a thing as that shall happen, yet God’s people shall be saved, They shall come, but they shall not come nigh unto them. Let me read those words again: If you have gone to God in the day of your sin, and have found pardon, he that took away the sin will take away the sorrow. “Surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him.”

[Psalms 32:7](#). *Thou art my hiding place; thou shall preserve me from trouble; thou shall compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah.*

“Thou art my hiding place” — precious words! “Thou art my hiding place”; not “Thou art a hiding place,” but “Thou art MY hiding place.” A man who is beset by foes does not stand still, and say, “Yes, I can see there is a hiding place there,” but he runs to it. Beloved, run to your hiding place this morning, each one of you who can have a claim and interest in Christ: run to him now and say: “Thou shalt preserve me from trouble.” David has come up out of the roaring to the singing; all the day long he roared, and now all the day long he sings; he hears songs everywhere: he lives in a circle of music; his heart is so glad. Well may he put another “Selah,” for he has smitten the strings very joyfully, and they need tuning again.

[Psalms 32:8](#). *I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.*

And here the speaker changes: “I will instruct thee”; I have forgiven thee; “I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go.” I have restored thee back to the way; now I will teach thee in the way thou shalt go. “I will guide thee with mine eye”; thine own might lead thee astray. I will guide thee with mine eye”; I will be on the path, I will fix mine eye upon thee. “I will guide thee with mine eye.”

[Psalms 32:9](#). *Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee.*

“Be ye not as the horse,” not only David, but all of you. If God will guide you, be guided; if he will teach you, be teachable; if he will be gracious to you, be gracious towards him.

[Psalms 32:10](#). *Many sorrows shall be to the wicked: but he that trusteth in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about.*

“Many sorrows shall be to the wicked”; David had found that out; his sin had brought him a transient pleasure, but a lasting misery. He shall have a bodyguard of mercy; God will be gracious to him, tender to him, and will not leave him if he is trusting in the Lord.

[Psalms 32:11](#). *Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart.*

“Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous.” Be glad. Well, but you cannot always be glad, says one. “Be glad in the Lord”; you may always be glad in him. Here is an unchanging source of joy. “Rejoice, ye righteous, and shout for joy.” Here is the man that was silent, has gone as far as shouting now. Is it not enough to make him? Twice he was blessed, in the first and second verses; and now he has been pardoned, he has been delivered, he has been compassed about with mercy: why, he must be glad! “Shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart.” God bless you in the reading of his Word.

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 32; John 17.

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PSALM 33

Verses 1-22

[Psalms 33:1](#). *Rejoice in the LORD, O ye righteous: for praise is comely for the upright.*

Notice the connection between the words “rejoice” and “praise.” Joy is the soul of praise. God is not extolled by our misery, but by our holy mirth. Be glad in the Lord, for so can you make him glorious. “Rejoice and “praise”, “for praise is comely for the upright.” Praise is the beauty of a Christian. What wings are to a bird, what fruit is to the tree, what the rose is to the thorn, that is praise to a child of God.

[Psalms 33:2](#). *Praise the LORD with harp: sing unto him with the psaltery and an instrument of ten strings.*

In the old days of forms, and ceremonies, and outward worship, musical instruments were abundantly used; but in the early Christian Church there was no such thing as a musical instrument, because the believers were afraid of going back to Judaism. It is curious that, as men get further away from Christ, they get fonder and fonder of such things as these. Still, under certain conditions, they are lawful; though, we think, not expedient. God was acceptably worshipped in the olden time with harp and with psaltery, and he may be so now; yet we worship him, so we judge for our own selves, better without them.

[Psalms 33:3](#). *Sing unto him a new song;*

For, you see, that all the music had singing with it. “Praise the Lord with harp; sing unto him “Sing unto him a new song.” “Unto the Lord, unto the Lord, Oh, sing a new and joyful song!” It was only as it guided and strengthened the singing that the instrumental music was tolerated even in those early days.

[Psalms 33:3](#). *Play skillfully with a loud noise.*

God ought to be worshipped with our best: “Play skillfully.” God ought to be earnestly worshipped: “with a loud noise.” Hearty worship is what the Lord desires, and what he deserves; let us render it to him.

[Psalms 33:4](#). *For the word of the LORD is right;*

Let us praise him for his Word. Men are depreciating it; let us appreciate it. “The word of the Lord is right:” from the first page to the last it is right, emphatically right; let us praise him for it.

[Psalms 33:4](#). *And all his works are done in truth.*

The book of providence is full of truth; oh, for grace to read it with thankful hearts! Let us praise God, and sing unto him, as every page passes

under our eye.

[Psalms 33:5](#). *He loveth righteousness and judgment: the earth is full of the goodness of the LORD.*

You would think, from the way in which most people talk, that the world was full of misery and full of the anger of the Lord; but it is not. Notwithstanding all the evil that is in it, it is still true that “the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.”

[Psalms 33:6](#). *By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.*

They did not grow out of something that was there before; they were made out of nothing “by the word of the Lord.” All the hosts of stars innumerable were created “by the breath of his mouth.”

[Psalms 33:7](#). *He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap: he layeth up the depth in storehouses.*

We know not how much God hath in store, out of sight, in the vast abysses; but we know that he drowned the world when he broke up the fountains of the great deep.

[Psalms 33:8](#). *Let all the earth fear the LORD: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him.*

He is so great a God that all the oceans are in his sight but as a heap; let us worship, and adore, and bow down before him.

[Psalms 33:9](#). *For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.*

With God it is no sooner said than it is done; “He spake, and it was done.” All that he has to do is but to bid it be so, and so it is. And, as it was for creation, so is it for confirmation: “He commanded, and it stood fast.”

[Psalms 33:10](#). *The LORD bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: he maketh the devices of the people of none effect.*

If the folly of man yields to God’s wisdom, so also shall the wisdom of man. No matter though men take counsel together against the Lord, and against his Anointed, God will certainly carry out his purposes.

[Psalms 33:11](#). *The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations.*

What the Lord intends to do, he will do; there is no turning him from his purpose, and his dispensations stand fast for ever.

[Psalms 33:12](#). *Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance.*

If you have chosen God, God has chosen you. It is a happy thing when it is so; when these two elections meet,-your election of God, and God's election of you,-then you are happy indeed.

[Psalms 33:13-14](#). *The LORD looketh from heaven; he beholdeth all the sons of men. From the place of his habitation he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth.*

Just as in a glass hive you can see all the bees, and all they do, so can God see us; and he can see all that we think, and read and know us through and through.

[Psalms 33:15-16](#). *He fashioneth their hearts alike; he considereth all their works. There is no king saved by the multitude of an host:*

Look at Napoleon, who marched more than half a million of men into Russia; but they nearly all melted away, and, after a time, he himself became a captive on the lone rock of St. Helena: "There is no king saved by the multitude of an host."

[Psalms 33:16](#). *A mighty man is not delivered by much strength.*

Look at Goliath, stronger than all his fellows; yet how soon he lay prone upon the earth when a single stone from the sling of David smote him in the forehead.

[Psalms 33:17-19](#). *An horse is a vain thing for safety: neither shall he deliver any by his great strength. Behold, the eye of the LORD is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy; to deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine.*

Whatever becomes of kings and princes in the day of need, the Lord will take care of those who fear him, and put their trust in him. There have been vast numbers of cases of singular providence's, so many that they have ceased to be singular, in which God has provided for those who have trusted in him,

[Psalms 33:20](#). *Our soul waiteth for the LORD: he is our help and our shield.*

Dear friends, notice those three "ours"-three firm clasps, three strong holdfasts: "Our soul waiteth for the Lord: he is our help and our shield." Why did he not say, "Our souls wait," for there are many of us? Ah! but we are so alike in this one thing that it is as if we had only one soul in all these many bodies, so the psalmist says, "our soul." You remember, when the disciples went to Emmaus, and Christ talked with them, they said, "Did not our heart burn within us?" There were two of them; then, why did they not

say, “Did not our hearts burn?” Well, their hearts were so one that he who spoke called them “heart” rather than “hearts”; and it is so here: “Our soul waiteth for the Lord: he is our help and our shield.”

[Psalms 33:21-22](#). *For our heart shall rejoice in him, because we have trusted in his holy name. Let thy mercy, O LORD, be upon us, according as we hope in thee.*

That is a good prayer with which to close our reading; let us all present it at the throne of the heavenly grace.

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PSALM 34

Verses 1-20

[Psalms 34:1](#). *I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth.*

“Others may do what they please, and murmur, and complain, and be filled with dread and apprehension of the future; but I will bless the Lord at all times. I can always see something for which I ought to bless him. I can always see some good which will come out of blessing him. Therefore will I bless him at all times. And this.” says the Psalmist, “I will not only do in my heart, but I will do it with my tongue His praise shall continually be in my mouth,” that others may hear it, that others may begin to praise him, too, for murmuring is contagious, and so, thank God is praise; and one man may learn from another — take the catchword and the keyword out of another man’s mouth, and then begin to praise God with him. “His praise shall continually be in my mouth.” What a blessed mouthful! If some people had God’s praises in their mouths, they would not so often have fault-finding with their fellow men. “If half the breath thus vainly spent” in finding fault with our fellow-Christians were spent in prayer and praise, how much happier, how much richer, we should be spiritually! “His praise shall continually be in my mouth.”

[Psalms 34:2](#). My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof and be glad. Boasting is generally annoying. Even those that boast themselves cannot endure that other people should boast. But there is one kind of boasting that even the humble can bear to hear — -nay they are glad to hear it. “The humble shall hear thereof, and be glad.” That

must be boasting in God — a holy glorying and extolling the Most High with words sought out with care that might magnify his blessed name. You will never exaggerate when you speak good things of God. It is not possible to do so. Try, dear brethren, and even boast in the Lord. There are many poor, trembling, doubting, humble souls that can hardly tell whether they are the Lord's people or not, and are half afraid whether they shall be delivered in the hour of trouble, that will become comforted when they hear you boasting. "The humble shall hear thereof, and be glad." "Why," says the humble soul, "God that helped that man can help me. He that brought him up through the deep waters, and landed him safely, can also take me through the river and through the sea, and give me final deliverance. My soul shall make her boast in the Lord. The humble shall hear thereof, and be glad."

[Psalms 34:3](#). *O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together.*

He cannot do enough of it himself. He wants others to come in and help him. First, he charges his own heart with the weighty and blessed business of praising God, and then he invites all around to unite with him in the sacred effort. "Magnify the Lord with me. Let us exalt his name together."

[Psalms 34:4](#). *I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.*

That was David's testimony. That is mine. Brother, that is yours. Is it not? Sister, is not that yours too? Well, if you have such a blessed testimony, be sure to bear it. Often do you whisper it in the mourner's ear, "I sought the Lord. and he heard me." Tell it in the scoffer's ear. When he says, "There is no God," and that prayer is useless, say to him, "I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears." it is a pity that such a sweet encouraging profitable testimony should be kept back. Be sure at all proper times to make it known. But it is not merely ourselves. There are others who can speak well of God.

[Psalms 34:5](#). *They looked unto him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed.*

And who were they? Why, all the people of God — the whole company of the saints in heaven, and the saints on earth. It can be said of them all, "They looked to him, and were lightened." As there is life in a look, so is there light in a look. Oh! you that looked to Christ and lived at first. Look to

him again, if it is dark with you tonight, and speedily it shall be light round about you. “They looked unto him, and were lightened.”

[Psalms 34:6](#). *This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.*

Who was he? He was a poor man — any poor man — nothing very particular about him, but he was poor — a poor man. What did he do? He cried. That was the style of praying he adopted — as a child cries — the natural expression of pain. Poor man, he did not know how to pray a fine prayer, and he could not have preached you a sermon if you had given him a bishop’s salary for it; but he cried. He could do that. You do not need to go to the Board School to learn how to cry. Any living child can cry. This poor man cried. What came of it? “The Lord heard him.” I do not suppose anybody else did; or if they did, they laughed at it. But it did not signify to him. The Lord heard him. And what came of that? He “saved him out of all his troubles.” Oh! is there a poor man here tonight in trouble! Had he not better copy the example of this other poor man? Let him cry to the Lord about it. Let him come and bring his burdens before the great One who hears poor men’s prayers. And, no doubt, that poor man lived to tell the same tale as he who wrote this verse. “This poor man cried, and the Lord heard and saved him out of all his troubles.”

[Psalms 34:7](#). *The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.*

It is no wonder, then, that they are delivered, for the angels are always handy. They are waiting round about God’s people. Lo, they are not at a distance to fly swiftly and come for our rescue, but God has set a camp of angels round about all his people. Are we not royally attended? What a portion is ours! Many are they that be against us, but glorious are they that be for us, both in their number and their strength. But the text does not intend so much the angels, as one blessed, glorious, covenant angel — the angel of the Lord, the messenger of God. He it is that holds his camp hard by his people, and sends his messengers for their rescue in all times of difficulty.

[Psalms 34:8](#). *O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.*

That is the language of experience. Some of us have lived by trusting God for many years, and, instead of growing weary of it, we would invite others to do the same. Oh! taste and see that the Lord is good. You cannot

know his goodness without tasting it. But there was never a soul yet that did taste of the goodness of the Lord but what could bear cheerful testimony that it were even so. “Oh! taste and see.” Partake of it. Become practically acquainted with it. Trust God yourselves, and none of you shall ever have to complain of God. To your latest hour you will have to find fault with yourselves, but never once will you have to accuse of changeableness, or of unfaithfulness, or even of forgetfulness. “Oh! taste and see that the Lord is good, for blessed is the man that trusteth in him.”

[Psalms 34:9-10](#). *O fear the LORD, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him. The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing.*

They are very strong, those young lions. They are fierce. They are rapacious. They are cunning. And yet they do lack and suffer hunger. And there are many men in this world that are very clever, strong in body, and active in mind. They say that they can take care of themselves, and perhaps they do appear to prosper; but we know that often they who are the most prosperous apparently are the most miserable of men. They are young lions, but they do lack and suffer hunger. But when a man's soul lives upon God, he may have very little of this world, but he will be perfectly content. He has learned the secret of true happiness. He does not want any good thing, for the things that he does not have he does not wish to have. He brings his mind down to his estate, if he cannot bring his estate to his mind. He is thankful to have a little spending money on the road, for his treasure is above. He likes to have his best things last, and so he is well content, if he has food and raiment, to urge on his way to the rest which remaineth for the people of God. “The young lions do lack and suffer hunger, but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.”

[Psalms 34:11](#). *Come, ye children,*

Ye that are beginning life — you that want to know where true happiness is found

[Psalms 34:11](#). *Hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD.*

It is that which you want to know, beyond everything else.

[Psalms 34:12-13](#). *What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile.*

He that can rule his tongue can rule his whole body. Alas! that unruly member destroys peace and happiness in thousands of cases. The tongue

can no man tame, but the grace of God can tame it; and that man begins life with a prospect of happiness whose tongue has been tamed by grace.

[Psalms 34:14](#). *Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.*

True happiness is found in true holiness. “Depart from evil.” That is, do not go after it. But it is much more than that. Go away from it. Give it a wide berth. “Depart from evil.” But be not satisfied with the negatives. It is not enough to say, “I do not do any evil,” but do good. The only way to keep out the evil is to fill the soul full of good. We must be active in the cause of God, or Satan will soon move us into sin. “Depart from evil and do good.” “Seek peace.” Be of a quiet turn of mind. Be always ready to forgive. “Seek peace and pursue it.” That is, when it runs away, run after it. Make up your mind that you will have it. There are some that seek quarrels, There are some that seek revenge. As for you, seek peace and pursue it.

[Psalms 34:15](#). *The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto heir cry.*

God is all eye and all ear, and all his eye and all his ear are for his people.

Are you distressed in heart? God sees your distress. Are you crying in secret in the bitterness of your soul? God hears your cry. You are not alone. O lonely spirit, broken spirit, be not dismayed; be not given to despair. God is with you. If he sees nothing else, he will see you. “The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous.” And if he hears no one else in the world, he will hear you “His ears are open to their cry.”

[Psalms 34:16](#). *The face of the LORD is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.*

You know what we say sometimes. “I set my face against such a thing as that.” Now God sets his face against them that do evil. You will come to an end, my friend. Your happiness, like a bubble painted with rainbow colors, may be the object of foolish desires; but in a little while it will burst and be gone, as the bubble is, and there will be nothing left of you. Even your remembrance will be wiped out from the face of the earth. What numbers of books have been written against God of which you could not gets copy now, except you went to a museum! What numbers of men have lived that have been scoffers; and they had great names amongst the circles of unbelievers, but they are quite forgotten now! But the Christian Church treasures up names of poor, simple-hearted Christian men and women —

treasures them up like jewels, and their fame is fresh after hundreds of years.

[Psalms 34:17](#). *The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles.*

That is how we live, if you want to know. God makes us righteous, and then we cry. We often praise him. We desire to have our mouth full of it. But we cry as well, and whenever we cry God hears, and our troubles are removed.

[Psalms 34:18](#). *The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.*

Are you here tonight, poor weeping Mary? Are you here, brokenhearted, troubled sinner? Are you here? Are you seeking the Lord? Do not seek him any longer. You have got him. Read the text, “The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart.” He is with you now. Speak to him; cry to him; trust him. You shall find deliverance this night.

[Psalms 34:19](#). *Many are the afflictions of the righteous:*

You should hear some of them talk, and you would soon know that; for I know some of the righteous that seldom talk of anything else. “Oh! the badness of trade!” They have been losing money — oh! ever since I knew them. They had not any when they started, but they have gone on losing money every year; and I believe they always will. And they always have pains of body. The weather is so bad. And they always have ungrateful friends. And the church they belong to is not up to the mark. Indeed, there is nothing around them that is right. “Many are the afflictions of the righteous.”

Well now, dear brethren, as that is recorded in God’s Word, and most of us have a pretty good acquaintance with that subject, I do not think that it is necessary for all of us to insist upon it every day. Could not we go on to the next part of the verse? “Many are the afflictions of the righteous,” but — but —

[Psalms 34:19](#). *But the LORD delivereth him out of them all.*

Not out of some of them, but out of them all, however numerous they may be.

[Psalms 34:20](#). *He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken.*

He sustains no real injury. He gets flesh wounds and bruises, but his bones are not broken. That is to say, the substantial part of his nature is well kept and preserved.

Verses 1-22

[Psalms 34:1](#). *I will bless the LORD at all times:*

“At dark times, and bright times when I am alone, and when I am in company; when I feel like doing it and when I do not feel like doing it: ‘I will bless the Lord at all times.’”

[Psalms 34:1](#). *His praise shall continually be in my mouth.*

“I will not only feel it in my heart, but I will give expression to it with my mouth. Those who do not care for this blessed employment may leave it alone; but as for me, ‘his praise shall continually be in my mouth.’”

[Psalms 34:2](#). *My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad.*

“I will ride the high horse when I begin to talk of the goodness of God: ‘My soul shall make her boast in the Lord;’ and whereas boasters are generally very vexatious to humble-minded people, this kind of boasting shall please them: ‘the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad.’”

[Psalms 34:3](#). *O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together.*

Come, my brethren and sisters, I cannot perform this happy service alone; it is too much for me all by myself. This bunch of grapes is too heavy to be carried by one. “O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together.”

[Psalms 34:4](#). *I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.*

Should not the prayer-hearing God be praised? If he hears the cries of his people, should he not also hear the praises of his people? It is not one only to whom God has thus listened, but many can say with the psalmist, “I sought the Lord, and he heard me.”

[Psalms 34:5-6](#). *They looked unto him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed. This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.*

It is God’s delight to hear the cry of poor men. Sometimes, he passes by the rich and great, and gives heed to the poor and desolate. It is our need that has the loudest cry with God; if our necessities are urgent, our prayer will be powerful.

[Psalms 34:7](#). *The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.*

God's children are always attended like princes, legions of angels form their body-guard. The angel of the Lord, and companies of holy angels with him, pitch their celestial tents round about them that fear God.

[Psalms 34:8](#). *O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.*

Do try him, dear friends, and prove for yourselves how good and gracious he is: "O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him."

"Oh, make but trial of his love;
Experience will decide
How blest are they, and only they,
Who in his truth confide!"

[Psalms 34:9](#). *O fear the LORD, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him.*

He will supply all their wants. You need not fear for anything else when once you fear God.

[Psalms 34:10](#). *The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger:*

They are strong, and fierce, and crafty, and unscrupulous, yet still they suffer hunger: —

[Psalms 34:10](#). *But they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing.*

Though they be neither cruel, nor cunning, nor strong, "they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." What a promise for you to plead in prayer, dear friends! If you are in any need, do not hesitate, but by an act of faith take this gracious word, and plead it with the promise-keeping God: "Hast thou not said that, 'they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing'? Then, Lord, do as thou hast said."

[Psalms 34:11-13](#). *Come, ye children, hearken unto me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD. What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile.*

He who can manage his tongue can manage his whole body; for the tongue is the rudder of the ship, and if that be properly held, the vessel will be rightly steered. If thou wouldst escape the quicksands and the rocks, look well to thy tongue; keep it from evil, that it speak neither blasphemy against God nor slander against thy fellow men; and keep thy lips from guile, that is, from deceit, from double meanings, from saying one thing and meaning

another, or making other people think that you mean another, — an art all too well understood in these days. God make us plain-speaking men, who say what we mean, and mean what we say! When, by the grace of God, we are taught to do this, we have learnt a good lesson.

[Psalms 34:14](#). *Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.*

If it runs away from you, run after it. Never run into or after a quarrel, but always run after peace: “Seek peace, and pursue it.”

[Psalms 34:15](#). *The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry.*

The Lord is always watching them, and he is always listening that he may hear everything they say, especially when they cry unto him.

[Psalms 34:16](#). *The face of the LORD is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.*

He will not only destroy the wicked, but he will blot out the very memory of them. They may become great and famous in their wickedness, but they shall not be kept in memory, as the righteous are. As Solomon says, “The name of the wicked shall rot.”

[Psalms 34:17-18](#). *The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles. The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.*

Men do not care for broken hearts, but God does. “Give me a sound heart and a brave heart,” says man. “Give me a broken and a contrite heart,” says the Lord. If you have such a heart as that, be not afraid to draw near to your God, through Jesus Christ, for he is already nigh unto you.

[Psalms 34:19](#). *Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all.*

Many who read this verse admit that the first part of it is true: “Many are the afflictions of the righteous.” Yes, but the latter clause is also true: “but the Lord delivereth him out of them all.” Do not omit either portion of the passage, for one part is as true as the other.

[Psalms 34:20](#). *He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken.*

God’s people shall suffer no real, lasting, vital injury. You may have flesh wounds, but as to the bones of your spirit, as it were, the solid part of it, “not one of them is broken.”

[Psalms 34:21](#). *Evil shall slay the wicked: and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate.*

They shall want nothing else to make an end of them but their own sins:

“Evil shall slay the wicked.”

[Psalms 34:22](#). *The LORD redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate.*

Now we are going to read the last chapter of the Book of the prophet Hosea, the first of the minor prophets.

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 34; and Hosea 14.

[PSALMS CONTENTS](#)

Psalm Chapter 35

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

Psalm Chapter 36

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

PSALM 37

Verses 1-10

[Psalms 37:1](#). *Fret not thyself because of evil-doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity.*

A common temptation. Many of God’s saints have suffered from it. Learn from their experience. Avoid this danger. There really is no power in it, when once the heart has come to rest in God. But it is a sad affliction until the heart does get its rest. “Fret not because of evildoers.”

[Psalms 37:2-4](#). *For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the LORD*

Make him thy delight, and take care that thou do really delight. Feel a fullness of joy in him.

[Psalms 37:4](#). *And he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.*

Because when the heart delights in God, then its desires are all such as God can safely grant. He does not say to every man, or even to every

praying man, “I will give thee the desires of thine heart,” but “Delight thyself in the Lord,” and then he will.

[Psalms 37:5](#). *Commit thy way unto the LORD*

Give it up to him to rule it, and to guide thee and lead thee in every step.

“Commit thy way unto the Lord.”

[Psalms 37:5-6](#). *Trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday.*

It is better to trust our character with God than with the ablest counselor. Scandal may pass over a fair name for a while and cloud it, but God is the avenger of all the righteous. There will be a resurrection of reputations, as well as of persons at the last great day. Only we must commit it to God.

[Psalms 37:7-8](#). *Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil.*

A fretful spirit soon comes to be an angry spirit, and when we begin to be jealous of evildoers, we are very apt to become evildoers ourselves. Many an honest man has snatched at hasty gain, because he was envious of the prosperity of the unrighteous; and then he has pierced himself through with many sorrows in consequence. But “fret not thyself in any wise to do evil.” There is an old proverb that it is hard for an empty sack to stand upright. Therefore, when you are in temporal trouble, ask the Lord to fill you with his grace, for then you will stand upright, and by-and-by you shall be delivered.

[Psalms 37:9](#). *For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth.*

If there is anything good to be had here, men that wait upon God shall have it. If there is any grain of wheat amidst these heaps of chaff, believers that are trusting the Lord shall find them.

[Psalms 37:10](#). *For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be:*

How transient are their joys! Their wealth which they accumulate, the beauty which they think is upon their estate, all this is but as the painted colors of the bubble, which is scarcely seen before it vanishes. Wilt thou envy this? Wilt thou envy a little child his play-toys, which will be broken in an hour? Wilt thou envy a madman the straw crown which he plaits and puts upon his head when he thinks himself a king? Oh! be not so foolish.

Thine inheritance is eternal, and thou art immortal. Why shouldest thou envy the creature of an hour? “For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be.”

[Psalms 37:10](#). *Yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, His mansion, his house, the grand figure that he cut in society.*

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 73; [Psalms 37:1-10](#).

Verses 1-18

Let us read tonight part of the thirty-seventh Psalm. David here first of all dissuades himself and us from falling into a very common evil, that of envying the wicked because of their prosperity, and murmuring against God because we, perhaps, are not so highly favored in our earthly affairs.

[Psalms 37:1-2](#). *Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of inequity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb.*

No one envies the grass, let it be never so green; no one envies flowers, let them be never so fragrant, for we know that grass must be cut, and that flowers must wither. Let us look upon the wicked in the same light; their time of perishing shall soon come, their end hasteth on apace; therefore, let all envying be out of the question, since they are such short-lived beings.

[Psalms 37:3](#). *Trust in the LORD, and do good;*

There you have the secret of the active life of the Christian. The root of his activity lies in his faith: “Trust in the Lord.” The outward manifestation of his inner life is in the good that he does; and where there is this faith, proved to be living faith by good works, there follows the promise, —

[Psalms 37:3](#). *So shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.*

It does not say, “Young man, verily thou shalt prosper in business.” It does not say, “O ambitious man, thou shalt dwell in a palace, or revel in luxuries, “but it does say to thee, O humble-minded Christian, trusting in God, “Verily thou shalt be fed.” You know, when the word “Verily” is used, there is something upon which God sets his seal as being true: “Verily thou shalt be fed.” God’s “Verilys” are better than men’s oaths. Believe, then, Christians and let there be no more fretting about your temporal trials. I know you have come in here tonight very anxious, and vexed with care and grief; take this “Verily”, and lay it, like Isaiah’s lump of figs, upon the boil, and “Verily” you shall soon be healed.

[Psalms 37:4](#). *Delight thyself also in the LORD and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.*

Delight is a Christian's duty. To sorrow, to mourn, to despair, — these belong not to the believer: "Delight thyself in the Lord." Here is a river to swim in, Christians, plunge into it. Here is a bottomless abyss of delights, the person, the grace, the works, the attributes of our covenant God; and here is a promise given to each one of those who carry on this excellent duty, "He shall give thee the desires of thine heart."

[Psalms 37:5](#). *Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.*

Put the helm of your ship into the hand of the Almighty Pilot. Leave the guidance of your pilgrimage to him who has led many caravans across the desert aforesaid, and who has never suffered any to perish. What an easy way this is; and yet how hard do we find it to carry it out! It is to unload ourselves, and put our burden on our God. Oh, that we had the sanctified common-sense to make us fulfill this duty!

[Psalms 37:6](#). *And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday.*

Leave your character with God; it is safe there. Men may throw mud at it, but it will never stick long on a true believer; it shall soon come off, and you shall be the more glorious for men's slander.

[Psalms 37:7-11](#). *Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way; because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil. For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.*

This is now a gospel blessing, for Christ pronounced it upon the mount among his other benedictions: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." Somehow or other, the only persons who truly enjoy life, and get happiness out of this present vale of tears, are the meek spirits, the men who can say, — "Mine are the valleys, and the mountains mine; my father made them all." Even the possessions of other men make these people glad. They are like the man we have heard of in China, who met a mandarin covered with jewels, and, bowing to him, said, "Thank you for those jewels." Doing

this many times, at last the mandarin asked the cause of his gratitude. “Well,” said the poor but wise man, “I thank you that you have those jewels, for I have as good a sight of them as you have; but I have not the trouble of wearing them, putting them on in the morning, taking them off at night, and having a watchman keeping guard over them when I am asleep. I thank you for them; they are as much use to me as they are to you.” This meek man can walk along the broad acres of a rich man’s farm, he can see his noble oaks and other forest trees, and he can say, “Thank God for them all! I have as much enjoyment from these as the rich man himself has, for they are mine to enjoy as truly as they are his.” “The meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace, “not in the abundance of wealth, but in the abundance of peace. To a meek man, peace is his wealth, and holy quietness and calm his true riches.

[Psalms 37:12-18](#). *The wicked plotteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth. The Lord shall laugh at him: for he seeth that his day is coming. The wicked have drawn out the sword, and have bent their bow, to cast down the poor and needy, and to slay such as be of upright conversation. Their sword shall enter into their own heart, and their bows shall be broken. A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked. For the arms of the wicked shall be broken: but the LORD upholdeth the righteous. The LORD knoweth the way of the upright: and their inheritance shall be for ever.*

He knows their dark days, and he will be their light; he knows their sunny days, and he will be their shelter; he knows their last day, and he will be their confidence; he knows their resurrection-day, and he will be their glory: “Their inheritance shall be for ever.”

“Go, you that boast in all your stores,
And tell how bright they shine;
Your heaps of glittering dust are yours,
But my Redeemer’s mine.”

Verses 1-40

May the Spirit of God graciously apply this Psalm to our hearts, comforting us as no one else can! Is he not the Comforter, and what better cordial has he for our spirits than his own Word?

[Psalms 37:1-2](#). *Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb.*

Evil cannot last. It is a feeble plant, like the grass and weeds which the mower's scythe soon cuts down, and leaves to wither in the blazing sunshine.

[Psalms 37:3-4](#). *Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the LORD and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.*

This is a most precious verse, its sweetness who can tell? Do not think first of the desires of thy heart, but think first of delighting thyself in thy God. If thou hast accepted him as thy Lord, he is thine; so delight in him, and then he will give thee the desires of thy heart.

[Psalms 37:5](#). *Commit thy way unto the LORD trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.*

Give it over into God's hands, and then confide in him as completely as a little child confides in its mother. "He shall bring it to pass." It is quite certain that you cannot "bring it to pass," so you will be wise if you leave it with him who can do what you cannot.

[Psalms 37:6](#). *And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday.*

Thou canst not make the light and the noonday; that is a work that is far beyond thy power; but thy God can give thee both light and noonday. He can clear thy character from any slander that may have befouled it, and he can crown thee with honour and glory in place of the contempt that is now cast upon thee.

[Psalms 37:7](#). *Rest in the LORD,-*

That is the sweetest word of all: "Rest." Go no further. Fret no more. Bear thy burdens no longer. Make this day a Sabbath to thy soul: "Rest in the Lord,"-And wait patiently for him:-Do not be in a hurry. The Lord has infinite leisure, so partake of it as far as thou canst: "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him:"-

[Psalms 37:7-8](#). *Fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass. Cease from anger,-*

You cannot do that unless you "rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him." Angry passions fail upon the fire of fretfulness; therefore, "cease from anger,"-

[Psalms 37:8-9](#). *And forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil. For evil doers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they*

shall inherit the earth.

Their turn will come in due time. It comes last, but then it comes to last, for there is nothing to come after the last.

[Psalms 37:10](#). *For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be.*

The house in which he lived, or the place that was called by his name, is often destroyed.

[Psalms 37:11-12](#), *But the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace. 'The wicked plotteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth.-*

That has been the style of things from the beginning, and the old serpent's seed will be like the old serpent, and he "was more subtle than any beast of the field." "The wicked plotteth against the just,"-He plots against the Lord's people, but--

[Psalms 37:13-18](#). *The Lord shall laugh at him,"For he seeth that his day is coming. The wicked have drawn out the sword, and have bent their bow, to cast down the poor and needy, and to slay such as be of upright conversation. Their sword shall enter into their own heart, and their bows shall be broken. A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked. For the arms of the wicked shall be broken: but the LORD upholdest the righteous. The LORD knoweth the day of the upright: and their inheritance shall be for ever.*

He gives them an eternal portion by an everlasting covenant.

[Psalms 37:19](#). *They shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.*

There is nothing that they can get, but God will give them what they cannot get themselves. He will ransack heaven and earth to find food for his people: "In the days of famine they shall be satisfied."

[Psalms 37:20-23](#). *But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the LORD shall be as the fat of lambs they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away. The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again: but the righteous sheweth mercy, and giveth. For such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth, and they that be cursed of him shall be cut off.*

The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD:-Even his "steps"-the little movements of his life,-not only his "rest plans and his ambitious projects, but "the steps of a good man are ordered by Jehovah;"-

[Psalms 37:23](#). *And he delighteth in his way.*

He loves to see him walk, even as parents delight to watch the first tottering steps of their little children, so that he, who “taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man,” taketh pleasure in the ways of his people.

[Psalms 37:24](#). *Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down:-*

For a while, it may seem as if he had been finally defeated; things may seem to go altogether wrong with him; but, “though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down;”-

[Psalms 37:24-25](#). *For the LORD upholdeth him with his hand. I have been young and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.*

And we also can still speak of the faithfulness of Jehovah. He who took care of his people in David’s day has not changed since then. We have not seen the righteous forsaken.

[Psalms 37:26](#). *He is ever merciful, and lendeth; and his seed is blessed.*

God has a special regard for the children of believers. Grace does not run in the blood, but it often runs side by side with it. The God of Abraham is the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, and the God of Joseph, and the God of Manasseh and Ephraim.

[Psalms 37:27-29](#). *Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell for evermore. For the LORD loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off. The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever.*

I have frequently remarked to you that, although the wolf is very strong and fierce, and the sheep is very weak and timid, yet there are more sheep in the world than there are wolves; and the day will come when the last wolf will be dead, and then the sheep shall cover the plains and feed upon the hills. Weak as the righteous often are, they “shall inherit the land” when the wicked shall have been out off from the earth.

[Psalms 37:30](#). *The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment.*

That which is down in the heart will come up into the mouth, and you may rest assured that men are fairly judged by the common current of their conversation.

[Psalms 37:31-33](#). *The law of his God is in his heart, none of his steps shall slide. The wicked watcheth the righteous, and seeketh to slay him. The LORD will not leave him in his hand, nor condemn him when he is judged.*

How dreadful it would be for the godly man if the Lord were to leave him in the hand of the wicked! You remember how David sought to avoid that calamity when he had to choose famine, pestilence, or the sword of his enemies. “Let me fall,” said he “into the hand of the Lord, for very great are his mercies; but let me not fall into the hand of man.” Let us thank God that, even if we should get into the hand of the ungodly, the Lord will not leave us there, nor condemn us when we are judged.

[Psalms 37:34-37](#). *Wait on the LORD, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it. I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree. Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace.*

There is no end to that man, for he is to endure world without end. In any sense in which there is an end to him, his end is everlasting peace

[Psalms 37:38-39](#). *But the transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off. But the salvation of the righteous is of the LORD: he is their strength in the time of trouble.*

Have you not proved it so, dear brethren and sisters in Christ? I know that you have had times of trouble, but has not God been your strength in a very peculiar way in all such times?

[Psalms 37:40](#). *And the LORD shall help them,-*

He is and he shall ever be their Helper: “The Lord shall help them,”-

[Psalms 37:40](#). *And deliver them: he shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in him.*

That is the point,-not because of any merit of theirs, nor because of any skill of theirs, but “he shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in him.” So, Lord, help us to trust in thee! Amen

Verses 17-40

[Psalms 37:17](#). *For the arms of the wicked shall be broken: but the LORD upholdeth the righteous.*

They must stand, therefore, for how shall he fall whom God upholds?

[Psalms 37:18-19](#). *The LORD knoweth the days of the upright: and their inheritance shall be for ever. They shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.*

These are bad times now. Everyone complains, and indeed there seems to be abundant cause, for distress is universal. But let us fall back on the

promise. “In the days of famine they shall be satisfied.”

[Psalms 37:20-23](#). *But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the LORD shall be as the fat of lambs: they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away. The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again: but the righteous sheweth mercy, and giveth. For such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth; and they that be cursed of him shall be cut off. The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way.*

There is a mutual delight, you see. If we delight in God, God delights in us. He delights in the conduct of his people. When they walk with him, he takes pleasure in every step that they take. What say you, brothers and sisters? Have you tried to live today so that God may take pleasure in you? He cannot do it if we have lived carelessly, or fruitlessly, or selfishly. But when we live to him, then the Lord delights in our way.

[Psalms 37:24](#). *Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand.*

Just going to fall, but in came the interposing hand. Grace catches us up when sin would throw us down.

[Psalms 37:25](#). *I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.*

It was so unusual a thing that David had never seen, it. I have several times seen the seed of the righteous begging bread, but in every case it has been because of their drunkenness or their laziness, or because of their own vice which they brought upon themselves. But, as a rule, takes care of the children of his children. He does not suffer them to want. They may be brought into great straits, but he will not permit them to come to beggary.

[Psalms 37:26-29](#). *He is ever merciful, and lendeth; and his seed is blessed. Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell for evermore. For the LORD loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off. The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever.*

There is a grand time coming (oh! that God would hasten it!) when truth and righteousness shall rule the earth, and then shall the godly have their portion. At the present time: —

“Every prospect Pleases,
And only man is vile “;

But the day shall come when the vile person shall cease from off the earth, and the saints shall trove the kingdom.

[Psalms 37:30](#). *The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment.*

You may often judge a man by his mouth. The physician looks at the tongue to see how the man is; and so is a righteous man known by his mouth and his tongue, for he talks of judgment.

[Psalms 37:31-40](#). *The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide. The wicked watcheth the righteous, and seeketh to slay him. The LORD will not leave him in his hand, nor condemn him when he is judged. Wait on the LORD, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut of, thou shalt see it. I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree. Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright. For the end of that man is peace. But the transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut of. But the salvation of the righteous is of the LORD: he is their strength in the time of trouble. And the Lord shall help them, and deliver them: he shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in him.*

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PSALM 38

Verses 1-22

I am going to read two portions of Scripture. In the first, — the 38th Psalm, — we shall hear a suffering servant of Jehovah crying out to his God.

[Psalms 38:1](#). *O LORD, rebuke me not in thy wrath: neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.*

“If thou dost rebuke me, do it gently, O my Lord! If thou dost chasten me,

let not thy displeasure wax hot against thy servant.”

[Psalms 38:2](#). *For thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore.*

God may aim his arrows even at his own children, and he may lay his hand very heavily upon those whom he deeply loves.

[Psalms 38:3](#). *There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin.*

David was under the afflicting hand of God even with regard to his bodily disease. He could have borne the pain if it had been merely physical; but there was a sense of sin mixed with it which made it sting him in his very soul.

[Psalms 38:4-5](#). *For mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me. My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness.*

David had some painful old sores; I mean, old sins; and they seem to have broken out again and again, and when he wrote this Psalm, he was groaning in his spirit at the remembrance of them. His faith was at a low ebb, and his feelings were of the most bitter and sorrowful kind.

[Psalms 38:6](#). *I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long.*

Yet he was a true child of God all the while, for this is, according to its title, “A Psalm of David,” concerning whom the Lord said “I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfill all my will.” God’s flowers do not have sunlight twenty-four hours in the day. They have their night seasons, when it is not only dark, but it may also be heavy with the cold dew, or trying with a sharp frost.

[Psalms 38:7-8](#). *For my loins are filled with a loathsome disease: and there is no soundness in my flesh. I am feeble and sore broken: I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart.*

That is an expressive word that David uses: “I have roared.” He felt as if his prayers were more like the agonized cries of a wounded beast than the intelligent supplications of a human being, — least of all, of a man of God; and, sometimes, when the spirit is greatly bowed down, it cannot express itself in words, but has to be content with groans, and cries, and sobs, and tears.

[Psalms 38:9](#). *LORD, all my desire is before thee; and my groaning is not hid from thee.*

What a sweet, sweet truth that is! Happy is that man, who in the time of deepest darkness, can still grasp that truth and hold it fast. “Lord, my groaning is not hid from thee! I could only roar out my complaint, or groan it out; but thou couldst hear it just as well as if I had ordered my words aright before thee.”

[Psalms 38:10-11](#). *My heart panteth, my strength faileth me: as for the light of mine eyes, it also is gone from me. My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore; and my kinsmen stand afar off.*

“Relatives and friends alike all get away from me as far as they can, for they cannot bear to be in such sorrowful company.”

[Psalms 38:12-13](#). *They also that seek after my life lay snares for me: and they that seek my hurt speak mischievous things, and imagine deceits all the day long. But I, as a deaf man, heard not; and I was as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth.*

Although David was a tried man, he was, at least at that time, a wise man. God did not leave his servant to act or to speak foolishly; and beloved, when men are unjustly rebuking and reproaching you, there is nothing more wise than to act as if you did not hear them. It is the very acme of wisdom if you can keep quiet, and not answer them, — refusing to make any apologies or extenuations — or even showing any sign that you have so much as heard what they have said.

[Psalms 38:14-15](#). *Thus I was as a man that heareth not, and in whose mouth are no reproofs. For in thee, O LORD, do I hope: —*

What sublime faith there is here! It is easy to have faith in sunshiny weather, — to have faith when you have the least need of it. There are plenty of people, who fancy they are believing in God when everything is going well with them. It is one thing to believe when you are lying at anchor in a peaceful harbour, it is quite another matter to believe when you are at sea in a storm. David hoped in God when trouble had come upon him wave upon wave: “For in thee, O Lord, do I hope:” —

[Psalms 38:15](#). *Thou wilt hear, O LORD my God.*

“Even if I do not hear thee, thou wilt hear me and if no man shall hear me, thou wilt hear my prayer, and answer my supplication.”

[Psalms 38:16-20](#). *For I said, Hear me, lest otherwise they should rejoice over me: when my foot slippeth, they magnify themselves against me. For I am ready to halt, and my sorrow is continually before me. For I will declare mine iniquity; I will be sorry for my sin. But mine enemies are lively, and they are strong: and they that hate me wrongfully are multiplied. They also that render evil for good are mine adversaries; because I follow the thing that good is.*

We need never be afraid of any man’s opposition when the reason for his being our adversary is that we “follow the thing that good is,” as our

translators quaintly express it.

[Psalms 38:21-22](#). *Forsake me not, O Lord: O my God, be not far from me. Make haste to help me, O Lord my salvation.*

Now we shall see, as we read that wondrous 53rd chapter of Isaiah not a man of God in trouble, but the Son of God in trouble; and we shall see him also as a deaf man that heareth not, “and as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth.”

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 38, and Isaiah 53.

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PSALM 39

Verses 1-13

This Psalm gives a description of David’s experience and conduct when stretched upon a sick-bed. He appears to have felt impatience working within him, which I am sorry to say is a very common disease with most of us when God’s hand is heavy upon us. Yet David struggled against his impatience, though he felt it, he would not know it, lest he should thereby open the mouths of his enemies, and cause them to speak evil of his God. Let us imitate his restraint if we resemble him in the temptation to impatience.

[Psalms 39:1](#). *I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue:--*

This government of the tongue is a most important part of our ways; it in a very essential part of holy discipline, yet we have heard of one saint who said that he had lived for seventy years, and had tried to control his tongue, but that he had only begun to understand the art when he died. David said, “I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue;”-

[Psalms 39:1](#). *I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me.*

They have such quick ears, and they are so ready to misinterpret and misrepresent our words, and if they can find one word awry, they will straightway preach a long sermon over it, so let us muzzle our mouths while they are near. The ill words of Christians often make texts for sinners, and thus God is blasphemed out of the mouths of his own beloved children. Let it not be so with any of you, beloved.

[Psalms 39:2](#). *I was dumb with silence, I held my peace, even from good; and my sorrow was stirred.*

We all know that, unless our grief can find expression, it swells and grows till our heart is ready to break. We have heard of a wise physician who bade a man in great trouble weep as much as ever he could. "Do not restrain your grief," he said, "but let it all out." He felt that only in that way would the poor sufferer's heart be kept from breaking. David determined that, before the wicked, he would have nothing at all to say, and though his griefs were surging within him, yet for a time he kept them from bursting out.

[Psalms 39:3](#). *My heart was hot within me, while I was musing the fire burned: then spake I with my tongue,*

He could not hold his peace any longer; it would have been well if he had done so, for he uttered an unwise prayer when he spake with his tongue.

[Psalms 39:4](#). *LORD, make me to know mine end,*

That is what you and I are apt to say when we get into a little trouble; we want to die, and get away from it all. We say that we long to be with Christ, but I am afraid that it is often only a lazy wish to share the spoils of victory without fighting the battle, to receive the saints' wages without doing the saints' work, and to enter into heaven without the toils and dangers of the pilgrims' way. Perhaps this has been the case with us sometimes when we have thought that our aspirations were of the best and holiest kind. When David prayed, "Lord, make me to know mine end," his prayer was not a very wise one, but the next sentences were not quite so foolish:--

[Psalms 39:4](#). *And the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am.*

Oh, that we could all know how frail we are! But we reckon upon living for years when we have scarcely many more minutes left, we think our life's hour-glass is full when the sands have almost run out, and although the hand of God's great clock may be upon the striking-point, we think our brief hour has but just begun.

[Psalms 39:5](#). *Behold, thou hast made my days as, an handbreadth;*

This is a very common measure, the breadth of the human hand; and David says that this span is the measure of his life. Some here must surely

have spent a great part of that handbreadth; let them and all of us be prepared to meet our God when that short span's limit is reached.

[Psalms 39:5](#). *And mine age is as nothing before thee:*

It is an incalculably tiny speck when compared with the immeasurable age of the Eternal: "Mine age is as nothing before thee." When Alcibiades boasted of his great estates, the philosopher brought him a map of the world, and said to him, "Can you find your estates on this map?" Even Athens itself was but as a pin's point; where, then, were the estates of Alcibiades? Nowhere to be seen. So, when we see the great map of eternity spread out before us, where is the whole of this world's history? It is but a speck, and where then, are your life and mine? They are as nothing before God.

[Psalms 39:5](#). *Verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity.*

Then what must he be at his worst state

[Psalms 39:6](#). *Surely every man walketh in a vain shew: surely they are disquieted in vain:*

They fret, and fume, and flurry, and worry, and all about what? About nothing. We sometimes say, "It will be all the same a hundred years hence." Ah! but it will be all the same much sooner than that, when the six feet of earth shall be all our heritage.

[Psalms 39:6](#). *He heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them.*

"Bethink thee," says an old writer, "every time thou dost lock up thy money in a box, how soon death shall lock thee up in thy coffin." Some men seem to be like our children's money-boxes, into which money is put, but they must be broken before any can come out. To some men, how sad must be the thought that they have been accumulating wealth all their days, and they know not for whom they have been gathering it! A stranger may, perhaps, inherit it; or if their own kith and kin shall get it, they may squander it just as thoroughly as the misers hoarded it.

[Psalms 39:7](#). *And now, Lord,-*

If all earthly things are nothing but emptiness,-

[Psalms 39:7](#). *What wait I for?*

"I wait for nothing here, for there is nothing here to wait for."

[Psalms 39:7](#). *My hope is in thee.*

Ah! this hope makes life worth living. Now that we hope in God, now that we know that there remaineth another and a better world than this

world of shadows, life is invested with true solemnity.

[Psalms 39:8-9](#). *Deliver me from all my transgressions: make me not the reproach of the foolish. I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it.*

It is always a blessed reason for resignation when we can say of any bereavement or affliction, “The Lord has done it.” Shall he not do as he wills with his own? Then let us say, with Job, “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.”

[Psalms 39:10-12](#). *Remove thy stroke away from me: I am consumed by the blow of thine hand. When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth: surely every man is vanity. Selah. Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear unto my cry; hold not thy peace at my tears:*

Tears have ever had great prevalence with God. Christ used these sacred weapons when, “with strong crying and tears,” he prayed to his Father in Gethsemane, “and we heard in that he feared.” Sinner, there is such potency in a penitent’s tears that thou mayest prevail with God if thou wilt come to him weeping over thy sin, and pleading the precious blood of Christ. Thy tears cannot merit heaven, or wash away thy sins, but if thou dost penitently grieve over them, and trust in the great atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, thy tearful prayers shall have a gracious answer of peace. Mr. Bunyan describes the City of Mansoul as sending Mr. Wet-eyes as one of her ambassadors to the Prince Emanuel, and he is still a most acceptable ambassador to the King of kings. He who knows how to weep his heart out at the foot of the cross shall not be long without finding mercy. Tears are diamonds that God loves to behold.

[Psalms 39:12](#). *For I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were.*

“I am not a stranger to thee, O my God! Blessed be thy holy name, I know thee well; but ‘I am a stranger with thee.’ Thou art a stranger in shine own world, and so am I. The world knows thee not, and the world knows me not; and when I act as thou actest, the world hateth me even as it hateth thee.”

[Psalms 39:13](#). *O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more.*

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PSALM 40

Verses 1-17

To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David. If I were to read this Psalm all through as referring to Christ, and to Christ only, I should be correct in so doing; but still, there is such a unity between Christ and those who compose his mystical body that, what is true of the Head, is true of the members. What is true of the Vine, is true of the branches. What is true of Christ, is true of those who are in him. Therefore, this Psalm relates to David as well as to “great David’s greater Son”, and it also concerns every one who is of the royal seed, every true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus the Psalm begins :—

[Psalms 40:1](#). *I waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry.*

“I waited.” Do not beggars wait long at a fellow-creature’s door for some pitiful alms, and should not I be content to linger at Mercy’s gate for such great boons as I am craving? “I waited patiently.” Well may we tarry in patience till Jehovah’s time to help, since we know that “Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him; and if he be pitiful, we can well afford to be patient, “I waited patiently for Jehovah.” Those who have been most mighty in prayer have sometimes had to wait for the answers to their supplications. Do not expect the Lord to hear thee today or tomorrow. He may hear thee before thou speakest, according to his promise, “Before they call, I will answer;” but he may, for the trial of thy faith, make thee wait. Art thou able to wait? Then thou art certain to receive a great blessing. “I waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me,” bowed down out of heaven, inclined unto me, stooped to me, thought well of me, and of my prayer also, “and heard my cry.”

[Psalms 40:2](#). *He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.*

This is a wonderful song, full of rapturous joy. You know how Orientals were accustomed to cast their prisoners into pits, and those pits were often horribly deep, and dark, and damp; and the mud at the bottom would be such that a man would sink in it. David sings of the Lord, “He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay.” What a wonderful up-bringing was this; and, as God never does anything by halves, he did not let

his servant slip back again, for David added, “and set my feet upon a rock.” “He set my feet.” When God sets a man’s feet, those feet are well set; there is no sliding, no slipping, then. The Lord set’ David’s feet upon a rock; and, more than that, established his goings, made them firm, so that when he stirred he did not stumble.

[Psalms 40:3](#). *And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God:*

Sing, then, believer! Thou didst groan often enough in the pit; sing now that thou art on the rock. Thou wast desolate enough in the dungeon; sound aloud thy grateful thanksgivings now that thy goings are established.

[Psalms 40:3](#). *Many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD.*

There you have a picture of a sinner’s conversion and its effects. The man sees the Lord’s goodness to the child of God in distress. He fears; that is, he stands in awe of the great God; and then he also believes, he trusts in the Lord. One saint makes many; one child of God brought up out of the horrible pit leads to the bringing up of a great many others in the same way.

[Psalms 40:4](#). *Blessed is that man that maketh the Lord his trust, and respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies.*

If you trust in God, you will have no reverence for the proud, nor for those who turn aside from God’s Word, and teach falsehood. If you really fear God, you will have no fear of men.

[Psalms 40:5](#). *Many, O LORD my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered.*

The child of God, reviewing the Lord’s great goodness, feels that he can never count the mercies of God to him; and, as to telling them out, that can never be, It will be, perhaps, a part of our eternal employment to tell to angels, and principalities, and powers in the heavenly places the story of the lovingkindness of the Lord which we have experienced here below. If we had no troubles, we should have nothing to tell; but now that we are led in a strange way, and into very difficult places, we can write another page in our diary, which will be worth reading in those days when fictions shall all have been consumed in the fire, but the great facts in the lives of the Lord’s people shall make God to be admired in his saints for ever and ever.

[Psalms 40:6-8](#). *Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required.*

Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.

Spoke I not truly when I said that the Christ of God is here? To whom is this passage one hundredth part so applicable as to the Lord Jesus himself? Does not Paul dwell upon this passage as teaching the putting aside of the old covenant law, and the bringing in of something better, even the obedience of Christ our Saviour? However, this evening, I wish to read the Scripture in reference to the saints, the Lord's own people. I trust that many of us, seeing that God does not delight in ritualistic performances, and in the externals of religion, so much as he does in the obedience of the heart, can come to him, and declare with David, "I delight to do thy will, O my God." Beloved friends, you are not what you ought to be; you are not what you want to be; you are not what you shall be; but, tell me, are you ever happier than when you are consciously doing the will of God? Do you not find misery in sin, and delight in holiness? If you can say that it is so with you, then you are bound for the kingdom; you are on the way to complete victory over sin. Be of good cheer; he who has wrought in you this selfsame thing, to delight to do the will of God, will grant you grace to do it. He will bruise Satan under your feet shortly; and your inbred corruptions shall yet be uprooted by the Spirit of his grace.

[Psalms 40:9](#). *I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O LORD, thou knowest.*

This is what Jesus can say. He was the Prince of open-air preachers, the Great Itinerant, the President of the College of all preachers of the gospel; and I trust that many of us here can also say that, according to our ability and opportunity, we have tried to tell of Christ to those round about us.

[Psalms 40:10](#). *I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation.*

If any of you have done so, if there has been a sinful reticence about the things of God, if called to preach, you yet have not preached the full gospel of God's grace, the Lord forgive you, and bring you out into a clear manifestation of what he has written within your hearts! We cannot tell what we do not know, and we ought not to try to do so; but what is graven in our hearts by the Holy Spirit we are bound to tell to others. This gas was lighted that it might shine; and you received the divine fire that you might shine to the glory of God. It may be that, in some dark hour, it shall afford

you at least a little comfort to be able to say, “I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation.” You may be able to use it as an argument in prayer, as the psalmist does: “I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation, therefore,”—

[Psalms 40:11](#). *Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O Lord; let thy lovingkindness and thy truth continually preserve me.*

Depend upon it, God will take care of us, if we take care of his truth. If we, from cowardly reasons, keep back any part of the gospel, God may leave us to defend ourselves; but if we conceal nothing that he has revealed to us, if we are faithful to the truth committed to our charge, that truth will itself preserve us, and we shall know more and more of the loving-kindness of the Lord.

But what a sad verse is the next one, if it describes the experience of any one of you who have known the Lord!

[Psalms 40:12](#). *For innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me.*

If that is the condition of any one whom I am addressing, be comforted by the remembrance that another has been along that dark road where you now are found, and follow his example in praying to the Lord to deliver you. —

[Psalms 40:13](#). *Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me: O Lord, make haste to help me.*

Thus did David cry unto the Lord “out of the depths.” Imitate his example if you are in similar circumstances. Say, with good John Ryland,—

“Out of the depths of doubt and fear,
Depths of despair and grief,
I cry; my voice, O Jesus, hear,
And come to my relief!”

14—16. *Let them be ashamed and confounded together that seek after my soul to destroy it; let them be driven backward and put to shame that wish me evil. Let them be desolate for a reward of their shame that say unto me, Aha, Aha, Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee:*

Here is comfort for all poor trembling seekers; they are only seekers, but let us thank God that they are seekers, and let us say with the psalmist, “Let

all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee.” All true Christians, those who have found Christ, are still seekers; for, after finding Christ, they do their souls inflame to seek him more and more. So that our prayer also is, “Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee.”

[Psalms 40:16-17](#). *Let such as love thy salvation say continually, The LORD be magnified. But I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me: thou art my help and my deliverer; make no tarrying, O my God.*

The Lord bless to us the reading of this precious portion of his Word, for his name’s sake! Amen.

[PSALMS CONTENTS](#)

PSALM 41

Verses 1-13

You will see, dear friends, from these holy songs, that the saints of God in those olden days were not screened from trials and troubles, but were tempted in all points like as we are. If we happen to be in similar trying circumstances, let us take comfort from their experiences; the footsteps of the flock that has gone before should make the sheep feel that it is not lost. Psalms 41 To the chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

[Psalms 41:1](#). *Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble.*

David delivered others, and God will deliver him. When he is poor and needy, God will think upon him, even as he considered the poor and the needy when they cried unto him.

[Psalms 41:2-3](#). *The Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive; and he shall be blessed upon the earth: and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies. The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness.*

God will be condescendingly gentle to such as are kind and gentle to the poor. If we love God first, and then exhibit the result of that love in our care for the poor and the needy, we shall certainly be recompensed, for he that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord, and the Lord will pay him back, — sometimes in his own coin, and oftener in a coin of heavenly currency. Let us take note of this, and let us never harden our heart against the poor and the needy in the time of their extremity.

[Psalms 41:4](#). *I said, Lord, be merciful unto me:*

David had been very kind to the poor at all times; but when he gets into trouble, he does not plead that, he just mentions it, but the main stress of his pleading is quite in another direction, namely, for mercy: “I said, Lord be merciful unto me.”

[Psalms 41:4-5](#). *Heal my soul; for have sinned against thee. Mine enemies speak evil of me, When shall he die, and his name perish?*

But good men do not die to please wicked men, and sometimes, when the good men have been dead and buried, and their memory has been insulted by the wicked, they have risen up again in their posthumous influence. Good men live too long for the wicked, but they live as long as God wills that they should; they are immortal till their work is done. The story of Wycliffe is but a typical case of what has often happened. When the monks gathered round his bed, and expected that their opponent would soon be gone, he said, “I shall not die, but live,” and so he did; and even after he had died, he continued to be a living power in the land; indeed, we know not how much of the blessings we enjoy is the result of the light that was shed upon England by “the morning star of the Reformation.”

[Psalms 41:6](#). *And if he come to see me, he speaketh vanity: his heart gathereth iniquity to itself; when he goeth abroad, he telleth it.*

Those are bad visitors to the sick who, when they speak, talk only nonsense or that which galls the sufferer; and then, when they go out, begin to tell an idle tale against him to his injury.

[Psalms 41:7-9](#). *All that hate me whisper together against me: against me do they devise my hurt. An evil disease, say they, cleaveth fast unto him: and now that he lieth he shall rise up no more. Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.*

Many a child of God has had his character whispered down by slanderers, many a man has had a hard time of it through the evil speaking of men of the world; yea, even the Lord of saints and the King of pilgrims knew what it was to find a traitor in his most familiar friend, and to receive the basest ingratitude from one who had eaten of his bread. Do not be carried away with too much sorrow if you are slandered or betrayed; better men than you have suffered through this fearful evil. Therefore, take the trouble to your Lord, and bear it with such patience as he will give you.

[Psalms 41:10-11](#). *But thou, O LORD, be merciful unto me, and raise me up, that I may requite them. By this I know that thou favourest me, because mine enemy doth not triumph over me.*

“He may think that he shall triumph over me, he may even begin in his mind to divide the spoil; but he shall never really get it: ‘Mine enemy doth not triumph over me.’”

[Psalms 41:12-13](#). *And as for me, thou upholdest me in mine integrity, and settest me before thy face for ever. Blessed be the LORD God of Israel from everlasting, and to everlasting. Amen, and Amen.*

That is the sick man’s praise; it is full of fervor and full of life. Let us never rob God of the revenue of his praises; let us not have such a cupboard love for him that we only praise him when he gives us good things. Let us bless his name just as much when he takes away, when he afflicts, when he chastises. That is true praise which comes from the bed of affliction, and from a heart that is sore broken with sorrow. Now in the next Psalm we find the good man in trouble again.

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 41, 42.

[PSALMS CONTENTS](#)

PSALM 42

Verses 1-11

Psalms 42:1. *As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.*

“As the hart panteth” or “brayeth.” And if such be your soul’s panting after God, you shall have what you pant for. Sooner or later, God will manifest himself in grace to the man who cries after him in this fashion.

Psalms 42:2. *My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God : —*

“My soul, my very soul, thirsteth for God, the living God.”

Psalms 42:2-3. *When shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?*

That is another of the taunts of the ungodly. Just now, they said, “When shall he die and his name perish?” Now they cry, “Where is thy God?” “You said that he would help you; you were sure that he would comfort you; you

were confident that he would draw near to you; and now you are crying and panting after him, and have not got what you want: ‘Where is thy God?’”

Psalms 42:4. When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me :-

That is not a good thing to do; if you do pour your soul out, do not pour it into yourself again. There is little gain when you merely empty your grief out of yourself into yourself. I have known many a man lay his burden down, and then take it up again directly. That is poor economy; the way to get rid of the sorrow is to pour out your hearts before God. There is no wisdom in doing what the psalmist says he did: “I pour out my soul in me:” —

Psalms 42:4-5. For I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holy day. Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me?

You see, the psalmist here talks to himself. Every man is two men; we are duplicates, if not triplicates, and it is well sometimes to hold a dialogue with one’s own self. “Why art thou cast down, O my soul?” I always notice that, as long as I can argue with myself about my depressions, I can get out of them; but when both the men within me go down at once, it is a downfall indeed. When there is one foot on the solid rock, the other comes up to it pretty soon.

Psalms 42:5. Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.

“I know I shall; he will yet look at me. I shall not always be in the dark; wherefore, let me begin at once to praise him.” It is well sometimes to snatch a light from the altars of the future, and with it to kindle the sacrifices of the present: “I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.”

Psalms 42:6. O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar.

From the little hill I will think of all thy former love; — all the sacred spots where thou hast met with me, all the lonely places where thou hast been my comfort, and all the joyful regions where thou hast been my glory. I will think of these, and take comfort from them, for thou art an unchanging God; and what thou didst for me aforetime, thou wilt do for me again and yet again.

Psalms 42:7. Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.

Here is a great storm; here is a man, not merely on the sea, but in the sea;

with not only some waves beating upon him, but with all of them going over him; and those not common waves, but God's waves. That is a Hebraism for the biggest waves, Atlantic billows; all these have gone right over him, yet see how he swims. Hope in God always crests the stormiest billow.

Psalms 42:8-9. Yet the Lord will command his lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life. I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?

See what liberties saints take with God; how they reason with him, how they argue with him; and God loves them to do so. Are you not pleased with your child when he urges reasons why you should do this or that for him? You are glad to see that he has mind enough to think of these things, and confidence enough in you to expect you to be affected by his pleadings; and the Lord loves his people to discourse with him. "Put me in remembrance," saith he, "let us plead together." "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord." If we reasoned more with God, we should reason less with ourselves. There is a good reason for reasoning with God, but it is often unreasonable to reason with yourself.

Psalms 42:10-11. As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God? Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: For I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

It is curious to see the duplicate man here; he talks to himself as "thou," and yet he says "I." "Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance." First, he said, "I shall yet praise him for the health of his countenance;" now it is "the health of my countenance." When God helps us with his countenance, then our own countenance soon grows bright and healthy. "Who is the health of my countenance," says the psalmist; and then he comes to the sweetest note of all, "and my God."

"For yet I know I shall him praise,
Who graciously to me,

The health is of my countenance,
Yea, mine own God is he.”

Oh, sweet word that! May each of us be able to reach it! Amen.

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 41, 42.

[PSALMS CONTENTS](#)

PSALM 43

Verses 1-5

Psalms 43:1-2. Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation: O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man. For thou art the God of my strength:

In the previous Psalm, David had called the Lord the God of his life. Now he calls him the God of his strength. We generally sing ourselves up. We may begin in a very low key, as David did, but if we can praise God in the dark, we shall soon praise God in the light.

Psalms 43:2-4. Why dost thou cast me off? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles. Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy:

“My exceeding joy,”--exceeding all the other joys I have,--exceeding still the joys of the happiest men I have ever known.

Psalms 43:4. Yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God my God.

It was not enough for David to say, “O God;” he cries, “O God my God.” You cannot praise another man’s God. Possession is not only nine points of the law, but it is all the points of the gospel.

Psalms 43:5. Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance and my God.

May the Lord comfort his mourning people by such words as these!

[PSALMS CONTENTS](#)

PSALM 44

Verses 1-8

Psalms 44:1. *We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old.*

Now Israel was restored to Canaan, and the Canaanite and Perizzite were driven out, that God's chosen people might occupy their appointed place.

Psalms 44:2-3. *How thou didst drive out the heathen with thy hand, and plantedst them; how thou didst afflict the people, and cast them out. For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them: but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favour unto them.*

They did use their own arm and sword; but, for all that, it was God who won the victory for them. It was his might that made them brave, and a consciousness of his gracious purpose that made them strong, so that they routed all their foes until, from Dan to Beersheba, the land was all their own.

Psalms 44:4-6. *Thou art my King, O God: command deliverances for Jacob. Through thee will we push down our enemies: through thy name will we tread them under that rise up against us. For I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me.*

See how the lesson from ancient history was turned to practical account in the psalmist's own experience: "As our forefathers were delivered, not by their own bow or sword, but by the right hand of the Most High, so I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me." Brethren, let us always labour to reproduce in ourselves, by God's grace, the best experiences of his saints. Wherever we see the hand of the Lord displayed in others of his people, let us pray that the same hand may be manifested to us and in us.

Psalms 44:7-8. *But thou hast saved us from our enemies, and hast put them to shame that hated us. In God we boast all the day long, and praise thy name for ever. Selah.*

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 44:1-8; and Psalms 45.

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PSALM 45

Verses 1-9

The lily psalm — a psalm of loves. Oh! that our hearts might be full of love tonight, and, while we read, may our hearts be singing to the praise of the Well Beloved.

[Psalms 45:1](#). *My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the king: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer.*

Sometimes the heart could speak if it could move the tongue; but it is a blessed time with us when, first of all, the heart is fully warmed with love, and then the fire within burns the strings that tie the tongue, and the tongue begins to move right joyously in expressing the heart's love. May it be so with us tonight who have to preach. May it be so with all our brethren who have, in public, either to preach or to pray.

[Psalms 45:2](#). *Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips therefore God hath blessed thee for ever.*

No sooner does he begin to write about Christ than he sees him. A warm heart soon kindles the imagination. The eye of faith is soon opened when once the heart is right. We feel the presence of Christ. We begin to speak of him and to him. "Thou art fairer than the children of men." Oh! I would tonight that Christ would but lift the corner of his vail and show you but one of his eyes. Your hearts would be ravished with his infinite beauty. "Thou art fairer than the children of men." Would God he would but speak half a word into our weary ear, and we should say, "Grace is poured into thy lips." Oh! for some sense and sight of him! Do not our hearts hunger after this tonight?

[Psalms 45:3-4](#). *Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty. And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things.*

The heart never glows with love to Christ unless, in consequence, there is a longing that his kingdom may be extended. It is an instinct of a loving heart, that it desires the honour of its object. We long for Christ to rule and reign, simply because we love him. Oh! that he would lay his right hand to his work in these slow times. How little is being done, comparatively! Oh! for an hour of the right arm of Jesus. If he would but come himself to the battle, and the shout of a king were heard in our camps, what victories

would be won. Cry unto him, O you that love him. He will come to your call.

[Psalms 45:5](#). *Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies, whereby the people fall under thee.*

Christ has not only power near at hand, with his right hand, but far off he darts the arrows of his bow and heathens are made to feel that the gospel is mighty. Would God it were so now. Cry for it.

[Psalms 45:6](#). *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the scepter of thy kingdom is a right scepter.*

And this we know to be spoken concerning Jesus Christ for this was quoted by the apostle, "Thy throne, O God." Let those who will, deny his Deity. It shall be the joy of our heart to worship him, and, in express terms, to address him who is our brother as "very God of very God." "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever. The scepter of thy kingdom is a right scepter."

[Psalms 45:7](#). *Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.*

Fellow with us and yet equal with God. Man anointed, the Christ, yet still the reigning God. Glory be to his name.

[Psalms 45:8](#). *All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad.*

Not only is Christ precious, but everything that touches him. There is not a garment that hangs upon his shoulder but becomes sweet by contact with him. "All thy garments smell of myrrh." There is myrrh about the priestly robe that falls down to his feet, and about the golden girdle of his faithfulness that is girt about his waist. There are myrrh, and aloes, and cassia about his crown, though it be of thorns. About every garment that he puts on there is a sweet perfume.

[Psalms 45:9](#). *Kings' daughters were among thy honourable women: upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir.*

Blessed queen of Christ, — his church. Let us never think little of her. There are some that are always crying up "the church," "the church," "the church"; but that is not the true church that tries to take the place of Christ. It is anti-Christ. The true church has her place, however, and that is at her husband's own right hand, where she sitteth in the best of the best, — in gold, and that the gold of Ophir, for he spares nothing for her beauty and her glory.

Verses 1-14

It is a Psalm of instruction, and yet it is a song of love, for the science of love to Christ is the most excellent of all the sciences. To know Christ is to love him, and we are best instructed who love him most, and the Psalm is most of all a Maschil, a Psalm of instruction, when we are taught to love. Hence the Psalm is a song of love.

[Psalms 45:1](#). *My heart is inditing a good matter:*

A good instrument — the heart refined and sanctified — a good subject, for, says he: —

[Psalms 45:1](#). *I speak of the things which I have made touching the king:*

Oh! it is a loyal subject concerning King Jesus. The original has it, “My heart boileth up with a good matter” — bubbleth up — as if each verse of this Psalm were, so to speak, the bubbling up of a boiling heart that is heated with the love of Christ; and all is concerning him — concerning him the king. “I speak of the things which I have made.” That is experience — things made my own; and there is no matter like that. Theoretical theology is of little value. We must have it in the heart, and have it in our own.

[Psalms 45:1](#). *My tongue is the pen of a ready writer.*

As though it were moved by another hand, as a pen might be. So the Psalmist feels as if his tongue were under divine influence, and he were about to utter things his own, yet not his own; — things which he has made, yet which the Spirit indicts.

[Psalms 45:2](#). *Thou art fairer than the children of men:*

And then he sees him. He does see him by faith; and he speaks, not so much about him, as to him. “Thou art fairer than the children of men.” Oh! it is sweet meditating upon Christ, when Christ himself is present. It is blessed work to speak about Christ when you can speak to Christ at the same time. Thou art fairer than the children of men — the very fairest of them. Whatever beauty, excellence, and worth there may be about mankind, thou hast all, and more than all that they possess.

[Psalms 45:2](#). *Grace is poured into thy lips:*

It comes, therefore, pouring from them. It comes swelling up from thy mouth. Every word that thou speakest is full of grace and truth.

[Psalms 45:2](#). *Therefore God hath blessed thee for ever.*

The Mediator, the God-man, Christ Jesus, is blessed of God. The blessing of the Most High rests upon him, because he is so infinitely lovely. His words are unspeakably gracious; and if God blesses him, shall not we

bless him? If God himself praises him, shall not we praise him? Oh! let us not be silent, but where God leads the way, let us joyfully follow.

[Psalms 45:3](#). *Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty.*

He loves the fighting Christ — Christ with the sword on his thigh. Oh! but it is sweet to see the Prince of peace — to know that he comes to our heart bearing unspeakably precious blessings; but yet the terrible side of Christ is precious to his saints. They ask him to gird his sword upon his thigh. An armed Christ can only be armed for the defense of his people, and for the deliverance of them from captivity. Therefore, O thou loveliest of the lovely, be the mightiest of the mighty too.

[Psalms 45:4](#). *And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things.*

There are three things that are much put to it in this world, and have a hard time of it; truth, which is beset with error, like the hunted hind pursued by dogs. O God, defend thy truth! O Christ of God, lay upon thy sword to smite down error! The next thing is meekness. A gentle spirit has a hard time of it amongst the hard-hearted sons of men. They do not understand meekness. They call the meek man a milksop. They make mirth out of his gentleness. O sword of the Lord, defend the meek ones of the earthy And there is a third thing that has a hard time of it, and that is righteousness amongst a godless generation, that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter — darkness for light, and light for darkness. Righteousness has to run the gauntlet. But, O thou who art truth, and meekness, and righteousness embodied, come forth with thy sharp sword, and fight on the behalf of these things! We do not ask the Lord to come into the world for the sake of pomp, and pride, and power. We only want his battles to be battles of love. We only ask him to extend the kingdom of truth, and meekness, and righteousness.

[Psalms 45:5](#). *Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; whereby the people fall under thee.*

Christ has far-reaching power. He can not only smite with the sword, but he has skill with the bow, and he can dart an arrow to those that are far off, that they may feel his power. Oh! that he would do so now, that those who are leagues away from him may, to their own surprise, find a shaft come right into their heart, that they may fall under the power of Christ, and cry

out to him to come and heal the wound that his own arrow has made. He will do it, for it is written, “I wound, and I heal”; and wherever Christ wounds in mercy, he heals in mercy too.

[Psalms 45:6](#). *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the scepter of thy kingdom is a right scepter.*

Notice that the more you look at Christ the more there is to see. Here the songster first said, “Thou art fairer than the children of men”; and now he cries, “Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.” That man has not seen much of Christ who has not perceived him to be God — God on the throne, God on an everlasting throne. Oh! if any of you have not yet believed in Christ as God, I pray you may do so; for you do not know the Christ of the Scriptures at all, however much you may value his moral character as supreme in wisdom, unless you can say, “My Lord and My God,” as Thomas did when he saw his wounds. “Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever. The scepter of thy kingdom is a right scepter.” There is the joy of it! Christ has absolute sovereignty, but that absolute sovereignty never goes beyond the realm of right. “The scepter of thy kingdom is a right scepter.”

[Psalms 45:7](#). *Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.*

Christ is no neutral. He loves righteousness, and hates wickedness. He is like fire in all that he does. There is about him a certain strength of heart, both to love and to hate; and it is for this reason that God loves him, for God hates lukewarmness. “So then, because thou art neither cold nor hot,” says he, “I will spue thee out of my mouth.” But Christ is never neutral about those matters. He loves righteousness. He hates wickedness. “Therefore, God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.” And if you want to have the oil of gladness, dear friends, you must not be neutral. You that live betwixt and between — that are neither very good nor very bad — that are not decided worldlings, nor yet decided Christians, you never have any joy at all. You see, you do not go enough into the world to get its joy, bad and base as it is; and you do not go enough into Christ’s kingdom to get its joy; so you get no comfort either way. Oh! to be cast into the kingdom altogether — thrown into it as a man into the deep sea, and swallowed up in it! In its lowest depths are the sweetest waters.

[Psalms 45:8](#). *All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad.*

The very clothes of Christ are precious to believers. “Unto you that believe he is preciousness.” But even his very garments are savoured with it, whether he puts on his priestly robes, or his royal garniture, or his prophetic mantle. Each one of these has in it a sweet savour of all manner of choice perfumes, myrrh, and aloes, and cassia. Bitter sweets all of them. Oh! in Christ there is a wonderful bitter sweetness — the pangs of death that breed our life: the pangs of sorrow that bring us joy: his downcasting for our uplifting.

[Psalms 45:9](#). *Kings’ daughters were among thy honourable women: upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir.*

No one is so honoured as the one who waits upon the Saviour. They are honourable women that minister to him of their substance, that are often found in his temple, like Anna of old. These are kings’ daughters, every one of them. And, as for his Church as a whole, she is a queen. She takes no low mean rank, and her apparel is like her dignity. She is clothed in the gold of Ophir — the, best of metals, and the best kind of that metal — the gold of Ophir; and “strangely, my soul, art thou arrayed by the great Sacred Three.” All manner of royal apparel is put upon the Church of God, and upon every member of it.

[Psalms 45:10](#). *Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father’s house;*

We cannot know Christ thoroughly unless we leave off knowing the world. There must be a forgetting as well as a remembering. We are to forget our father’s house come right out from it. If Christ is to love his Church, it must be a nonconforming church in the deepest sense of that word. I mean not conformed to this world, but transformed by the renewing of its mind. Not only are we not to love the world, but we are not to think of it. “Forget also thine own people, and thy father’s house.”

[Psalms 45:11](#). *So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty:*

We were thinking of his beauty. But see: when once we see the beauty of Christ, Christ puts a beauty upon us; and when we learn the beauties of Christ, we soon see beauties in his Church. I find that those who at the Church of God have not any very high esteem of the Church’s Head; but when he is beloved, his people are beloved for his sake. Why, there is an

old proverb that says, “Love me, love my dog.” Much more may we say, “Love Christ, love his Church.”

[Psalms 45:11](#). *For he is thy Lord; and worship thou him.*

This is the great business of the Church — to carry on the worship of her Lord; and I believe that, met together as we are tonight, we are met for the noblest purpose under heaven. When the people of God come together for worship, they are doing that which angels do before the throne — an occupation from which they never cease day or night!

[Psalms 45:12](#). *And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift;*

Well, but she is a heathen; she is a trafficker. What does she know about the king of Israel? Ah! but when Israel owns her king — when the Church of Christ delights in Christ, and dotes upon him, she shall have converts in plenty, from the least likely places.

[Psalms 45:12](#). *Even the rich among the people shall entreat thy favour.*

They are generally taken up with other things, but then they shall know, when once the Church is right with her King.

[Psalms 45:13](#). *The king’s daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold.*

Who has wrought it but her King, whose own right hand has hammered out the precious fabric, and then has taken every golden thread and, with his own bleeding hand, has wrought it into a sacred vesture that shall outlast the stars. “Her clothing is of wrought gold.”

[Psalms 45:14](#). *She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee.*

Happy are those pure virgin spirits that hardly dare think themselves fit to be called a part of the bride, but yet follow her and keep close to her. They are really a part of her, and they “shall be brought unto thee.”

Verses 1-17

To the chief Musician upon Shoshannim, (or, upon the lilies,) for the sons of Korah, Maschil, A Song of loves. We may look upon the 45th Psalm as being a sort of compendium of the Song of Solomon. It is written, too, upon the same subject, and that is not the marriage of Solomon with Pharaoh’s daughter; — only the strangest and most whimsical fancy could ever have found Pharaoh’s daughter either in this Psalm or in the Book of the Canticles. It is a description of Christ and his Church; a song of love

between that pair for ever affianced, and soon to sit down together at the marriage supper in glory.

[Psalms 45:1](#). *My heart is inditing a good matter:*

Or, as the margin has it, “My heart boileth or bubbleth up with good matter.” It is said of Origen, one of the ancient fathers of the Church, that whenever he preached, he preached with great earnestness and fervor; but that, when he spoke of Christ, he seemed to be all on fire. So, whenever our hearts speak of the good matter which concerns Christ, our souls should be all on fire, we should be boiling over with love to him.

[Psalms 45:1](#). *I speak of the things which I have made touching the king:*

A man can never speak so well of the things which he has learned, or heard, as of the things which he has made, that is, the things which he has experienced. Indeed, this is your life-work and mine, beloved, to tell to others the things which we have made our own touching the king.

[Psalms 45:1](#). *My tongue is the pen of a ready writer.*

A ready writer writes what he has thought of beforehand, what he has well meditated upon, and digested; so the psalmist declares that this rapturous song is as certainly true as the verba scripta of a thoughtful accomplished penman.

[Psalms 45:2](#). *Thou art fairer than the children of men:*

The Hebrew word here is doubled, as much as to say, “Thou art doubly fair; thou art fair, fair; twice fairer than the children of men.” Both in outward appearance — although his visage was so sadly marred while he was here, — and in personal character, our Lord Jesus Christ is “fairer than the children of men.”

[Psalms 45:2](#). *Grace is poured into thy lips:*

Grace has, in the most copious manner, been poured upon Christ, and now there pours from his lips a very cataract of grace; — floods of love, and tenderness, and holy eloquence stream from his lips.

[Psalms 45:2-3](#). *Therefore God hath blessed thee for ever. Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty.*

Put thy sword where it will be ready for use; come forth, and let us see thee appear in thy strength, O most Mighty! For this is one of the names of Christ: “I have laid help upon One that is mighty; I have exalted One chosen out of the people.”

[Psalms 45:4-5](#). *And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee*

terrible things. Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; whereby the people fall under thee.

You may see, on some of the ancient slabs, representations of Oriental monarchs riding in their chariots, perhaps engaged in hunting, or pursuing their enemies, with their bow and arrow in their hands, and their sword upon their thigh. So is our Saviour thus graphically described. His Word is his sword, and the testimony of his ministers he makes to be like sharp arrows sticking in the hearts of his enemies. May it be so this day, and everyday may Christ thus ride prosperously!

[Psalms 45:6](#). *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the scepter of thy kingdom is a right scepter.*

This could not have been said of Solomon; for he was never called God. It refers to none other than Christ the King, whose throne is for ever and ever.

[Psalms 45:7-9](#). *Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad. Kings' daughters were among thy honourable women:*

Thy maids of honour, for all those who truly wait on Christ become at once the King's daughters. It is more noble to serve God than to sit as king upon a throne. The day shall come when all the honour of earthly kings' daughters will have passed away, but the glory of those who are in Christ's court as honourable women shall abide for ever.

[Psalms 45:9](#). *Upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir.*

In the best and purest gold. Every member of the Church of Christ may well say, with Dr. Watts, —

“Strangely, my soul, art thou array'd
By the great Sacred Three”

[Psalms 45:10-11](#). *Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house; so shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him.*

Though the Church has been brought up in the world, she is to be separated from it. The more distinction there can be between Christians and worldlings, the better will it be for both. Christ greatly admires the beauty of his Church when she is separated from the world, and it is nothing but an adulterous alliance when the church becomes united to the State. We never

can expect any great and permanent blessing to any church which thus degrades and dishonours itself. If a church cannot stand without the support of the civil power, let it fall; but happy is that Church which relies alone upon the King himself, and is content with the dowry which he gives her.

[Psalms 45:12.](#) *And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift; even the rich among the people shall entreat thy favour.*

The day is coming when the Church of Christ shall be honoured by all men. The merchant princes, who now esteem her as a thing of naught, shall come with their tribute to her, and those who once despised her shall entreat her favor.

[Psalms 45:13-14.](#) *The king's daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee.*

Happy was John the Baptist to be “the friend of the Bridegroom” to Christ, and happy are the hearts of those who are the bridesmaids to his Church: “the virgins her companions that follow her” — you, whose pure hearts are set upon the Lord alone, and who follow whithersoever he doth lead, you, too, “shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework” with his Church.

[Psalms 45:15-16.](#) *With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the king's palace. Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth.*

There is such a thing as an apostolical succession, though not the fiction which usually goes by that name. The Lord is constantly raising up fresh disciples, fresh preachers, and fresh teachers, whom he makes to be princes in his earthly courts, and who shall be princes in his heavenly courts for ever and ever.

[Psalms 45:17.](#) *I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever.*

“Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
Does his successive journeys run;
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore
Till moons shall wax and wane no more.”

[PSALMS CONTENTS](#)

PSALM 46

Verses 1-11

To the chief Musician for the sons of Korah, Song upon Alamoth. This Psalm is often called “Martin Luther’s Psalm.” Whenever there was any great trouble, Luther used to say, “Let us sing the forty-sixth Psalm together, and then let the devil do his worst.” This is the Psalm, too, from which Mr. John Wesley preached in Hyde Park, at the time of a great earthquake. While the earth was shaking, and there was a great tempest, Mr. Wesley preached from the second verse: “Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.”

[Psalm 46:1](#). *God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.*

All creatures have their places of refuge. “As for the stork, the fir trees are her house. The high hills are a refuge for the wild goats; and the rocks for the conies.” All men also have their places of refuge, though some are “refuges of lies.” But God is our refuge and strength,” the omnipotence of Jehovah is pledged for the defense and support of his people. “A very present help in trouble,”-one who is near at hand; always near, but nearest when he is most needed. Not much entreaty is required to bring him to the aid of his people, for he is close at hand and close at heart, “a very present help in trouble.”

[Psalm 46:2-3](#). *Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.*

Here we have, you perceive, a mention of the greatest convulsions of nature, yet the believer fears not. Doubtless, too, these verses are intended to be a picture of the great convulsions that take place in the providential dealings of God. States and kingdoms that seem to be as solid as the earth will one day be removed. Dynasties that seem as fixed and firm as mountains may soon be swept away into the sea of oblivion. We may have famine, and war, and pestilence, and anarchy, until the whole earth shall seem to be like the sea in a great storm; yea, hope may fail with many and the stoutest hearts may shake at the swelling thereof; yet, let the worst come to the worst, God’s people are still safe. As one old writer saith, “Though

God should, to use his words concerning Jerusalem, wipe the earth as a man wipes a dish, wiping it, and turning it upside down, yea, though he should break it into a thousand shivers, yet need not his people fear; for, if he does not protect them under heaven, he will take them up to be with him in heaven.” If heaven and earth could be mingled together, and chaos could return, yet still, as long as God is God, there is no use for the believer to fear.

[Psalms 46:3](#). *Selah.*

We may well pause, and renew our confidence in the God who never has failed us, and who never will fail any who trust him.

[Psalms 46:4](#). *There to a river, the stream whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacle of the most High.*

Whatever river may have been in the psalmist’s mind, it was the symbol of sovereign grace, flowing freshly and freely from the sacred fountain of eternal love, to make glad the people of God. And now we have the inspired Book, we have the preached Word, we have the many precious promises, we have the blessed Spirit himself, and all these make a glorious river, the streams whereof “make glad the deity of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High.”

[Psalms 46:5](#). *God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early.*

The Hebrew expression is, “at the turning of the morning,” our marginal reading gives it, “when the morning appeareth.” “God shall help her at the turning of the morning.” At that period when the night is the blackest, just before the light begins to come, then shall God help his Church. Child of God, this promise is to you also. When the night gets thickest, and the gloom is the heaviest, then God shall help you “at the turning of the morning.” He may tarry for a while, but he will tarry no longer than is wise. You shall find, in looking back upon God’s dealings with you, that, although he sometimes seemed to be long in coming to your help and you cried out, “Lord, how long?” yet, after all, he did help you, and that “right early,” too.

[Psalms 46:6](#). *The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted.*

God hath but to speak, and his stoutest foe shall dissolve like snow when the sun shineth upon it.

[Psalms 46:7-9](#). *The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah. Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire.*

Here the psalmist invites us to behold what God has done in the past. He has desolated the desolaters, and destroyed the destroyers. War has been a terrible scourge to mankind, but our God is Master even over war. When I look at the old ruined castles all over our land, I cannot help saying to myself and others too, “Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth,” and when I stumble upon some broken-down abbeys, and monasteries, and Popish cathedrals, I can but wish that there were more of them, that we might see many such desolations which the Lord hath made in the earth. He will get the victory over all his foes, and break all his adversaries in pieces, however long he may wait before putting forth his great power in judgment upon them.

[Psalms 46:10](#). *Be still, and know that I am God:--*

Here is the command, and here is the reason which will help us to obey it. Judge not the Lord hastily; murmur not at his providential dealings with you. Be not hurrying and scurrying hither and thither, but “be still.” In silence and in confidence shall be your strength. “Be still, and know that I am God:”-

[Psalms 46:10](#). *I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.*

If God is willing to wait, you need not be impatient. His time is the best time, and he will be exalted in due time.

[Psalms 46:11](#). *The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.*

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PSALM 47

Verses 1-9

[Psalms 47:1-5](#). *O clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph. For the LORD most high is terrible; he is a great King over all the earth. He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations*

under our feet. He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob whom he loved. Selah. God is gone up with a shout, the LORD with the sound of a trumpet.

One of our sacred poets has written, “All his work and warfare done, He into his heaven is gone, And beside his Father’s throne, Now is pleading for his own;” but, not merely is he “beside his Father’s throne,” he is with him sitting upon the throne, and waiting until his foes be made his footstool.

[Psalms 47:6-9](#). *Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises unto our King, sing praises. For God is the King of all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding. God reigneth over the heathen: God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness. The princes of the people are gathered together, even the people of the God of Abraham: for the shields of the earth belong unto God: he is greatly exalted.*

There are some, in these days, who have, according to their own confession, cast off the God of Abraham. They do not believe in the Jehovah who is revealed in the Old Testament; they are like those of whom Moses said, “They sacrificed to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not; “ but as for us, we still delight to sing,”

“The God of Abraham praise
Who reigns enthroned above,
Ancient of everlasting days,
And God of love!
Jehovah, great I AM!
By earth and heaven confest;
I bow, and bless the sacred name
For ever blest!”

“But the God of Abraham is very stern,” says someone. Assuredly he is; he is terrible in the majesty of his justice; yet we worship and adore him for that very reason. No effeminate deity, such as modern thought has invented, has even an atom of our admiration, much less of our adoration;

but the glorious God of the Sinai thunders, who is equally terrible as the God of justice on Calvary, this God, who, nevertheless, is love, our hearts adore and worship.

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PSALM 48

Verses 1-14

A Song and Psalm for the sons of Korah. It is not every Psalm that is a song, for some Psalms are full of sorrow and it is not every song that is a Psalm, for, alas! there are many songs that are mere foolish rhymes or something worse, but here is a happy combination, “A Song and Psalm for the sons of Korah.”

[Psalms 48:1](#). *Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised —*

Surely a great God should have great praise: “greatly to be praised” —

[Psalms 48:1](#). *In the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness.*

If there is any place where he ought to be praised, surely it is there. Even if all the rest of the world is silent, let God be praised “in the mountain of his holiness.” Holy people must praise the holy God. It is natural that they should do so. It needs holy people to see God, and when they do see him, their eyes will glisten with delight, and their voices will ring with his praise.

[Psalms 48:2](#). *Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, in mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King.*

Thus the Jew praises Jerusalem, and thus the Christian praises the Church. The Church of Christ is, to his eye, the most precious thing in the whole world, and there is nothing upon the face of the earth that is so lovely in the sight of God as his own chosen Church.

[Psalms 48:3](#). *God is known in her palaces for a refuge.*

Are not all her people kings? Therefore they live in palaces; and they none of them trust in themselves, God is known to them as a refuge.

[Psalms 48:4-5](#). *For, lo, the kings were assembled, they passed by together. They saw it, and so they marveled;*

They came up with their confederate bands of kings to attack Jerusalem, and they looked at it, and wondered at its strength and beauty.

[Psalms 48:5](#). *They were troubled, and hasted away,*

If they came quickly, they went away still more quickly, hurrying off like a band of frightened children.

[Psalms 48:6-7](#). *Fear took hold upon them there, and pain, as of a woman in travail. Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish with an east wind.*

God broke up the confederacies of kings that were leagued against his people. Even the great galleons of Tarshish were dashed to pieces when the Lord blew with his wind, and scattered them, as, many centuries later, he did with the “Invincible” Armada on our own coasts.

[Psalms 48:8](#). *As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the LORD of host, in the city of our God: God will establish it for ever. Selah.*

Well might there be a pause here for solemn consideration, for putting the harp strings right, and lifting up the heart to the Lord in praise.

[Psalms 48:9](#). *We have thought of thy lovingkindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple."*

Here is a blessed subject, "thy lovingkindness, O God;" — a blessed people, we who have enjoyed it; — a blessed occupation, "we have thought of thy lovingkindness," — and a blessed place in which to do it, "in the midst of thy temple." When we are in the midst of the Lord's people, in the midst of his Church, then is the time for sweet and blessed thoughts concerning our gracious God.

[Psalms 48:10](#). *According to thy name, O God, so is thy praise unto the ends of the earth:*

As is God's name, so is his fame; unto the very ends of the earth shall men hear the praises of the Lord, especially when he delivers his people.

[Psalms 48:10](#). *Thy right hand is full of righteousness.*

God's right hand is never empty: "thy right hand is full;" and when he comes to sinners, he deals with them in righteousness; and when he comes to his saints in mercy, it is still in righteousness. "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins"

[Psalms 48:11](#). *Let mount Zion rejoice, let the daughters of Judah be glad, because of thy judgments.*

That is, the smaller cities of Judah, let them sing, as well as Jerusalem, the high praises of their delivering God. Perhaps it refers to the women who, in times of war, have to suffer most and worst of all; let them be loudest in their joyous music; as Miriam took her timbrel, and led the song of the women on the shore of the Red Sea, so let the daughters of Judah be glad because of the Lord's righteous judgments upon the enemies of his people.

[Psalms 48:12-13](#). *Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following.*

Sunday-school teachers, note the security of the Church of God, mark the eternal truth on which she is founded, the everlasting promises by which she is guarded, the forts and bastions of omnipotence that preserve her from

the assaults of her enemies! and then tell all this “to the generation following.”

[Psalms 48:14](#). *For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death.*

But the Hebrew is better still: “He will be our guide even over death.” We shall trample down death; or, as one puts it, we shall stand by the grave of death. What a glorious place for us to stand in when death itself is dead through the ever-living Christ, and the resurrection power that comes through his death! “He will be our guide even over death.”

This exposition consisted of readings from 1 Kings 5, and Psalms 48, 95.

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PSALM 49

Verses 1-20

The chief musician here bids us not to fear the ungodly. However high they may be placed, they are but dying men, and when they die their hope shall perish with them. He gives a very graphic description of the deathbed and of the perdition of ungodly men.

[Psalms 49:1-2](#). *Hear this, all ye people; give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world: both low and high, rich and poor, together.*

Whenever God has a voice for men, it is meant for all sorts of men. No Scripture is of private interpretation. No warning is intended only for a few. Hear ye this, then, all ye people. Whether ye be low, ye are not too low to listen to his voice; or, whether ye be high, ye are not too high to be under his supremacy.

[Psalms 49:3-4](#). *My mouth shall speak of wisdom; and the meditation of my heart shall be of understanding. I will incline mine ear to a parable: I will open my dark saying upon the harp.*

Mysteries are to be preached, but they are to be preached with an earnest endeavor on the preacher’s part to make them plain. If it be a dark saying, yet let it be open; and, if music will help, so let it be. Whatever there is to be taught, let it be plainly taught to the sons of men.

[Psalms 49:5](#). *Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil, when the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about?*

We may read it: “The iniquity of my supplanters shall compass me about.” There may some dark days when the wicked seed, whose delight it is to bite at the heel of the seed of God, will gather around us; and we think, perhaps, that they will be too many for us. But why should we fear them?

Who are they? They are great and mighty, perhaps, but if they are but an iniquity; — a corporated iniquity, — we need not to be afraid of them. Our righteous God is our defender.

Psalms 49:6-7. *They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches; none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him:*

They may be rich as Croesus, but they cannot save a comrade from the grave. They may fee the physician, but they cannot bribe death. How little is the power of wealth, after all! The rich man cannot save even his babe that he loves so well. He certainly cannot save his fellow-sinner.

Psalms 49:8. *(For the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever:)*

There is no redemption but one, and if a soul be unredeemed, the hope of it ceaseth for ever.

Psalms 49:9. *That he should still live for ever, and not see corruption.*

For the bodies of the great are fed upon by the worm as readily as the bodies of the paupers. They may embalm the body, if they will, to cheat the worm, or put it into a coffin of lead, but little can they do with it. It is a costly business after all, and is the exception to the rule. Even the wisest cannot live for ever, so as not to see corruption.

Psalms 49:10. *For he seeth that wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish and leave their wealth to others.*

Whatever men may have gathered, the wisest cannot find an invention which will enable him to take his treasure with him. He must leave it behind. “Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return thither.”

Psalms 49:11. *Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling places to all generations; they call their lands after their own names.*

Man is so fond of immortality that, while he foolishly rejects the reality of it he clings to the name of it; and he builds a house which he ties down by entail to his heirs, and his heirs’ heirs, “for ever,” as he calls it. And then

he calls the land by his own name, that it may never be forgotten that such a worm as he once crawled over that portion of the earth.

Psalms 49:12. Nevertheless man being in honour abideth not:

He passes away. His grace, his lordship, his reverence, must lie in the grave. How ridiculous grand titles seem when once it is said, “Earth to earth; dust to dust; ashes to ashes.” “Vain pomp and glory of the earth,” indeed we may say, in the presence of the shroud and the mattock, and the grave and the worm. “Man being in honour abideth not.”

Psalms 49:12. He is like the beasts that perish.

Not like any one beast, but like any beast that perisheth. He doth but live, and, as far as this world is concerned, he is gone.

Psalms 49:13. This their way is their folly: yet their prosperity approve their sayings. Selah.

When men have lived only for this world, and die and pass away, without any future worth the having — without any hope of heaven — yet still they report it in the papers that he died “worth” — so much, as if it were wonderful to have so much to leave. And they speak of the shrewd things he used to say — mostly very greedy things, and very grasping things; and though he was a fool, after all, for aiming at the “main chance,” as he called it, while he missed the real main chance, namely, the salvation of his soul yet his posterity inherit his folly with his blood, and they approve his sayings.

Psalms 49:14. Like sheep they are laid in the grave;

They lead a worldly life, and die a worldly death—quiet, contented with this world, — no thought of the world to come.

Psalms 49:14. Death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning;

That everlasting daybreak shall shed a light on many things; and then the master and the lord, who-- tyrannized over the poor and needy, shall find himself under the foot of those he trod upon. “The upright shall have dominion over them in the morning.”

Psalms 49:14-15. And their beauty shall consume in the grave from their dwelling. But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave: for he shall receive me. Selah.

What a happy confidence! Blessed are those who, by a living faith in a living God, know that their soul shall be received into its Maker’s hands.

But woe unto those whose confidence lies in the treasure they have accumulated and the acres they have purchased.

Psalms 49:16-17. Be not thou afraid when one is made rich, when the glory of his house is increased; For when he dieth he shall carry nothing away: his glory shall not descend after him.

They will not know him in the next world to be the squire, the peer, the prince. Death is a dreadful leveller. Envy not the great man of this world. "His glory shall not descend after him."

Psalms 49:18. Though while he lived he blessed his soul: and men will praise thee, when thou doest well to thyself.

Not "when thou doest good," mark; for often when you do good, men will criticize and censure; -- and, the better the deed, the more sure is it to provoke the contempt of many. But "men will praise thee when thou doest well to thyself." A shrewd man, that! That is the kind of man, See how he prospers! A smart, pushing fellow! Oh, yes, he is the man for a friend." Whenever there is an aggravated selfishness that accumulates to itself like a rolling snow-ball, men are sure to praise. It is the irony of life.

Psalms 49:19. He shall go to the generation of his fathers; they shall never see light.

They are sleeping in the grave. So shall he, and beyond the grave there is nothing but darkness for him whose heart is set on this world.

Psalms 49:20. Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish.

Understanding, and the fear of the Lord which is the beginning thereof, and not earthly honour, is our only succor in the day of death.

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PSALM 50

Verses 1-10

A Psalm of Asaph.

Whether this means that Asaph wrote it, or that it was committed to him to sing, we do not know. Certainly Asaph did write some Psalms. There are twelve ascribed to him in the book of Psalms. He wrote some, and it is equally certain that some others were dedicated to him. He had the leadership of the orchestra, who sang the Psalm in the temple. This is a very

marvelous Psalm. If we only consider the poetry of it, it is one of the chief of the Psalms, but its matter is very deep — august. It should be read with great reverence of spirit. The Psalm begins with a prologue in which the scene is introduced. God is represented as coming forth out of Zion to judge those who profess to be his people — to discern between the precious and the vile — to separate between mere professors and pretenders. The first six verses represent God as coming.

[Psalms 50:1](#). *The mighty God, even the LORD, hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof.*

The Hebrew hath it, “El Elohim, Jehovah hath spoken” — three names of God — great and mysterious — the strong God, the only God, the self-existent God. He speaks — calls upon the whole earth from the east to the west to listen to his voice.

[Psalms 50:2](#). *Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined.*

There he dwelt. Now in this scene he is represented as shining forth from it. As he had described the earth as being lighted by the sun from the east to the west, so now God himself, who at first speaks and demands a hearing, now shines forth with beams of glory which altogether eclipse the brightness of the sun. “Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined.”

[Psalms 50:3](#). *Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him.*

The voice was heard saying that God would come, and then the beams of glory which warned men that he was coming; and here his people stand attentive, expecting him to come. “They expect him to speak.” Fire and rushing wind are usually used in Scripture as attendants of the throne of God, fire representing justice in action, and the tempest representing his power when it is displayed. Think of God’s coming thus. The poet here pictures it, but it will be so in very deed. “The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, taking vengeance upon thee that know not God.” He will even come after this manner, “for our God is a consuming fire.”

[Psalms 50:4](#). *He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people.*

Do you catch the thought? There comes the great Judge with the fire burning before him. He rides upon a cherub — yea, rides upon the wings of the wind, and then he calls heaven, with all the angels and glorified spirits,

and he calls to earth, with all its inhabitants, to stand and witness what he does while he judges his people.

[Psalms 50:5](#). *Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.*

God has a separated and chosen people. It will be a part of the proceedings at the last great day to gather these together unto God. There will be a day when he will make up his jewels — a time when he will gather his wheat into his garner. But as this Psalm stands, this is a large gathering. It refers to a picture of all professing saints being brought before the throne of God — true saints that made a covenant with God by sacrifice. They see Jesus Christ, who ratifies the covenant of grace by blood, and they have laid their hands on Christ, and the covenant made between them and God. But there were others in the Psalmist's day who had offered sacrifice and pretended to have made a covenant with God, and there are their representatives in these days. They are now to be gathered before the throne of judgment, for God has come to judge them.

[Psalms 50:6](#). *And the heavens shall declare his righteousness: for God is judge himself. Selah.*

The very heavens, as they look down upon the august assize where God himself, not by deputy, but in the person of his dear Son, shall sit and judge — the heavens shall declare his righteousness. Now I doubt not the heavens often wonder how it is that God permits the ungodly to be mixed with the righteous in his Church. But ah! when the fan shall be in his hand, and he shall thoroughly purge his floor — when he shall lay justice to the line and righteousness to the plummet — the angels shall wonder at the exactness and accuracy of the divine judgment. “Selah.” Pause, rest, consider, admire, adore, humble yourself, pray. It is good to have a pause when such a scene as this is before us. Now from the 5th verse down to the 15th verse you have God's dealing with his people. The Judge is sitting on the throne. He begins to speak thus: —

[Psalms 50:7](#). *Hear, O my people, and I will speak: O Israel, and I will testify against thee: I am God, even thy God.*

It is with his national people, the Jews; it is with his visible Church, God is now dealing. He himself has seen the ways of his professing people: he need not, therefore, call any witnesses. He who cannot err will testify against us; and he declares himself here not only as God, but under that name, “thy God.” It was thus the law began. “I am the Lord thy God that

brought thee up out of the land of Egypt and out of the house of bondage.” It is thus the judgment and rebuke begin: “I am God, even thy God.”

[Psalms 50:8](#). *I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings, to have been continually before me.*

He is going to deal with weightier matters than that. Whether they have, or have not, offered abundant sacrifices, that is not the thing which God looks at. “I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices. Nay, I have done with thy sacrifices.”

[Psalms 50:9](#). *I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he goats out of thy folds.*

“Do you think that these things in themselves are of any value to me. O ye formalists? I will not even take them.”

[Psalms 50:10](#). *For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills.*

Though men call them theirs, yet they are thy God’s.

Verses 1-23

A Psalm of Asaph. It is mentioned, in the life of Hezekiah, that “the king and the princes commanded the Levites to sing praise unto the Lord with the words of David, and of Asaph the seer,” so that very likely this Psalm was sung in the temple after it had been cleansed and reopened for worship. The first part of the Psalm contains a majestic prophecy of the Second Advent.

[Psalms 50:1-3](#). *The mighty God, even the LORD, hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof. Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined. Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him.*

He came once under the old legal dispensation, and then “there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount; ... Sinai was altogether on a smoke because the Lord descended upon in it fire,” and when Christ shall come, in the latter days, with equal splendor, there shall be fire and tempest to swell the pomp of his court.

[Psalms 50:4](#). *He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people.*

Heaven shall yield up the blessed who are already there, and earth shall give up those that are alive and remain until Christ’s coming, and so the whole company of the redeemed shall stand in the presence of their great

Lord and Saviour when Christ shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe.” This is the summons that is to ring out to the heavens above and the earth beneath: —

[Psalms 50:5-6](#). *Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice. And the heavens shall declare his righteousness: for God is judge himself. Selah.*

Now the subject of the Psalm changes; but let not the doctrine of the Second Advent pass from our thoughts. Christ will surely come again, but are we all prepared to meet him? Shall we behold that glorious appearance with joy or with sorrow? When he reigns with his ancients gloriously, shall we share in the splendors of that reign? Lord, call us to thyself now; help us to suffer with thee now; help us to bear reproach for thee among men now, and then, though — “It doth not yet appear how great we must be made,” — yet we know that “When we see our Saviour here, we shall be like our Head.” Now the Lord addresses his own people: —

[Psalms 50:7](#). *Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee: I am God, even thy God.*

Note then that, with all the faults which Christ can find in his people, he is still their God. All the sins of the saints cannot separate them from Christ. They may blot the indenture, but it is only a copy of the covenant made by Christ on their behalf; the real title-deeds are in heaven, beyond all risk of loss. Sinner though thou art, O child of Israel, yet God is thy God still, and not all thine imperfections, follies, and backslidings can ever rob thee of thine eternal interest in him.

[Psalms 50:8-13](#). *I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings, to have been continually before me. I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he goats out of thy folds. For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains; and the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fullness thereof. Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?*

The Lord puts a slur upon the Levitical sacrifices in comparison with evangelical offerings. He sets prayer and praise before the blood of bulls or the sacrifices of goats. Yet we are not to understand that God despises the gifts of his people. If you give to God as though he needed your help, he will have none of it but our gracious God is so condescending that, although he needs nothing, he permits his people to bring their thank-offerings, and

to lay them at his feet. My God, wilt thou accept a gift from me? Then I will not be slow to give it to thee. Let every one of us feel in his heart that, though God needeth nothing from us, yet we need the privilege of giving to him.

[Psalms 50:14-15](#). *Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High; and call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.*

See the three ways of praising God. One is by giving him your grateful thanksgiving. Banish your murmurings; sweep away your mistrusts; and let your mouth be filled with his praise all the day long. Then the next way of praising God is by paying your vows unto him; let your constant prayers and offerings to God prove the gratitude of your heart. And the last and sweetest way of praising God is to call upon him in the day of trouble. There are many of you who are in trouble at this moment, therefore call upon God. Perhaps you say, "That will benefit me, but how will it glorify him?" Why, God getteth much honour out of hearts that dare to trust him. If thou canst cast thy burden upon the Lord, thou wilt as much honour him as angels do when, with veiled faces, they cry, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory." We adore his wisdom, his faithfulness, his love, his grace, his truth, his power, when we believe that in the darkest night he can bring us sudden daylight, and that in the ebb-tide of our affairs he can bring the floods back again. Christian, honour thy God by calling upon him. With all thy difficulties, and doubts, and fears, call upon God, and he will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify him. Now comes another change: —

[Psalms 50:16](#). *But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?*

Unconverted preachers, unsaved Sabbath-school teachers, what answer can you give to this question of the Most High?

[Psalms 50:17-20](#). *Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee. When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him, and has been a partaker with adulterers. Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit. Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own mother's son.*

Slander, you see, is put side by side with adultery and theft; and indeed, I do not know whether it is not the worst of the three. You might almost as well cut a man's throat as slander his character. You had better steal his

purse than steal his good name. “What shall be given unto thee? or what shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue? Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper.” There are no coals hot enough to burn slanderous tongues; there are no punishments severe enough for those who slander their own mother’s son.

[Psalms 50:21](#). *These things hast thou done, and I kept silence;*

A wonderful thing is that silence of God, that longsuffering with sinners and another wonderful thing is the impudent interpretation which the sinner gives to that silence.

[Psalms 50:21](#). *Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes.*

“I will do what I have not yet done. If thou thinkest me in arrears, I will clear myself with thee soon. I will ease me of mine adversaries.” When God arises in judgment, he may make it to be a slow work, but he will make it to be a sure work.

[Psalms 50:22-23](#). *Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver. Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God.*

How blessed, then, is it to praise the Lord both with the lip and with the life!

Verses 14-23

In the first part of this Psalm God has solemnly expostulated with his people as to the utter worthlessness of sacrifice and ceremony apart from living faith in him, and holy life as its fruit; and he sums it all up in the searching question of the 13th verse, “Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? Have ye such a groveling opinion of me, your God, as to conceive that I am satisfied with these things?” See what contempt the Lord pours upon sacrifices — even those that were of his own ordaining — when men rested in them and made them their confidence and their end.

[Psalms 50:14](#). *Offer unto God thanksgiving:*

This is what he wants — heart-work.

[Psalms 50:14](#). *And pay thy vows unto the most High:*

This is what he demands — obedience.

[Psalms 50:15](#). *And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.*

Thus you see God has spoken to his professing people — to those who were moral, decent, and observant of outward ritual. He now turns to some others — some others, perhaps, quite as outwardly religious, but their lives were immoral; their conduct was a breach of his law. At first he speaks of their neglect of the first table, which says, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,” and shows that it is not bullocks and rams which can make amends for forgetfulness of God. Now he turns to the second table and shows that no amount of sacrifice can make up for breaches of the law of God as it touches our fellow men.

[Psalms 50:16](#). *But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?*

Your unholiness, even though you were of the tribe of Levi, would disqualify you from declaring my statutes. Your mouth full of slander, how should you dare to use it to speak of my covenant with it?

[Psalms 50:17](#). *Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee.*

As if they were worthless things to be thrown away — as if they were obnoxious things to be thrown behind thy back where thou couldest not see them. “Dost thou talk about worshipping me, whilst thou art neglecting my words?” Now it is a very solemn thing when a man boasts about the covenant, or about the doctrines of grace, or about outward ceremonies, and yet there are parts of God’s Word that he neglects — there are portions of God’s will that he dares not look in the face. If ever I meet a text that I am afraid of, I begin to be afraid off myself; and if I feel any tendency to take away from a text any of its swooping charges or its strong demands, I feel that surely I must have quarreled, with this text, because it has quarreled with me. How can we think we are offering to God acceptable sacrifice when any of his words are cast behind our backs?

[Psalms 50:18](#). *When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him, and hast been partaker with adulterers.*

“When thou sawest a thief thou consentedst with him,” and some professors do this. If they do not themselves rob, there are some who will employ their clerks to tell lies in writing. They consent in the bad trade of others. They become accomplices, helping to make excuses for others.

“And hast been partaker with adulterers.” Can a man profess to be religious, and yet do this? Well, I have known such, and such will creep into the Church of God still — unclean, unchaste men, who nevertheless will

come and sit as God's people sit, and sing as God's people sing. And, indeed, any one who listens to lascivious talk, or who smiles at an unchaste jest, is himself a partaker with adulterers more or less.

[Psalms 50:19](#). *Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit.*

How many do this, and yet think they are the children of God? They ruin other characters most remorselessly; they will spread false reports, if not actually invent them, and yet think themselves the people of God.

[Psalms 50:20](#). *Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own mother's son.*

When a tongue has once learned the habit of calumny, it will spare none. The nearest relative and the dearest will become victims to the habit — first of gossip and afterwards of actual detraction and lying. Oh! the misery, the pain, that is caused in the world by this habit which is so rife! And can we imagine ourselves to be the people of God when we delight in repeating false stories about others? Have we forgotten the truth of that word, "All liars shall have their portion in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone"? As surely as God is true and loves truth, if we love lies, where God is we can never come. It matters not how much we may pretend to have reverence for God, and to have an experience of his truth; we are not of the truth, neither are we of God.

[Psalms 50:21](#). *These things hast thou done, and I kept silence;*

God, in his long-suffering, bears with these sinners. "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself." These men came at last to say, "Pooh! the prophets make too much fuss about holiness. You can serve God, and yet, after all, live as we do. So long as we give God a tithe, it matters not how we get our property. If we offer him the bulls, he will be quite content." Ah! to what do men degrade their God! Some made him of old to be like unto a bullock that hath horns and hoofs; but many men now-a-days think God to be like themselves, and that is worse.

[Psalms 50:21](#). *Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes.*

"I will lay thy sins out before thee — parcel them out, 'Item this' — Item that.' I will classify them: I will set them like a dreadful army in array before thee. I will let thee see that, though I had patience with thee, I was neither blind nor deaf, but heard and saw all that thou hast done, and noted

it all.” Oh! what a vista this opens up for unholy professors — for ungodly members of Christian churches!

[Psalms 50:22](#). *Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.*

What solemn words! What dreadful words? God never plays at threatening; and his ministers, when they speak of wrath to come, are not to speak with velvet mouths and soft words, for “Oh! the wrath to come,” as George Whitefield used to say with uplifted hands and streaming eyes, “The wrath to come! The wrath to come — how dreadful will it be:” God himself proves it. “Beware ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver.”

And then the Psalm finishes up with this kind word of gracious address which drops like raindrops out of the bosom of the tempest that went before:

[Psalms 50:23](#). *Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me:*

More than he that offers bullocks.

[Psalms 50:23](#). *And to him that ordereth his conversation aright.*

The man that strives in the sight of God to walk a holy life: this is the man to whom:

[Psalms 50:23](#). *Will I show the salvation of God.*

If he wants saving, let him order his conversation as he may, he will owe all to sovereign grace. He will have no merit of his own; “but where I by grace,” saith the Lord, “lead a man to order his conversation aright there will I show more and more fully, and at last perfectly in him, the salvation of God.”

This exposition consisted of readings from [Psalms 50:14-23](#); [Ezekiel 36:21-38](#).

[PSALMS CONTENTS](#)

PSALM 51

Verses 1-19

There are seven penitential Psalms, but this seems to be the chief one of the seven. The language of David is as suitable to us today as it was to him, and though much was lost to the cause of righteousness by David’s sin, yet the Church is enriched for all ages by the possession of such a Psalm as

this. It is a marvelous recompense. Surely here the Lord reigneth, bringing good out of evil, blessing generation after generation through that which in itself was a great evil.

[Psalms 51:1](#). *Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.*

Observe he appeals to mercy, and mercy only — to mercy, abounding mercy in its tenderest and kindest aspect. “According to thy tender mercies.” Note here David does not use his name. He does not say, “Lord remember David”: he is ashamed of his name. And he does not seem to want God to remember that, but to remember mercy: and to have pity upon this nameless sinner. He does not say, “Save the son of thine handmaid,” or “Deliver thy servant,” as he was wont to do; he just appeals to mercy, and that is all. And observe it is not “Have mercy upon me, oh! my God.” He is far off now: he has lost the comfortable assurance of the covenant of grace, and so it is rather more like the cry of the prodigal when he returned and said, “I am not worthy to be called thy son”: have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness — according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out — (or as more correctly it might be rendered, “wash out” — “wipe out”) — my transgressions. The allusion is rather to a dish — wipe it out, turn it upside down, and turn out all that is in it, sweep it away — wipe out all my transgressions. Or it may be as a withdrawal of a record in court when the indictment is withdrawn, “Lord be pleased to quash the indictment against me; blot out all my transgressions.”

[Psalms 51:2](#). *Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.*

Nothing about the punishment observe — he does not mention that. The true penitent, though he dreads punishment, much more dreads sin. It is sinfulness — sin that he would be delivered from. “Wash me.” Thou must do it; no other washing will suffice. Wash me thoroughly, till I am perfectly cleansed: cleanse me from my sin — my sin. I do not lay it on anyone else; cleanse me from it.

[Psalms 51:3](#). *For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.*

Unless sin is before us, we shall not be likely to spread it before God; but when we have knowledge of it, then we shall make acknowledgment of it to God. “My sin is ever before me.” He was in such a state of heart that

the remembrance of sin seemed painted on his eyeballs. Even in his dreams he remembered it: he was never free from the dread remembrance of it.

[Psalms 51:4](#). *Against thee only have I sinned.*

Yet he had sinned against many more; but just now the thought of his sin against God swallowed up all else. All his offenses against his fellow men were trivial compared with the high treason which he had committed against his God. This is the virus of sin, that it is sin against God.

[Psalms 51:4](#). *And done this evil in thy sight.*

Whilst thou wast looking on. For a thief to steal in the presence of the Judge is impudence indeed, but yet in thy presence, O my God, I have done this evil.

[Psalms 51:4](#). *That thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.*

As much as to say, "I make this confession of sin, which is so black, that if thou shouldest judge me, however severely, or sentence me to however exemplary a punishment, thou wilt be quite clear and quite just. I could put in no plea against whatever thou shouldest command. I richly deserve all thy wrath can bring upon me."

[Psalms 51:5](#). *Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin, did my mother conceive me.*

The black stream leads him to look at the black fountain. How can we expect from parents who have sinned that there should be born unto them pure and spotless children. No! the tendencies in us all towards evil are there at the very first. He does not at all venture to excuse himself, but rather to aggravate his sin, that he had been a sinner from his very birth.

[Psalms 51:6-7](#). *Behold thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean:*

He had seen the leper pronounced clean when the hyssop was dipped in blood and sprinkled on him; but then the leper had to be clean beforehand before this could make him ceremonially clean. He is leaping through the first process and coming to the closing one, his soul anxious to be accepted with God at once.

[Psalms 51:7](#). *Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.*

Yet what can be whiter than snow? Snow is not like a whited wall that is but white on the surface: it is white all through. And yet when God washes the believer, he makes him whiter than snow, for the snow soon becomes

tainted, soon loses its purity; but we never shall if God shall wash us. There was no provision made for the cleansing of an adulterer under the law. David, therefore, had to look beyond all the sacrifices of the law to the cleansing power of the great coming sacrifice, and he so believed in it that with a brave faith — (I know no more brave expression in all Scripture than this) — he says, “Wash me, filthy as I am, and I shall be whiter than snow.”

[Psalms 51:8](#). *Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.*

The original expression is “bones cracked,” or, as one puts it, smashed. His sense of sin had been so great that he felt as one might feel whose very bones had been smashed by some terrible blow. So he seems to say that, as there may be a delightful pleasure in having every one of these broken bones restored, such would be his pleasure if God would pardon his sins.

[Psalms 51:9](#). *Hide thy face from my sins,*

If we set out sins before our own faces, then God will turn his face away from our sins. If we hide our sins from our faces, God will set them before his face, but when they are ever before us they shall be never before him.

[Psalms 51:9-10](#). *And blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God:*

It is a creation: the very word is used which is employed concerning the creation in the first chapter of Genesis. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

[Psalms 51:11](#). *Cast me not away from thy presence: and take not thy holy spirit from me.*

I have put thee away from my presence by forgetting thee, but put me not away from thy presence. I have been filled with an unholy spirit, but oh! take not thy Holy Spirit from me.

[Psalms 51:12](#). *Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation and uphold me.*

He feels how much he needs it. The burnt child dreads the fire. “Uphold me with thy free spirit.”

[Psalms 51:13](#). *Then will I teach transgressors thy ways: and sinners shall be converted unto thee.*

And David has been doing that ever since, for this Psalm has been a continual sermon to sinners, teaching them God’s ways in pardoning sin; and many, I doubt not, have been converted unto God by his Spirit through the language of this Psalm. When you and I find Christ, let us tell of our blessed finding. Hast thou honey? Eat it not all thyself: go, tell thy fellow

men. Art thou saved? Tarry not, but go and spread the news that others may be saved too.

[Psalms 51:14](#). *Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation;*

His faith is growing. He has humbled himself. It is the way to rise. Weaken thyself before God, and thou shalt grow strong. Empty thyself, and thou shalt be filled; bow low, and he will lift thee up. “Thou God of my salvation.”

[Psalms 51:14](#). *And my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.*

Those tongues that confess sins are the best tongues to sing with. That tongue which has been salted with the brine of penitence is fitted to be sweet with the honey of praise.

[Psalms 51:15](#). *O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.*

You know the leper when he was unclean — what did he do? He covered his lips, as much as to confess that he was not fit to speak. So here the unclean David, with the covering over his lips, will not venture to speak until the Lord has taken away his sin, and opened his mouth for him. It was this that Isaiah meant when he said, “Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips”; but when it was said concerning the live coal, “Lo, this hath touched thy lips,” then he spake right eloquently. “Lord, open thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth thy praise.”

[Psalms 51:16](#). *For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering.*

Here we have what God does desire, and what he does not. If you turn to the sixth verse, you will see what he does desire. “Thou desirest truth in the inward parts.” Now here he does not desire the mere outward and external worship rendered by sacrifice. It was not the type alone that satisfied him.

[Psalms 51:17](#). *The sacrifices of God are a broken Spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.*

There are some spices that are never perfect in fragrance till they are pounded with the pestle in the mortar, and so is a broken heart. If it be made to suffer and to smart, yet there is sweet pleasure to the Lord when he perceives in his people the smart concerning sin — when they hate and loathe it.

[Psalms 51:18-19](#). *Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem. Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of*

righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar.

Gratitude ascends when sin is forgiven, and when God appears to bless his church, then she blesses her God.

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 51, [Psalms 119:145-168](#).

[PSALMS CONTENTS](#)

Psalm Chapter 52

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

Psalm Chapter 53

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

Psalm Chapter 54

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

PSALM 55

Verses 1-17

To the chief Musician on Neginoth, Maschil, A Psalm of David. It needed the chief musician to sing such a Psalm as this; it is so full of sorrow, and yet so full of confidence in God. It is a Psalm upon the stringed instruments, and it sings not of man only, but of that Son of man — that greatest of men, who was also greatest in grief as greatest in faith. Maschil: that is, “instructive,” “full of teaching.” The experience of one child of God is instructive to another, and especially the experience of the great First-born among many brethren. A Psalm of David — David, that many-sided man, who seemed not one, but “all mankind’s epitome.” Who has not found

his own experience when he has read the Psalms of David? It is a looking-glass — this Book of Psalms — which reflects us all. See how he begins.

Psalms 55:1. Give ear to my prayer, O God;

All the saints pray. There is no exception to this rule. And in their times of trouble they pray with greater vehemence than ever. They delight in prayer. But observe how eager they are that God should hear them. It is not praying for praying's sake — for the use of good words only. “Give ear to my prayer, O God.”

Psalms 55:1. And hide not thyself from my supplication.

When a man passes by his fellow in his distress, he is said to hide himself.

O God, do not pass me by, When thou hearest my plaintive voice, do not hurry on and leave me to my woes. Forget not, beloved, that our Lord Jesus Christ did suffer the hidings of God's face. You and I may trust that in our hour of prayer we shall not have to do so. “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” But even if we should have to drink of that cup, better lips than ours have tasted its bitterness long ago.

Psalms 55:2. Attend unto me, and hear me:

That is three times he thus implores God to give him a hearing. It reminds me of that Gethsemane pleading of our Lord when thrice he prayed using the same words. Here David begins — makes his exordium in prayer with a threefold cry to God. “Give ear to me; hide not thyself from me; attend unto my prayer, and hear me.”

Psalms 55:2. I mourn in my complaint, and make a noise;

Sometimes prayer is scarcely articulate. “I make a noise.” He was very free with God. He spoke out his heart as best his heart would speak, and he seemed to ramble. I believe that some of our sweetly-composed prayers have no prayer in them, and some of our broken petitions are those that reach the heart of God. “Groanings that cannot be uttered” are prayers that cannot be refused. There may be most strength in the passion of the soul when there is least order in the expression of the soul. “I mourn in my complaints, and make a noise.”

Psalms 55:3. Because of the voice of the enemy,

He can speak, and speak clearly too. Malice is never short of language, “because of the voice of the enemy.”

Psalms 55:3. Because of the oppression of the wicked:

The best men have often been the most oppressed of men. Men have often spoken worst of those who have deserved the best. David is in that plight, and so was our Lord. He, too, knew the voice of the enemy and the oppression of the wicked.

Psalms 55:3. For they cast iniquity upon me,

They bespatter me with their mire; they slander me. They speak evil of my good.

Psalms 55:3. And in wrath they hate me.

It is the old story. The seed of the serpent naturally hates the seed of the woman. Even our Lord had a bruised heel. Know ye not that Ishmael persecutes Isaac, the child of the promise? All down history there runs this line — the mark of blood and suffering. It must be so, “for they cast iniquity upon me, and in wrath they hate me.”

Psalms 55:4. My heart is sore pained within me: and the terrors of death are fallen upon me.

I suppose that David may have written this after he had been driven out of Jerusalem by the party under the leadership of his son Absalom and Ahithophel. When it is all over he sings his song of dolour, and yet of confidence before his God. You know that our Lord Jesus Christ could use this language with very great emphasis. “My heart is sore pained within me, and the terrors of death have fallen upon me” — as if mid-night came down upon his soul — came down from God. “Are fallen upon me.” Descended therefore; and those are the heaviest of griefs which seem to come down just when we expected that showers of mercy would come down. Our Saviour knew what this meant.

Psalms 55:5-6. Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me. And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest.

If he could not have the wings of an eagle to fight out the conflict, he begged for the wings of a dove to fly from it. But what would you and I be if we had wings? Where could we go if we had wings, but, like the dove of Noah, fly to the Lord? And we can get there without wings, brethren. We can get there by faith in him. It is a vain wish, then, and yet how many have sighed: — “Oh! for a lodge in some vast wilderness, Some boundless contiguity of shade, Where rumor of oppression and deceit might never reach me more.” Ah! we sigh for solitude, and when we get solitude we sigh to get out of it.

Psalms 55:7. *Lo, then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness. Selah.*

Why, David had been in the wilderness, and then he sighed to get back to the temple of God; but such foolish creatures are we at our very wisest that we know not what we sigh for. It was good for David that he had not wings, and it is good for you that you cannot run away. God has made you no armor for your back because you must go forward. Long ago he burnt our boats. We cannot return. We must “forward” now to the eternal victories in his strength.

Psalms 55:8. *I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest.*

But he that would fly away from slander must fly very fast. How can we escape it? That cruel tongue, that wicked tongue walks through the earth and smites with its sword the best of God’s people. Now, like a soldier, David prays as his Master would never pray.

Psalms 55:9. *Destroy, O Lord, and divide their tongues: for I have seen violence and strife in the city.*

That was not a bad prayer, for God heard it. He did divide their tongues. The counsels of the wicked were put to naught, and so they made a mistake, and David escaped through their divisions. I see not how a king driven from his throne and hunted by rebels, can pray differently from this.

If he be a warrior and fights at all, he must wish for victory. Yet let me remind you that these verses need not be read in the imperative, neither may they necessarily be understood to be prayers. They can be read as prophecies. “God will destroy and divide the tongues of the wicked.” The divisions of error are the hope of truth. God divides the tongues of those who use their tongues against his Word, and so his truth conquers.

Psalms 55:10. *Day and night they go about upon the walls thereof: mischief also and sorrow are in the midst of it.*

Remember, Jerusalem was in the hands of a band of wicked men.

Everywhere sin prevailed when David had quitted it.

Psalms 55:11-12. *Wickedness is in the midst thereof: deceit and guile depart not from her streets. For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him:*

Here you get to the center of David’s grief. Ahithophel had betrayed him, and here you begin to see the portrait of Christ coming out on the

canvas.

David seems to be painted first, and then there is painted an image of our Lord, which is seen here and there. "It was not an enemy; then I could have borne it."

Psalms 55:13. *But it was thou,*

In the original it runs thus: "But thou." The ardor of poetry is upon the Psalmist. He sees him: "Thou." And he looks at him with indignation: "Thou."

Psalms 55:13-14. *A man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company.*

It is Ahithophel; it is Judas Iscariot; it is either; it is both. Oh! what a grief it is to be betrayed by one whom we have trusted, one whom we treated as our equal, one whom we followed as a trusted guide, one to whom we told our secret and linked our heart. "Mine acquaintance." One whose friendship was sanctified by the sanctions of religion. "We took sweet counsel together, and walked to the house of God in company." Have any of you had to suffer from this serpent's tongue? Be not surprised. Your Master endured it before you. And now David bursts out in words of prayer, "Let death seize upon them. Let them go down quick into hell."

Psalms 55:15. *Let death seize upon them, and let them go down quick into hell: for wickedness is in their dwellings, and among them.*

And this prayer also was heard, for Ahithophel was hanged with a rope, and Absalom without one; and their followers perished by thousands in the wood of Ephraim; and so God swept away the good man's slanderers.

Psalms 55:16. *As for me,*

What would I do? Plot against their plots, and set cunning against their cunning? No, not I.

Psalms 55:16-17. *I will call upon God; and the LORD shall save me. Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice.*

He would pray often, but not too often. Where time sets her boundaries there are we to set up our altars: evening and morning, and at noon. It seems natural that our undertakings should be begun, continued, and ended in God, and that each day. Oh! pray much when your enemies plot much. If, morning, noon, and evening, they are seeking your ill, then just as often seek you good from God. How beautifully he puts it. "He shall hear my

voice.” He does not pray at a peradventure. He is certain that prayer will come up to God. Yea, more than that, he anticipates a blessing; he foresees, nay, he sees the blessing.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 56

Verses 1-13

To the chief Musician upon Jonathelemrechokim, Michtam (a golden Psalm) of David, when the Philistines took him in Gath.

[Psalms 56:1-2](#). *Be merciful unto me, O God: for man would swallow me up: he fighting daily oppresseth me. Mine enemies would daily swallow me up: for they be many that fight against me, O thou most High.*

David was in such peril from man that he cried to God to come to our rescue. Man was merciless to him, so he prayed, “Be merciful unto me, O God.” His enemies were many and mighty, so he appealed to the One who was almighty; who could destroy them, or put them all to flight.

[Psalms 56:3](#). *What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.*

He is a happy man who can trust in God when he is afraid, but he is still happier who can say, “I will trust, and not be afraid.”

[Psalms 56:4](#). *In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.*

The trusting soul is a singing soul, and it soon becomes a courageous soul. Faith in God drives out the fear of man: “In God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.”

[Psalms 56:5-6](#). *Every day they wrest my words: all their thoughts are against me for evil. They gather themselves together, they hide themselves, they mark my steps when they wait for my soul.*

David had many enemies, Saul, Doeg the Edomite, the Philistines, and some even in his own household, but all their malice and craft were in vain since the Lord was on his side. We too have enemies who wrest our words, whose thoughts against us are evil, who lay traps for us, and lie in ambush to take us unawares; but we need not fear any of them, not even the great adversary himself, if we are trusting in the Lord.

[Psalms 56:7](#). *Shall they escape by iniquity? in thine anger cast down the people, O God.?*

They sought to cast him down, so he prayed to the Lord to cast them down, and we know how graciously the Lord answered his supplication.

[Psalms 56:8](#). *Thou tellest my wanderings: put thou my tears into thy bottle: are they not in thy book?*

David was such a wanderer at that time that he might not remember all the places where he had hidden away from Saul, but God had a record of them, and even of his tears: “are they not in thy book?” There is nothing that concerns the Lord’s chosen people that is not noted and remembered by him.

[Psalms 56:9](#). *When I cry unto thee, then shall mine enemies turn back: this I know; for God is for me.*

David’s confidence in God was not misplaced, he who can truthfully say, “God is for me,” need not fear however many may be against him.

[Psalms 56:10-11](#). *In God will I praise his word: in the LORD will I praise his word.*

In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me. He repeats the declarations he made in verse 4; such holy confidence may rightly be published again and again. It is most pleasing and honouring to the Lord, and it is most likely to lead other tried believers to follow such a worthy example. The praising and trusting man fears not what man can do unto him.

[Psalms 56:12](#). *Thy vows are upon me, O God I will render praises unto thee.*

David had not forgotten the vows that he had made unto the Lord. Vows should not be lightly made; but, once made, they should be sacredly remembered, and faithfully performed.

[Psalms 56:13](#). *For thou hast delivered my soul from death: wilt not thou deliver my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living?*

So the Psalm ends, as it began, with prayer, a prayer that was most graciously answered, as we can see if we turn to [Psalms 116:8-9](#) : “Thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living.”

[PSALMS CONTENTS](#)

PSALM 57

Verses 1-6

1. *Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast.*

The heading of this Psalm — “To the chief musician, Aitaschith Michtam of David, when he fled from Saul in the cave,” — tells us when it was written. It is one of David’s “golden Psalms.” What a mixture of feebleness and strength there is in this first verse, — the feebleness so beautified by being clothed with the strength of faith! What a turning away from man, and what a turning wholly unto the Lord! And, in coming to the Lord, what humility, and what pleading for mercy, and for mercy only! “Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me.” Yet what holy boldness also! “For my soul trusteth in thee.” And what joyous confidence and what sweet repose in God! “Yea, in the shadow of thy wings, will I make my refuge.” “If I cannot see the brightness of thy face, the shadow of thy wings shall be enough for me. Only let me get near thee, — only permit me humbly to trust thee, and it shall be enough for me, ‘unto these calamities be overpass.’”

2. *I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for me.*

Do you pray like that, my brother, my sister? I hope you do “cry unto God most high;” but do you pray to him as the One “that performeth all things” for you; — not merely who can perform all things for you, but who is actually doing it at the present moment, — working out your lasting good by everything that is transpiring around you?

3. *He shall send from heaven, and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up. Selah.*

If all the forces on earth are not sufficient to save his saint, God will send sufficient reserves from the ranks of the heavenly host to preserve his people; or if he does not determine to preserve them on earth, he will take them away from the earth, to be with him in glory; but, in one way, or another, they shall be eternally secure.

Mark what the psalmist says of the voracity of his enemy: he speaks of Saul as “him that would swallow me up;” and the believer in Jesus is, at times, such an object of the unbeliever’s detestation that he would

annihilate him if he could; but God will sooner send help from heaven for his people than that such a calamity should ever happen.

3, 4. *God shall send forth his mercy and his truth. My soul is among lions:*

What peril David was in, and what dangers often surround the best of the men, — if not from arrows, and swords, and spears, from the hellish artillery of unbridled tongues! A human tongue is soft, but it can cut to the very quick; and the wounds from a cruel tongue are not easily healed. Many a man will bear, as long as he lives, the scars that were made by a slanderous tongue. God can save us, however, even from this great trial, and enable us actually to rejoice in this sharp affliction. It is no strange thing that has happened unto us, for so evil men persecuted the prophets that were before us, as they said all manner of evil against them falsely. God himself was slandered by the old serpent in the garden of Eden, so it is not surprising that his children should be still slandered by the serpent's seed.

4. *And I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword. Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; let thy glory be above all the earth.*

A grand burst of praise, and all the grander because of the condition of the man from whom it came. "My soul is among lions," says he; "but, 'be thou exalted, O God;'" as if he would say, "It does not matter what becomes of me, I shall be content even in this den of lions, so long as thou art exalted above the heavens, and thy glory above all the earth."

6. *They have prepared a net for my steps; my soul is bowed down: they have digged a pit before me, into the midst whereof they are fallen themselves. Selah.*

He knew that it would be so, and he looked upon it as already accomplished; their nets and pits would only injure themselves. Now look at the next verse in the light of the prayer David had been praying. See what a marvellous act of faith, and what a grand result of unwavering confidence in God it is, for a man to be able to sing as David does even when his soul is among lions, and fierce and powerful enemies are all round him, seeking his hurt.

Verses 1-11

To the chief Musician, Altaschith, Michtaim of David, when he fled from Saul in the cave.

This is one of the “Destroy not” Psalms; for that is the meaning of the title, *Altaschith*, which is used here, and in Psalms 58, 59, and 75. *Michtam* of David. David’s golden Psalm, “when he fled from Saul in the cave.” In this Psalm we see the calmness of David’s heart when he was in great peril. He was a man of peace; and to be hunted cruelly, as he was by Saul, greatly pained him. Yet, with all the sensitiveness of his nature, he did not fall into unbelief; for his sensitiveness was balanced by his confidence in his God. You will see how, greatly as he was afflicted, he was greatly strengthened.

[Psalms 57:1](#). *Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me:*

He pleads twice; for his was an urgent case. He would have the Lord help him at once; for, perhaps, if the Lord’s mercy came not to him at once, it would be too late; so he cried, “Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me.”

[Psalms 57:1](#). *For my soul trusteth in thee:*

This is the feather on the arrow of prayer that guides it straight to the heart of God. This is the condition attached to the promise, “According to your faith be it unto thee.” If you can truly plead that your soul is trusting in God, you may be assured that he will not deny you his mercy.

[Psalms 57:1](#). *Yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast.*

What a sweet realization there is here of the power of God to protect him! Just as the little chick hides beneath the mother’s wing, and knows no fear, so says David, “in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge.” There was no refuge to be seen; but David does not ask to see; an unseen God is all that faith wants. If it be only a shadow, yet the shadow of Jehovah’s wings is substantial enough for our confidence: “In the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast.” They will be overpast; the worst calamity will not last forever. We shall think differently of these rough times by-and-by; we ought not to give up in despair, and cast away our confidence while we are in the thick of the fight.

Until the calamities are overpast, it should be our joy to run under God’s protecting wings, and hide ourselves securely there.

[Psalms 57:2](#). *I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for me.*

Faith is never dumb; true faith is a crying faith. If thou hast a confidence in God of such a kind that thou dost not need to pray, get rid of it; for it is of no use to thee; it is a false confidence, it is presumption. Only a crying faith

will be a prevailing faith. “I will cry unto God most high:” the very height and sublimity of God is an attraction to faith; for though he is so high, he can and will stoop. Though God is so high, he can lift me up above the storm; for he is above it himself, and he can set me above it, too. “I will cry unto God most high;” and David sweetly adds, “unto God that performeth for me.” The translators have inserted the words, “all things”, and very properly, too; but David leaves, as it were, a gap, so that we may fill in anything that we please. Thus do we- “Sing the sweet promise of his grace, And the performing God.” He is not one who gives us promises, and then puts us off without the thing promised; but he fulfils the promises he has made, he is the Faithful Promiser: “God that performeth for me.”

[Psalms 57:3](#). *He shall send from heaven, and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up.*

If he cannot find any means upon earth for saving David, he will send from heaven to do it; but he will save him. God is sure to find an ark for his Noahs if the floods should cover the whole earth; and when they cannot be preserved any longer on the earth, he will catch them away to himself in heaven; but he will surely take care of his own: “He shall send from heaven, and save me.” If there were only one of his people in danger, he would rend the heavens in order to save him: “He shall send from heaven and save me,” not only from the danger to my life, but from danger to my character: “from the reproach of him that would swallow me up.” Often, the enemies of the righteous are so fierce and cruel that they would, like some huge python, swallow up the godly man, devour him, make an end of him, make one meal of him, if they could; but God will not allow them to do so. He will send from heaven, and deliver us from the reproach of them that would swallow us up.

[Psalms 57:3](#). *God shall send forth his mercy and his truth.*

The Psalmist had only prayed for mercy; twice he had said, “Be merciful unto me.” But God always answers us more largely than we ask in our prayers; he does exceeding abundantly above what we ask or even think. So his truth comes with his mercy, as a double guard to protect his people: “God shall send forth his mercy and his truth.”

[Psalms 57:4](#). *My soul is among lions: and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword.*

Yet, notice that David says, “I lie” there, that is the emphatic word; and the force of that word conveys this idea, “I recline there; I feel at ease, notwithstanding the danger of my position; I recline, and rest, even among them that are set on fire.” Oh, the calm confidence of the faith that forgets the adversary when once she has hidden herself under the shadow of Jehovah’s wings! The description given of ungodly persecutors is very strong: “whose teeth are spears and arrows.” Their mouth seems to contain a deadly armoury; they have no molars to grind their food, they are all canine teeth, cruel, cutting. You must know some such critical spirits, that seem to be all teeth, and whose every tooth is a spear or an arrow. But their tongue is worse than their teeth, for it is not only a sword, but “a sharp sword”, a sharpened sword. Oh, how tongues will cut and wound!

You may heal the cut of a sword; but who shall heal the cut of a deadly, cruel, malicious, slanderous tongue? Yet for all that, David was not dismayed, but he said, “I lie down among such men, my soul is among lions.” Like Daniel among the lions, so does this man of God take his night’s rest, as calmly as though he were sleeping in his own bed at home.

[Psalm 57:5](#). *Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; let thy glory be above all the earth.*

David so rises above his present circumstances that he begins to praise his God. O beloved, there is no condition in which God ought to be robbed of a song! What if I am sick? Yet my Lord must have my music, even if the harp-strings are not well tuned. What if I am poor? Yet why should I be poor towards him, and deny him my need of praise? What if I am busy? Yet I must still find time for praising him. How sweetly David seeks to exalt and glorify his God, “Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; let thy glory be above all the earth.”

[Psalm 57:6](#). *They have prepared a net for my steps; my soul is bowed down: they have digged a pit before me, into the midst whereof they are fallen themselves.*

They hunted him as they spread a snare for a bird, or as they sought to entrap a wild beast by digging a pit, and covering it over that he might stumble into it. David scarcely has time to tell us of their devices before he discovers that their plans have come to nought: “they have digged a pit before me, into the midst whereof they are fallen themselves.” You may go calmly on, my persecuted friend, for those who seek to do the righteous hurt, will only hurt themselves; their bows shall be broken, their arrows

shall fall back into their own bosoms. Only be thou still, and let the wicked alone; let God fight for thee, and do thou hold thy peace.

[Psalms 57:7](#). *My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise.*

That is enough for me, I will not stop my singing for all my adversaries. Let them howl like lions, I will sing on. Let them dig their pits, I will sing on. I find this my best employment, to keep on praising my God.

“All that remains for me, Is but to love and sing,

And wait until the angels come, To bear me to the King.”

[Psalms 57:8](#). *Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early. My tongue, the glory of my frame, be not thou silent! Bestir thyself!*

“I myself will awake early,” or, “I will awake the dawning.” I will call the sun up to be shining; I will bid him wake to shine to the honour of my Lord. With the earliest birds I will make one more singer in the great concert-hall of God. I will not want more rest, or a longer time to myself to consider all my troubles, I will give my best time, the first hour of the day, to the praise of my God.

[Psalms 57:9](#). *I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people: I will sing unto thee among the nations.*

I will make the Gentiles hear it. They that know not the Lord shall be astonished when they hear me praising him, and they shall ask, “Who is this God of whom this man makes so much?”

[Psalms 57:10-11](#). *For thy mercy is great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds. Be thou exulted, O God, above the heavens: let thy glory be above all the earth.*

God give us that same calm praiseful frame of mind that David possessed if we are called to endure such trials as fell to his lot!

Verses 7-11

Let me say, before we begin our reading, that the 108th Psalm is made up partly of the 60th and partly of the 57th; yet we are sure that the Holy Spirit is not short of language, so that he needs to repeat himself. It is always a pity to think that any portion of Scripture can be tautology. It cannot be; there is some good reason for every repetition; and you will see that, in the two Psalms, which we are about to read, the latter part of the 57th coincides with the first part of the 108th; and that, in the 57th Psalm, we have prayer and praise, and, in the 108th, we have praise and prayer. It is

well that we should see how these two holy exercises can change places, — so that, sometimes, we begin with prayer, and pray ourselves up into praise, and, at other times, we begin with praise, and find in it the strength we need to aid us in prayer.

[Psalms 57:7](#). *My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise.*

Let the lions open their cruel mouths, and roar, and let wicked men, “whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword, do their worst against me; let my every footstep be among the nets and pits that they have set and dug to catch me; even in the midst of danger, ‘my heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I still sing and give praise.’”

[Psalms 57:8](#). *Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early.*

“I will awake the dawn,” — so the Hebrew has it; — “I will wake up the morning and chide it for being so long in opening its eyes to look upon God’s works. David did this, notwithstanding all the trials of his surrounding circumstances. He calls on his “glory” — perhaps he means his tongue, — possibly, his poetic faculty, — perchance, his musical skill, — it may be that he means his intellect, — whatever his “glory” is, he calls upon his highest powers to awake to praise his God. Then he takes his psaltery and harp, — strange companions for a man whose soul is among lions but saints know how to evoke sweetest music even when their enemies are fighting fiercely against them; — and he sings, —

[Psalms 57:9-11](#). *I will praise thee, O lord, among the people: I will sing unto thee among the nations. For thy mercy is great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds. Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: let thy glory be above all the earth.*

Have not some of you found God’s mercy to be “great unto the heavens”? It even seemed to reach above the heavens; and as for God’s truth, you followed it till you could follow it no further, for it had ascended above the clouds. We could scarcely, I think, ever expect to understand here all the truth which God has pleased to let us hear or read. It reaches “unto the clouds,” and there we must leave it for the present. When God ceases to reveal anything, we may cease to inquire concerning it. I saw, in Florence, a picture of “The Sleeping Saviour.” He is represented as sleeping in the manger at Bethlehem, and the artist depicts the angels hovering round him, with their fingers on their lips as though they would not wake him from his

holy slumbers. So, when God bids truth sleep, do not try to wake it. There is enough revealed for thee to know, and more that thou wilt know by-and-by, so, pry not between the folded leaves; but wait your Lord's appointed time to teach you more of his will.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Psalms 57:7-11](#); Psalms 108,

PSALMS CONTENTS

Psalm Chapter 58

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

Psalm Chapter 59

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

Psalm Chapter 60

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

Psalm Chapter 61

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

PSALM 62

Verses 1-12

In this Psalm the royal singer casts himself entirely on God. Here we see the foundation of his expectation laid bare. He has no confidence anywhere but in God. The Psalm begins in the original with the word "Only." I always call it "The 'only' Psalm" because it harps upon that word. David had no mixed reliance; he had not built upon a foundation partly of iron and partly of clay; it was all in harmony throughout; his trust was in the Lord alone.

[Psalms 62:1](#). *Truly-*

Or, as it is in the margin, “Only” —

[Psalms 62:1](#). *My soul waiteth upon God: from him cometh my salvation.*

It is a blessed thing to wait truly and only upon God. You have proved everything else to be a failure, and now you hang upon the bare arm of God alone. There is certainly enough for you to depend upon there. Most people want something to see, something tangible to the senses, to be the object of their confidence; but David says, “Only my soul waiteth upon God: from him cometh my salvation.” It is already on the road; it is coming now; it is a salvation from present trouble and from present temptation. A complete salvation is on the road for all those whose souls are waiting only upon God.

[Psalms 62:2](#). *He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defense; I shall not be greatly moved.*

“Though I have no other shelter, yet,” says he, “God, but God alone, is my rock fortress. Though I have no other deliverer he is my salvation, and though thousands seek to do me hurt, and none will stand up for me, yet he is my shield and my defense.” Then he adds, “I shall not be greatly moved.’ I shall be like a well-anchored ship; I may suffer some tossing, but I cannot drift far away, my grace holds me fast.”

[Psalms 62:3](#). *How long will ye imagine mischief against a man? ye shall be slain all of you: as a bowing wall shall ye be, and as a tottering fence.*

See how he laughs at his enemies. He tells them they are like a wall that came over, bulges out, and shakes and totters, with a push, it will go over. “You think that you will destroy me,” says he, “but you will yourselves be destroyed.”

[Psalms 62:4](#). *They only consult to cast him down from his excellency: they delight in lies: they bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly. Selah.*

It is a sure proof that they delight in lies because they are guilty of telling them. They can speak soft oily words all the while that they are harboring curses in their hearts. God save us from having a tongue that talks in a different way from that in which our heart feels! But those that delight in lies are never better pleased than when they can find a man of God upon whom they can spit their venom; and of all cruel things slander is the worst, and it deserves the worst punishment. Well did the psalmist ask, “What shall be given unto thee? or what shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue?”

Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper.” Such punishment as that a slanderer’s tongue well deserves to feel.

[Psalms 62:5](#). *My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him.*

First he said that his salvation came from the Lord, and now he says that his exultation comes from him. All that he needs, and all that he wishes for, he gets from his God. “Let my foes slander me,” he seems to say, “but, O my soul, do thou wait upon God! Let their tongues keep on inventing their diabolical falsehoods; but, O my soul, take thou no notice of them! Sit thou down at Jehovah’s feet, and patiently wait then he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday.”

[Psalms 62:6](#). *He only is my rock and my salvation: he is my defense; I shall not be moved.*

Notice how David’s faith grows. In verse 2, he says, “I shall not be greatly moved;” but now he says, “I shall not be moved at all.” What strength faith gives to a man, and what strength prayer gives to a man! We may begin our supplication tremblingly, but as we draw near to God we become confident in him, and filled with holy boldness.

[Psalms 62:7-8](#). *In God is my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God. Trust in him at all times;-*

I cannot tell what “times” you may be passing through just now, yet I can repeat David’s exhortation, “Trust in him at all times.” In your darkest hours, in the most terrible times that you ever have, when all seems lost, when the dearest object of your heart’s love is taken from you, or when you yourself are coming to the swellings of Jordan, still trust in the Lord: “Trust in him at all times;” —

[Psalms 62:8](#). *Ye people, pour out your heart before him:-*

That is the way to get rid of all your troubles; take your heart, and turn it upside down, and pour out all that is in it. Do not save a drop or a drag: try not to hide one secret sorrow from your God, nor one slight grief that nestles in a corner of your spirit. “Pour out your heart before him.” It will not be wise for you to pour it out before your fellows, for they will misunderstand you and misrepresent you; but “pour out your heart before him:” —

[Psalms 62:8-9](#). *God is a refuge for us. Selah. Surely men of low degree are vanity,*

There is nothing in them; they are only the very essence of vanity.

[Psalms 62:9](#). *And men of high degree-*

They must surely be better. No, they are even worse: “Men of high degree” —

[Psalms 62:9](#). *Are a lie:*

Their presence of being better because they are of high degree is mere presence. Well but, if we mix them up, and get some poor men and some rich ones, some peasants and some peers, can we not make something solid out of this mixture? Oh, no!

[Psalms 62:9](#). *To be laid in the balance, they are altogether lighter than vanity.*

The men of low degree alone were vanity, but when the men of high degree were put with them, they became lighter than vanity; so that there seems to be a propensity in the men of high degree to make those that are of low degree even lighter than they are by nature; and whether men are high or low, if we trust in them, we shall be deceived. He who tries to base his happiness upon the good opinion of his neighbours, he whose happiness depends upon human esteem, builds not on sand, but on mere breath, which is no more solid than the bubble that our children blow.

[Psalms 62:10](#). *Trust not in oppression,-*

An ungodly man says, “Well, if I cannot trust in others, I will trust in myself; my own stout arm shall win me the victory, and I will tread others down beneath my feet.” “I will get money,” says another; “somehow or other, I will get money.” To both of these, David says, “Trust not in oppression,” —

[Psalms 62:10](#). *And become not vain in robbery: if riches increase, set not your heart upon them.*

If you do, they will either fly away from your heart, or else they will fly away with your heart, which would be the greater evil of the two, for, when riches carry a man’s heart away from God, his greatest gains are his heaviest losses. He is poor indeed who prizes his gold more than his God.

[Psalms 62:11](#). *God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God.*

Where ought we to put our confidence? Why, where true power is. If there were any power elsewhere, we might put a measure of confidence elsewhere; but when twice the heavenly message declares that power belongs to God, our wisdom will be shown in putting our trust in God.

[Psalms 62:12](#). *Also unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy:-*

Almighty power would be terrible if it were separated from infinite mercy; but it is not so.

[Psalms 62:12](#). *For thou renderest to every man according to his work.*

Thou givest him enough strength with which to do his work. Thou dost not send him to do a work beyond his power, and leave him to fail; but unto all thy children thy mercy brings thy power to help in every time of need. Thy faithful promise is, “As thy days, so shall thy strength be.” Come, my brothers and sisters in Christ, let us be of the same mind as David was when he wrote the first verse of this Psalm, and let each one of us say, “Truly my soul waiteth upon God: from him cometh my salvation.”

[PSALMS CONTENTS](#)

PSALM 63

Verses 1-11

I will read the 63rd Psalm first, as somewhat representing the state of heart into which I would we could all come tonight.

[Psalms 63:1](#). *O God, thou art my God; —*

Read that sentence how you will, it is unspeakably precious. If we say “O God, thou art my God,” it brings out the possession which the believer has in God. If we say “O God, thou art my God,” it shows the greatness of the possession which we thus have in having this God to be our God forever and ever. And if we say “O God, thou art my God, it leads us to think of God and not of his gifts as our chief good.

[Psalms 63:1-2](#). *Early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.*

Long after the old times over again — for those times of heaven upon earth — those special seasons when the Lord made the veil between us and heaven to be very thin indeed, and allowed us almost to see his face. “To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.” Well, then, let us go to the sanctuary again, or make the place where we are a sanctuary. Even the stony pillar may mark the site of Bethel, and every spot may be hallowed ground.

[Psalms 63:3-5](#). *Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands*

in thy name.

My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips: Satisfaction, absolute satisfaction; satiety of every desire, full to the brim to the running over only because God's is our God; we want nothing beyond that to make our mouth praise with joyful lips.

[Psalms 63:6-7](#). *When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches. Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice.*

If I cannot see thy face the shadow of thy wing shall be enough for me, for that shall shelter me from all harm and I will, yea I will rejoice. Under the wings we are near the heart of God, and he who knowest God's heart of love must needs be glad.

[Psalms 63:8-10](#). *My soul followeth hard after thee: thy right hand upholdeth me. But those that seek my soul, to destroy it, shall go into the lower parts of the earth. They shall fall by the sword: they shall be a portion for foes.*

All our sins, and all other things or beings that are the enemies of our soul, Christ has overcome, and he will leave them upon the field.

[Psalms 63:11](#). *But the king shall rejoice in God; every one that sweareth by him shall glory: but the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped.*

Now a short passage in the New Testament, about Mary, the sister of Martha.

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 63.; [Luke 10:38-42](#); and [John 12:1-8](#).

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Psalm Chapter 64

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

Psalm Chapter 65

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

PSALM 66

Verses 1-15

[Psalms 66:1](#). *Make a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands:*

Let not Israel alone do it. Take up the strain, ye nations. He is the God of all the nations of the earth. “Make a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands.”

[Psalms 66:2-4](#). *Sing forth the honour of his name: make his praise glorious. Say unto God, How terrible art thou in thy works! through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee. All the earth shall worship thee, and shall sing unto thee; they shall sing to thy name. Selah.*

I still must always cling to the belief that this whole world is to be converted to God, and to lie captive at the feet of Christ in glorious liberty. Do not fall into that lethargic, apathetic belief of some that this is never to be accomplished — that the battle is not to be fought out on the present lines, but that there is to be a defeat, and then Christ is to come. Nay, foot to foot with the old enemy will he stand, till he has worsted him, and until the nations of the earth shall worship and bow before him.

[Psalms 66:5-6](#). *Come and see the works of God: he is terrible in his doing toward the children of men. He turned the sea into dry land: they went through the flood on foot: there did we rejoice in him.*

Where God is most terrible to his enemies, he is most gracious to his friends. As Pharaoh and his hosts went down beneath the terrible hand of God, the children of Israel lifted up their loudest hallelujahs, and sang unto the Lord, who triumphed gloriously. And so shall it be to the end of the chapter. God will lay bare his terrible arm against his adversaries but his children shall meanwhile make music. “There did we rejoice in him.”

[Psalms 66:7-9](#). *He ruleth by his power forever: his eyes behold the nations: let not the rebellious exalt themselves. Selah. O bless our God ye people and make the voice of his praise to be heard. Which holdeth our soul in life and suffereth not our feet to be moved.*

Loudest among the singers should God’s people be. If others can restrain their praise, yet let the love of Christ so constrain us that we must give it a tongue, and tell forth the majesty of our God. It is he alone who keeps us from perdition — which holdeth our soul in life. It is he alone who

keeps us from falling foully, ay, and falling finally, “and suffereth not our feet to be moved.”

[Psalms 66:10](#). *For thou, O God, hast proved us:*

All God’s people can say this. It is the heritage of the elect of God. “Thou has proved us.”

[Psalms 66:10-11](#). *Thou hast tried us, as silver is tried. Thou broughtest us into the net.*

Entangled, surrounded, captive, held fast. Many of God’s people are in this condition.

[Psalms 66:11](#). *Thou laidst affliction upon our loins.*

It was no affliction of hand or foot, but it laid upon our loins — a heavy, crushing burden.

[Psalms 66:12](#). *Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water:*

It was the full ordeal. One was not enough. Fire destroys some, but water is the test for others, but God’s people must be tried both ways. “We went through fire and through water; but” — . Blessed “but.”

[Psalms 66:12](#). *But thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place.*

Out of the fire and out of the water they came, because God brought them, and when he brought them, it was not to a stunted, barren heritage, but into a wealthy place. Oh! beloved, when we think of where the covenant of grace has placed every believer, it is a wealthy place, indeed.

[Psalms 66:13-15](#). *I will go into thy house with burnt offerings: I will pay thee my vows Which my lips have uttered, and my mouth have spoken, when I was in trouble I will offer unto thee burnt sacrifices of fatlings, with the incense of rams; I will offer bullocks with goats. Selah.*

The best, I think. “The best of the best will I bring thee, O my God. I will bring thee my heart; I will bring thee my tongue; I will bring thee my entire being.

Verses 1-20

[Psalms 66:1-2](#). *Make a joyful noise unto God all ye lands: sing forth the honour of his name: make his praise glorious.*

In a company of advanced saints, silence may be sometimes profitable. The first verse of the previous Psalm should read, according to the Hebrew, “Praise is silent for thee, O God, in Zion.” Full-grown saints may have their times of waiting in silence before the Lord, but when the heathen are to be brought in, and when new hearts are to be taught new songs, then there

must be a noise, and not merely a noise, but a noise that is full of joy: “Make a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands.” This should be the chief point about it, that it should be a joyful noise. Many of the newly invented tunes, which have put the good old tunes out of favor, appear to have been made to rattle through the hymn as quickly as possible, as though the composer had written, “Let us praise God at express speed and get it done; and the quicker, the better.” But I prefer those tunes in which we can sometimes repeat the words, and roll them under the tongue until our heart gets thoroughly saturated with the spirit of them. “Make a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands;” but let that joyful noise be orderly, not like the shouts of those who cry around the ear of Juggernaut. Let it be joyful singing unto the Lord: “Sing forth the honour of his name.” God is worthy of the highest honour, so let our praise of him be given in such a way that it shall really honour him. “Make his praise glorious.” It is only giving back to God what rightly belongs to him when we give him glory, and it is our highest earthly glory to be giving glory to God; we are never so near to the condition of the glorified saints above as when we are, with heart, and soul, and voice, glorifying God.

[Psalms 66:3](#). *Say unto God, How terrible art thou in thy works!*

Our praises should be directed to God: “Say unto God.” Our hymns should be a form of speaking unto the Most High, and an ascription unto him of his own glory. The first attribute of God that influences men is the attribute of power, which fills them with terror of his awful majesty and might. Afterwards, they perceive more of his love, and goodness, and wisdom, and other attributes; but, at first, -ay, and perhaps at last, -there is a time in which there is much solemn stately music in this utterance, “How terrible art thou in thy works!”

[Psalms 66:3-4](#). *Through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee. All the earth shall worship thee, and shall sing unto thee; they shall sing to thy name.*

From the marginal reading of the 3rd verse, it appears that God’s enemies will only “yield feigned obedience” to him; but whether the submission is feigned or real, it shall not be possible for any man or any power finally to resist his omnipotence, and the day shall come when all the earth shall worship him, and sing unto him.

[Psalms 66:4](#). *Selah.*

Here is a little pause for the lifting up of the heart and of the spirit and well there may be, for what a joyful thing it is to think of all the earth worshipping God, and singing unto him! I know of no topic that is more calculated to excite the admiring gratitude of God's servants than the prospect of the universal supremacy of one God and of his Christ.

[Psalms 66:5-6](#). *Come and see the works of God: he is terrible in his doing toward the children of men. He turned the sea into dry land:-*

You must often have noticed that the sweet singers of Israel are never singing very long unto God without mentioning that wonderful deliverance that he wrought at the Red Sea. What God did when he brought his people out of Egypt will be the subject of joyous and grateful song unto God forever, for even in heaven "they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb." The Red Sea as the grand type of redemption, and the Lamb as the great Worker of redemption are joined together in that triumphant song of "them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name."

Here, the psalmist sings of what God did for his people at the Red Sea:

"He turned the sea into dry land:" —

[Psalms 66:6](#). *They went through the flood on foot; there did we rejoice in him.*

Perhaps some of you say, "But we were not there." No, we were not personally there; but do you not remember what the prophet Hosea says about God meeting with Jacob at Bethel? It is written, "There he spake with us." We were not personally there, yet believers have been everywhere in the Bible where other representative believers have been before them. "No prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation." What God spoke to any one of his people he has spoken to all of whom that one was typical. Paul tells us that the Lord hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," yet it was to Joshua that he said that; but, as he said it to Joshua, he virtually said it to me, for I am a believer even as he was. All the promises belong to us who are in Christ Jesus, for the heavenly inheritance is left to all the spiritual seed; and if we are in the Lord's family, we shall share alike with all the rest of the children. "There did we rejoice in him." Then, if we rejoiced in the Lord there, let us rejoice in him here. Brethren and sisters in Christ, let us rest assured that, when our turn to go through the sea shall come, we shall find that the Lord has "turned the sea into dry land" for us,

whether it be a sea of troubles or the sea of death. “They went through the flood on foot;” and so shall we. The God who made a way for them through the sea, virtually made a way for us also, for the army of God is one, and when the first ranks of the innumerable host passed through the flood, the army itself began to pass through, and that army can never be divided. So we are passing through the flood at this moment, and rejoicing in the God who cleaveth the sea in twain to make a highway for his people.

[Psalms 66:7](#). *He ruleth by his power forever;*

What he did in the past, he is still doing in the present, and he will do in the future.

[Psalms 66:7](#). *His eyes behold the nations: let not the rebellious exalt themselves.*

The rebellious may for a while exalt themselves; but they will, sooner or later, be pulled down. These eagles may fly as high as they will, but God’s arrow can always reach them. The Lord pulled down the haughty Pharaoh from his throne, but he lifted up the people whom the proud monarch had trodden down and oppressed. The Lord overthrew the hosts of Egypt; but as for his people, he led them forth like sheep, and guided them through the wilderness, even as he is doing at this very moment.

[Psalms 66:7](#). *Selah.*

That is, pause again, and lift up the heart and the sacred strain too; and when all the strings of your heart and of your harp are screwed up, then go on with your music again.

[Psalms 66:8-9](#). *O bless our God, ye people, and make the voice of his praise to be heard: which holdeth our soul in life, and suffereth not our feet to be moved.*

I do bless God for this verse, and as many of you as have found it true should also praise and bless him. Observe the two things that are mentioned here,-living and standing: “Which holdeth our soul in life, and suffereth not our feet to be moved.” There are some who have a certain standing in the church, and who keep up their reputation among their fellow-members, yet they are not spiritually alive. It is a dreadful thing to be standing, and yet not living; like those in Sardis who were only living in name. Then there are those who are living, but not standing,-at least, not standing fast. They are often caught tripping, and falling, and wounding themselves. They go with broken bones on their way towards heaven by reason of their many falls. But what a blessing it is to be kept both living and standing, and what

reason there is to bless God for this great mercy,-not congratulating ourselves on our steadfastness, and being exalted and proud, but magnifying the Lord for his grace in granting to us this double blessing,- living and standing!

[Psalms 66:10](#). *For thou, O God, hast proved us: thou hast tried us, as silver is tried.*

That is, with fierce furnaces, and with carefully graduated heat, for silver needs delicate refining. Christ still sits as the Refiner of silver, patiently watching until the process is complete.

[Psalms 66:11](#). *Thou broughtest us into the net;-*

Did not our enemies entangle us? Oh, yes; but God often uses our enemies to carry out his divine purposes; he over-rules all things; so, when you are caught in the net, do not sit down, and say that such-and-such a person did it, or that the devil did it. No; but look to the Great First Cause. If you strike a dog with a stick, he tries to bite the stick because he does not know any better. But you are not a dog, so do not you look at the second cause of your troubles, but learn to sing, as the psalmist does here, “Thou broughtest us into the net;” —

[Psalms 66:11](#). *Thou laidst affliction upon our loins.*

Not merely upon our backs, where we might be better able to bear it, but right on our loins, so that we were pressed and squeezed almost out of our very life.

[Psalms 66:12](#). *Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads;*

And when they mount their high horse, they vow and exalt themselves over God’s afflicted servants.

[Psalms 66:12](#). *We went through fire and through water:*

They were subjected to double that, for what fire does not burn water will drown, yet God’s people “went through fire and through water.” There is no fire that can burn them. Nebuchadnezzar tried it, and failed. And there is no water that can drown them. Even though their bodies may be burned or drowned, their real selves shall still survive, and stand upon the sea of glass mingled with fire, triumphant over both fire and water.

[Psalms 66:12](#). *But thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place.*

That is to say, the Lord brought the Israelites out from all manner of oppression under Pharaoh, and brought them into the land flowing with milk and honey. Nothing that Pharaoh could do could destroy the chosen nation, he tried to kill all the male children that were born, yet the Israelites

still increased and multiplied, and they came at last to Canaan. It will be just so with God's people in all times and all climes, they shall not die, but live, and shall ultimately come into that most wealthy of all places, even the heavenly and better Canaan. We cannot fully tell what joy awaits us there. We cannot measure the height of our joy by the depth of our sorrows, for, after all, our sorrows are shallow, but the glory of God, which the saints are to share, is a depth unfathomable, a height that no man can measure. O Lord, bring us into that wealthy place right speedily if it be thy holy will!

[Psalms 66:13](#). *I will go into thy house with burnt offerings:*

Here is one worshipper breaking away from the rest,-a child of God who is not satisfied by merely joining in the general praise of the whole assembly, so he brings his own personal thanksgiving and thankoffering to God. Dear brother, dear sister, try to do this. Break away from all the rest of us, and say to the Lord, "I will go into thy house with burnt offerings."

[Psalms 66:13-15](#). *I will pay thee my vows, which my lips have uttered, and my mouth hath spoken, when I was in trouble. I will offer unto thee burnt sacrifices of fatlings,*

"I will give thee the best that I have."

[Psalms 66:15](#). *With the incense of rams;*

Not only one of the best, but the best of two kinds of offerings.

[Psalms 66:15](#). *I will offer bullocks with goats.*

"I will present to thee great services and smaller sacrifices. I will obey thee in the great ordinances and in the lesser ordinances also. I will bring both bullocks and goats. I will make an all-round offering. I will try to do all that I can for thee, my God, since thou hast done so much for me."

[Psalms 66:15](#). *Selah.*

Here the psalmist pauses again while the smoke of the sacrifice ascends; let us also pause, and meditate upon the better sacrifice which Christ offered for the sins of all who put their trust in him.

[Psalms 66:16-17](#). *Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul. I cried unto him with only mouth, and he was extolled with my tongue.*

"I mixed crying and singing together. I cried when I was in trouble, and I extolled the Lord as soon as he delivered me from it. Nay, by faith expecting to be delivered, I began to extol him even while I was yet crying unto him."

[Psalms 66:18-19](#). *If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me: but verily God hath heard me;*

It is a blessed thing to be able to say that; and if you can truthfully say it, I pray you to say it: “Verily God hath heard me.” Some people tell us that there is no such thing as an answer to prayer; they say that it is a piece of superstition on our part. Well, I believe that I am as honest a man as anyone who denies the power of prayer, and I can truthfully say, “God hath heard me.” There are scores of us—there are hundreds of us—there are thousands of us who can stand in the witness-box, and each one of us can say, “Verily God hath heard me.” If our testimony is not accepted by unbelieving men, we cannot help that. We know what we do know, and we know that God has heard and answered our prayers again and again.

[Psalms 66:19-20](#). *He hath attended to the voice of my prayer. Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me.*

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 66.; and [Romans 8:1-9](#).

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Psalm Chapter 67

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

PSALM 68

Verses 1-35

This was a Psalm sung, at the removing of the ark, when it was taken up to its resting-place on Mount Zion. All the tribes were gathered together, and, in full pomp, they marched along, bearing the sacred chest. As they tramped forward, the trumpets sounded, and this Psalm rose up to God.

[Psalms 68:1](#). *Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered: let them also that hate him flee before him.*

That is the way to move,—God first, and his people following closely after him. That is the true order of revival,—the Lord in the lead, then all his children, quick of step, to follow where he leads. The psalmist seems to

take it for granted that there would be no fighting if God should arise, for all his enemies would be put to flight by his presence.

[Psalms 68:2-3](#). *As smoke is driven away, so drive them away: as wax melteth before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God. But let the righteous be glad; let them rejoice before God: yea, let them exceedingly rejoice.*

The courtiers of God ought to be clad in the silks of joy, and to be bright with the jewelry of rejoicing.

[Psalms 68:4-5](#). *Sing unto God, sing praises to his name: extol him that rideth upon the heavens by his name JAH, and rejoice before him. A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation.*

In the wilderness, the Israelites were like a company of fatherless people: but God was their Protector, and in all their trials and dangers he was their Defender.

[Psalms 68:6](#). *God setteth the solitary in families he bringeth out those which are bound with chains: but the rebellious dwell in a dry land.*

They had been in a sad condition in Egypt, scattered and driven hither and thither. God promised to bring them all together, in great families, and richly to bless them.

[Psalms 68:7-8](#). *O God, when thou wentest forth before thy people, when thou didst march through the wilderness; Selah: the earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God: even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel.*

If the translators had given us the original words, we should have valued this Psalm much more, for it contains nearly every name of God. This verse would run, "Even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of Elohim, the 'Elohim of Israel.

[Psalms 68:9-10](#). *Thou, O God, didst send a plentiful rain, whereby thou didst confirm thine inheritance, when it was weary. Thy congregation hath dwelt therein: thou, O God, hast prepared of thy goodness for the poor.*

It rained manna, and it rained quails. There are no difficulties about the commissariat of an army when God is the Commander-in-chief. All shall be provided for those who put their trust in him.

[Psalms 68:11](#). *The Lord—*

Or, Adonai—

[Psalms 68:11](#). *Gave the word: great was the company of those that published it.*

When God speaks, he always has publishers of his message. Our Lord found a woman at the well, and sent her back to the men of the city as his messenger, and he will find many others before his work is all done.

[Psalms 68:12-13](#). *Kings of armies did flee apace: and she that tarried at home divided the spoil. Though ye have lien among the pots,—*

Grimy among the brick kilns, covered with clay, and black with smoke, —despised, rejected, earthbound,—“ Though ye have lien among the pots,” —

[Psalms 68:13](#). *Yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.*

There are good times ahead for God’s people. Rich and rare blessings are laid up in store for them that fear him. Therefore, let us rejoice in him even now.

[Psalms 68:14](#). *When the Almighty scattered kings in it, it was white as snow in Salmon.*

Driven from the bare, bleak mountain-side in gusts like feathers, the snow flies before the wind; and so, when God scatters the mighty, they cannot resist him: “It was as snow in Salmon.”

[Psalms 68:15](#). *The hill of God is as the hill of Bashan; an high hill as the hill of Bashan.*

This hill of Zion is not high at all, it is a mere knoll compared with the lofty peaks; yet it was highly favored. So, to carnal eyes, Christ’s kingdom on earth was little in comparison with the kingdoms of this world; yet, in the sight of God, it is greater than all of them.

[Psalms 68:16](#). *Why leap ye, ye high hills? this is the hill which God desireth to dwell in; yea, the LORD will dwell in it forever.*

There are grander places than Zion, but if God chooses to dwell there, his presence gives her a glory and a greatness that no other spot can have. The forces at the disposal of Zion’s King are boundless; note how the psalmist enumerates some of them.

[Psalms 68:17-18](#). *The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place. Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them.*

As the ark went up the hill of Zion, so has Christ ascended to the eternal glory. He is the true Ark of the covenant, and he is also the true Mercy-seat;

wherefore, let our hearts rejoice in our ascended Saviour, who has “led captivity captive “ “Thou hast received gifts for men”; yea, for the rebellious also.” “In due time, Christ died for the ungodly.” “He made intercession for the transgressors.” Let rebellious sinners catch, at this great truth; and, touched by the love and grace of God, let them cease to rebel any longer.

[Psalms 68:19-20](#). *Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation. Selah. He that is our God is the God of salvation; and unto God the Lord belong the issues from death.*

All glory be to his thrice-blessed name for all that this verse includes!

[Psalms 68:21-22](#). *But God shall wound the head: of his enemies, and the hairy scalp of such an one as goeth on still in his trespasses. The Lord said, I will bring again from Bashan, I will bring my people again from the depths of the sea:*

Wherever his people may have gone, God will bring them all together again, “from Bashan,” or “from the depths of the sea.”

[Psalms 68:23-35](#). *That thy foot may be dipped in the blood of thine enemies, and the tongue of the dogs in the same. They have seen thy goings, O God; even the goings of my God, my King, in the sanctuary. The singers went before, the players on instruments followed after, among them were the damsels playing with timbrels. Bless ye God in the congregations, even the Lord, from the fountain of Israel. There is little Benjamin with their ruler, the princes of Judah, the their council, the princes of Zebulun, and the princes of Naphtali. Thy God hath commanded thy strength: strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us. Because of thy temple at Jerusalem shall kings bring presents unto thee. Rebuke the company of spearmen, the multitude of the bulls, with the calves of the people, till every one submit himself with pieces of silver: scatter thou the people that delight in war. Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God. Sing unto God, ye kingdoms of the earth; O sing praises unto the Lord; Selah: to him that rideth upon the heavens of heavens, which were of old; lo, he doth send out his voice, and that a mighty voice. Ascribe ye strength unto God: his excellency is over Israel, and his strength is in the clouds. O God, thou art terrible out of thy holy places: the God of Israel is he that giveth strength and power unto his people. Blessed be God.*

The Psalm ends with an ascription of praise unto God. So let our reading end, and our worship, and our lives: “Blessed be God.”

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 69

Verses 1-21

We shall read together at this time a part of the 69th Psalm, and afterwards two passages in the New Testament. Although there is no doubt that this Psalm is intended to describe a very large class of sufferers, but we think it never had its full meaning perfectly carried out, until our blessed Lord and Master suffered at the hands of men. We shall read the Psalm believing that it is full of Christ. It is absolutely certain that we have references here to his advent, his passion, and his resurrection.

To the chief Musician upon Shoshannim, a Psalm of David.

[Psalms 69:1](#). *Save me, O God; for the waters are come into my soul.*

The waves have not only teased the bank, but they have dashed over the bulwarks, and there is a flood within, as well as a flood without.

[Psalms 69:2](#). *I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing; I am come into deep waters where the floods overflow me.*

We had this text explained to us last Friday night, when the traveler told us he saw a man sink in the mud, almost swallowed up by it, till by a very desperate grasp of the boat he made his escape. Christ was, as it were, sucked in by the great deeps of his afflictions, as if he would be swallowed up quickly.

[Psalms 69:3](#). *I am weary of my crying: my throat is dried:*

He had been so long in the garden in that awful agony, with strong crying and tears.

[Psalms 69:3-4](#). *Mine eyes fail while I wait for my God.*

They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of mine head: him now in the street being led away to Mount Calvary; a vast multitude has congregated there, all eager to see him die.

[Psalms 69:4](#). *They that would destroy me, being mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty:*

They have the Roman soldiers at their backs, while the mob applauds them.

[Psalms 69:4](#). *Then I restored that which I took not away.*

Christ did not take away our innocence, nor our safety, nor our honour, but he restored them all to us. He hath made us clean; he hath made us accepted in the Beloved; he hath put a crown of pure gold upon our heads, and set our feet upon a rock.

[Psalms 69:5](#). *O God, thou knowest my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from thee.*

These words are not applicable to our Lord, except so far as they may refer to our foolishness and to our sin, which we know were all laid on him; except that one commentator says that he is here speaking according to the manner of the people. They called him foolish; they charged him with sin, but he appeals to heaven, “Lord, thou knowest whether I have been foolish, whether I have any sins or not.” In that sense we might apply it literally to the Saviour.

[Psalms 69:6](#). *Let not them that wait on thee, O Lord God of hosts, be ashamed for my sake: let not those who seek thee be confounded for my sake, O God of Israel.*

“Let not the shame of my cross destroy their faith; grant unto them such confidence in me that they may take up thy cross daily, and follow me: that they may even learn to say with my apostle, “God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

[Psalms 69:7](#). *Because for thy sake I have borne reproach; shame hath covered my face.*

It was for his Father’s sake, that he might bring honour to Jehovah, that he thus suffered reproach. “Shame hath covered my face”—that face which is brighter than the sun, and which angels desire to gaze upon.

[Psalms 69:8](#). *I am become a stranger unto my brethren,*

“Peter says he knows me not; all of them have forsaken me.”

[Psalms 69:8-9](#). *And an alien unto my mother’s children. For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up, and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me.*

Every hard word that was spoken of the Father fell upon the Son: the iniquities which were rebellions against Jehovah all fell upon the Man of Nazareth.

[Psalms 69:10](#). *When I wept, and chastened my soul with fasting, that was to my reproach.*

That was scandal unto them.

[Psalms 69:11](#). *I made sackcloth also my garment; and I became a proverb unto them.*

Just as Michael said of David, “How glorious did the King of Israel become in the eyes of his handmaidens.” out of mockery, so did they reproach Christ, “How glorious was the King of Israel, so daintily arrayed in a peasant’s robe, or stripped naked upon his cross.”

[Psalms 69:12](#). *They that sit in the gate speak against me;*

The judges who there dispensed justice, the merchants who there trade their wares, the idlers who were there to loiter, to hear the news, these speak against me.

[Psalms 69:12](#). *And I became the song of the drunkard.*

They made ballads of him, we may understand that to mean; they issued lampoons; every now and then there came out a caricature.

[Psalms 69:13-14](#). *But as for me, my prayer is unto thee, O Lord, in an acceptable time: O God, in the multitude or thy mercy hear me, in the truth of thy salvation. Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink: let me be delivered from them that hate me, and out of the deep waters.*

Think you hear your Master as he silently prays this prayer in the streets of Jerusalem; the mob is hooting, but he is praying; women are weeping, and he is weeping, too.

[Psalms 69:15-20](#). *Let not the waterflood overflow me, neither let the deep swallow me up, and let not the pit shut her mouth upon me. Hear me, O Lord, for thy loving-kindness is good: turn unto me according to the multitude of thy tender mercies. And hide not thy face from thy servant; for if am in trouble: hear me speedily. Draw nigh unto my soul, and redeem it: deliver me because of mine enemies. Thou hast known my reproach and my shame, and my dishonour: mine adversaries are all before thee.*

Reproach hath broken my heart. This is one of the most extraordinary verses in Holy Writ.

[Psalms 69:20-21](#). *And I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none. They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.*

Now, let us read the incidents in the history of Christ, of which this Psalm is a sort of prophecy and exposition.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Psalms 69:1-21](#). [Mark 15:15-23](#). [Luke 23:26-33](#).

PSALMS CONTENTS

Psalm Chapter 70

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

PSALM 71

Verses 1-14

[Psalms 71:1](#). *In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust: let me never be put to confusion.*

There is his trust, and there is his fear; his trust he dares to avow, his fear he turns into a prayer.

[Psalms 71:2-3](#). *Deliver me in thy righteousness, and cause me to escape: incline thine ear unto me, and save me. Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort: thou hast given commandment to save me; for thou art my rock and my fortress.*

“Be thou my strong habitation whereunto I may continually resort.” Not merely now and then a hiding-place in emergency, but my constant abode, my home, so that from morning to night I may come to thee, and feel myself secure. “Thou hast given commandment to save me; for thou art my rock and my fortress.” You see he knows that God has commanded nature, and providence, and grace to protect him; he has commanded his angels, indeed, he has commanded all his forces, to protect David for this reason, that David feels an inward rest and peace in God. That calm, that divine repose expressed in the words “Thou art my rock and my refuge,” are the tokens that God has given commandment to save us.

[Psalms 71:4](#). *Deliver me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked, out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man.*

Two iron hands are trying to pull him down, but he cries to God, whose one almighty hand can set him free.

[Psalms 71:5](#). *For thou art my hope, O Lord God: thou art my trust from my youth.*

Happy man that can look back upon a youth spent in God’s fear; for if we have trusted God in our youth, depend upon it, he will never cast us

away.

[Psalms 71:6](#). *By thee have I been holden up from the womb: thou art he that took me out of my mother's bowels: my praise shall be continually of thee.*

When we could not help ourselves, in the very moment of our birth, God took care of us; and he will take care of us even to the end. Men and women who are old should remember how carefully the Lord nursed them when they were infants; and if you come to a second childhood, you shall still have the same God.

[Psalms 71:7](#). *I am as a wonder unto many;*

They cannot make me out, I am a blessed problem and puzzle to them: it seems so strange that being so much afflicted I am yet so much upheld.

[Psalms 71:7](#). *But thou art my strong refuge.*

Aye! There is the answer to the riddle. If God be with us, men may well wonder; but he will always help us.

[Psalms 71:8-9](#). *Let my mouth be filled with thy praise and with thy honour all the day.*

Cast me not of in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth.

A prayer which both young and old may offer, for if we live long enough, that time of weakness will surely come on. There are many men who do cast off their old servants; but God does not. When we are worn out, he will still bless us.

[Psalms 71:10-14](#). *For mine enemies speak against me and they that lay wait for my soul take counsel together, saying, God hath forsaken him: persecute and take him; for there is none to deliver him. O God, be not far from me: O my God, make haste for my help. Let them be confounded and consumed that are adversaries to my soul; let them be covered with reproach and dishonour that seek my hurt. But I will hope continually and will yet praise thee more and more.*

In the 8th verse he had said, "Let my mouth be filled with thy praise." That is a mouthful, now he says, "I will praise thee more and more." As if he wanted more mouths wherewith to praise more room for his heart's grateful thanksgiving to God, "I will praise thee more and more."

This exposition consisted of readings from [Romans 5:1-11](#); and [Psalms 71:1-14](#).

Verses 1-24

[Psalms 71:1-8](#). *In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust: let me never be put to confusion. Deliver me in thy righteous, and cause me to escape: incline thine ear unto me, and save me. Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort: thou hast given commandment to save me; for thou art my rock and my fortress. Deliver me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked, out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man. For thou art my hope, O Lord God thou art my trust from my youth. By thee have I been holden up from the womb: thou art he that took me out of my mother bowels my praise shall be continually of thee.*

David had enjoyed the mercy of God from his very birth. We are apt to forget the tender care of God over our infancy, but we ought to remember it: and it will be a great comfort to us, if we come to a second childhood, to remember how kindly God took care of us in the first.

[Psalms 71:7-11](#). *I am at a wonder unto many, but thou art my strong refuge. Let my mouth be filled with thy praise and with thy honour all the day. Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth. For mine enemies speak against me, and they that lay wait for my soul take counsel together, saying, God hath forsaken him: persecute and take him; for there is none to deliver him.*

Surely that ought to have been the reason for letting him alone. With right-minded persons it would have been so, but the devil and his children are arrant onwads, and their argument is, “Persecute and take him: for there is none to deliver him.” You might as well expect tenderness in a wolf as anything like bravery and chivalry in a persecutor.

[Psalms 71:12-14](#). *O God be not far from me: O my God, make haste for my help. Let them be confounded and consumed that are adversaries to my soul; let them be covered with reproach and dishonour that seek my hurt. But I will hope continually, and will yet raise thee more and more.*

How was he going to do it? Already his mouth was filled with God’s praise, so, surely, he would fill his whole life with it, and his actions which would speak more loudly than his words, should bear daily testimony to the goodness of God.

[Psalms 71:15-16](#). *My mouth shall shew forth thy righteousness and thy salvation all the day; for I know not the numbers thereof. I will go in the strength of the Lord God:-“*

This shall be my praise; my very movements, my goings, my progress shall be in the ‘strength of the Lord God’”

[Psalms 71:16-17](#). *I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only. O God, thou hast taught me from my youth.*

Here is the same kind of argument again: “O Lord, I went to school to thee, so I must teach others what thou hast taught me.”

[Psalms 71:17](#). *And hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works.*

“Thou madest me a preacher, and I have stuck to my word. Hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works.”

[Psalms 71:18-20](#). *Now also when I am old and grayheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation and thy power to every one that is to come. Thy righteousness also, O God, is very high, who hast done great things: O God, who is like unto thee! Thou, which hast shewed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again,*

“Thou shalt not merely deliver me from my great and sore troubles, but thou shalt give me more life, thou ‘Shalt quicken me again.’” Divine quickening is the best remedy for a troubled heart.

[Psalms 71:20](#). *And shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth.*

“Though I seem to be like a man buried in the depth of the earth thou wilt bring me up again.”

[Psalms 71:21-22](#). *Thou shalt increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side. I will also praise thee-*

God blessing us, and we in return blessing him, so it ought to be. The more God does for us, the more we ought to do for him, is it not so, brother? Is not this good argument? Art thou carrying it out? Let thy conscience answer.

[Psalms 71:22-23](#). *With the psaltery, even thy truth, O my God: unto thee will I sing with the harp. O thou Holy One of Israel. My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto thee.*

Singing unto God ought to be the gladdest of exercises, when it is done in a doleful, dolorous way, it is not singing, but groaning.

[Psalms 71:23](#). *And my soul, which thou hast redeemed.*

“The sprinkled blood is on my soul, and therefore it shall leap for joy. Rescued from captivity, bought back from slavery, “my soul, which thou hast redeemed; shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto thee.”

[Psalms 71:24](#). *My tongue also shall talk of thy righteousness all the day long: for they are confounded, for they are brought unto shame, that seek my hurt.*

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 72

Verses 1-4

[Psalms 72:1](#). *Give the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son.*

“Give the king thy judgments, O God.” The right to reign was transmitted by descent from David to Solomon, but not by that means alone: Israel was a theocracy, and the kings were but the viceroys of the greater King; hence the prayer that the new king might be enthroned by divine right, and then endowed with divine wisdom. Our glorious King in Zion hath all judgment committed unto him. He rules in the name of God over all lands. He is King “*Dei Gratia*” as well as by right of inheritance. “And thy righteousness unto the king’s son.” Solomon was both king and king’s son; so also is our Lord. He has power and authority in himself, and also royal dignity given him of his Father. He is the righteous King; in a word, he is “the Lord our righteousness.” We are waiting till he shall be manifested among men as the ever-righteous Judge. May the Lord hasten in his own time the long-looked-for day! Now wars and fightings are even in Israel itself, but soon the dispensation will change, and David, the type of Jesus warring with our enemies, shall be displaced by Solomon the prince of peace.

[Psalms 72:2](#). *He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment,*

“He shall judge thy people with righteousness.” Clothed with divine authority, he shall use it on the behalf of the favoured nation, for whom he shall show himself strong, that they be not misjudged, slandered, or in any way treated maliciously. His sentence shall put their accusers to silence, and award the saints their true position as the accepted of the Lord. What a consolation to feel that none can suffer wrong in Christ’s kingdom; he sits upon the great white throne, unspotted by a single deed of injustice, or even mistake of judgment: reputations are safe enough with him. “And thy poor with judgment.” True wisdom is manifest in all the decisions of Zion’s King. We do not always understand his doings, but they are always right. Partiality has been too often shown to rich and great men, but the King of the last and best of monarchy deals out even-handed justice, to the delight

of the poor and despised. Here we have the poor mentioned side by side with their King. The sovereignty of God is a delightful theme to the poor in spirit; they love to see the Lord exalted, and have no quarrel with him for exercising the prerogatives of his crown. It is the fictitious wealth, which labours to conceal real poverty, which makes men cavil at the reigning Lord, but a deep sense of spiritual need prepares the heart loyally to worship the Redeemer King. On the other hand, the King has a special delight in the humbled hearts of his contrite ones, and exercises all his power and wisdom on their behalf, even as Joseph in Egypt ruled for the welfare of his brethren.

[Psalms 72:3](#). *The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness.*

“The mountains shall bring peace to the people.” Thence, aforesaid, rushed the robber bands which infested the country; but now the forts there erected are the guardians of the land, and the watchmen publish far and near the tidings that no foe is to be seen. Where Jesus is, there is peace, lasting, deep, eternal. Even those things, which were once our dread, lose all terror when Jesus is owned as Monarch of the heart: death itself, that dark mountain, loses all its gloom. Trials and afflictions, when the Lord is with us, bring us an increase rather than a diminution of peace. “And the little hills, by righteousness.” Seeing that the rule of the monarch was just, every little hill seemed clothed with peace. Injustice has made Palestine a desert; if the Turk and Bedouin were gone, the land would smile again; for even in the most literal sense, justice is the fertilizer of lands, and men are diligent to plough and raise harvests when they have the prospects of eating the fruit of their labours. In a spiritual sense, peace is given to the heart by the righteousness of Christ; and all the powers and passions of the soul are filled with a holy calm, when the way of salvation, by a divine righteousness, is revealed. Then do we go forth with joy, and are led forth with peace; the mountains and the hills break forth before us into singing.

[Psalms 72:4](#). *He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor.*

“He shall judge the poor of the people.” He will do them justice, yea, and blessed be his name, more than justice, for he will delight to do them good. “He shall save the children of the needy.” Poor, helpless things, they were packhorses for others, and paupers themselves, but their King would be their Protector. Happy are God’s poor and needy ones; they are safe

under the wing of the Prince of peace, for he will save them from all their enemies, “And shall break in pieces the oppressor.” He is strong to smite the foes of his people, Oppressors have been great breakers, but their time of retribution shall come, and they shall be broken themselves, Sin, Satan, and all our enemies must be crushed by the iron rod of King Jesus, We have, therefore, no cause to fear; but abundant reason to sing, —

“All hail the power of Jesus’ name!

Let angels prostrate fall,
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown him Lord of all.”

It is much better to be poor than to be an oppressor; for both the needy and their children find an Advocate in the heavenly Solomon, who aims all his blows at haughty ones, and rests not till they are utterly destroyed.

Verses 1-16

“A Psalm for Solomon” — much more for one who is greater than Solomon, the true Prince of Peace.

[Psalms 72:1](#). *Give the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king’s son.*

So it is decreed, and so it has been accomplished, that Jesus, who is both a King and a King’s son, should have all judgment delivered into his hand. And now at this time Christ is the judge. It is he who discerns between the precious and the vile. He sits as King in the midst of Zion.

[Psalms 72:2](#). *He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment.*

The kingdom of Christ has a special eye to the poor. They are generally passed by and forgotten in the scope of legislature among men, but Christ makes even his poor people — the poor in spirit also — to be the objects of his judgment.

[Psalms 72:3-4](#). *The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness. He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor.*

In the reign of Christ there shall be no treading down of the little by great — no pressure put upon the feeble by the strong, but his right hand shall get to the weakest cause the victory.

[Psalms 72:5](#). *They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations.*

For the kingdom of Christ renews itself. It is never broken in pieces by the power of the enemy, but every piece becomes a new root, and it springs up again. There are some plants of which they may say that the more you tread upon them the more they will spread, and certainly it is the case with the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. As long as there is a sun in the heavens, and a moon to gladden the night, so shall the kingdom of Christ endure.

[Psalms 72:6](#). *He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth.*

Christ shall not come like fire to burn up and to destroy, but his kingdom is one of mercy and grace. When the grass has just been wounded with the scythe, he shall come down to bring it refreshment, that it may spring up again. In plenteous showers of grace shall he visit wounded spirits.

[Psalms 72:7](#). *In his days shall the righteous flourish: and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth.*

There have been empires which have been propitious to the flourishing of great wrongs. Some of the worst and vilest of men have flourished under certain empires, which have but lately passed away; but in the empire of Christ the righteous alone shall flourish. Everything about him and about his power shall make it go well for them, and his empire is peace the most truly — “abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth.”

[Psalms 72:8](#). *He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.*

Universal monarchy is to be the monarchy of Christ. This is the fifth great monarchy, and there shall never be another. No king or potentate that shall ever rise can possibly have universal dominion again. We need not fear that, for the fifth empire is that of the Christ of God, and behold he cometh to claim it.

[Psalms 72:9](#). *They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust.*

The most distant tribes — those that wander and have no settled dwelling-place — shall, nevertheless, bow before him. The Arab boasts that he never knew a master — that even Caesar could not penetrate into his deserts and subdue him; but Christ shall be his Lord, and he will be glad to own him.

[Psalms 72:10](#). *The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts.*

We need not be afraid if this Psalm refers to Christ, and we do not doubt that it does. He must reign. The end of the world is not coming until there shall be a conquest for him. He may come before that time, but certainly there shall be no winding up of history until this shall be literally true. “The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents.”

[Psalms 72:11-12](#). *Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him. For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper.*

The Psalmist seems glad to dwell upon that. It seems to be the joy note in his mind — that the great King — the greatest of all kings — will care for the lowly and the humble. Let us rejoice in this, dear friends. Christ is chosen out of the people and exalted by God; and he is the Christ not only ready to save the highest, but to save the lowest. From his kingdom we may say: —

“None are excluded hence but those
Who do themselves exclude;
Welcome the learned and polite,
The ignorant and rude.”

[Psalms 72:13-15](#). *He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy. He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence: and precious shall their blood be in his sight. And he shall live, They say,*

“O king, live for ever.” It can never happen to their kings, but to our King it will happen. “He shall live.”

[Psalms 72:15](#). *And to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba:*

He shall have the best the world can find willingly given to him. I am sure that we who know his love think that we have nothing good enough for him. We would render to him all that we have.

[Psalms 72:15](#). *Prayer also shall be made for him continually;*

With the gold shall come the golden prayer — the prayer for Christ. But how can we pray for him? Why, that he may have the reward of his sufferings, may see of the travail of his soul — that his kingdom may come, and that his name may be dear in the hearts of men.

[Psalms 72:15](#). *And daily shall he be praised.*

He shall have praise as well as prayer and gold.

[Psalms 72:16](#). *There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon: and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth.*

It was corn — good seed corn, but there was only a handful of it. So there were saints in the world, but there were very few of them. And where were they? On the tops of the mountains. A strange place for corn; not a likely place for a harvest. So have God's servants been pushed into the corners of the earth. There they were in the valleys of Piedmont for many a year fighting for dear life. And, in all lands, those that have been faithful to God have been put away into the corners — driven, as it were, to the mountain-tops. But what has come of it, and what will come of it? Why, the fruit shall shake like Lebanon. The golden corn, standing upright in its strength, adorned with its ear, shall wave in the breeze as pleasing a sight even as the cedar of Lebanon.

Verses 1-20

A Psalm for Solomon.

This was David's dying bequest to his son Solomon, but a greater than Solomon is here, for this Psalm concerns the reign, triumph, and everlasting dominion of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[Psalms 72:1-2](#) *Give the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son. He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment.*

It is the distinguishing mark of Christ's kingdom that he cares so much for the poor, whereas in other kingdoms they are generally pushed to the wall, and men of great estate and consequence get all the good positions. In Christ's kingdom the poor are exalted.

[Psalms 72:3](#). *The mountains shall bring peace to thee people and the little hills, by righteousness.*

Those mountains, in whose caves robbers lurked, and from whose heights enemies often came down, and swept away the little estates of the lowlanders, even these shall bring peace and comfort. "No strife shall vex Messiah's reign." When Jesus Christ comes a second time to this earth, we shall see these prophecies literally fulfilled; and until then we delight to know that the reign of Christ is a reign of peace.

[Psalms 72:4-6](#). *He shall judge the poor of the people shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor. They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure throughout all generations. He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth.*

After being mown the grass is tender; should there be a long period of burning sunshine, the roots left exposed might soon be dried up, and the lower portion of the stem, bereft of moisture, might become hard. Never does rain seem so refreshing to the grass as just after the mowing; so is it in Christ's kingdom. Upon you whose broken hearts are like mown grass, upon you who have been cut down by the sharp scythe of affliction, and who have seen your hopes withered before your eyes, Jesus shall come on gently like rain upon the mown grass; and as the showers fertilize the barren earth, so shall the presence of Christ make your hearts to be fertile and fruitful. If any of us are like the parched earth or the mown grass, may we have this gracious promise fulfilled to us.

[Psalms 72:7](#). *In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth.*

Under other kings sinners have flourished, and great oppressors have walked in public, but in Christ's days the righteous shall flourish; "and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth." There have been some times of truce, there have been some periods when the temple of Janus has been shut; but when Christ comes, the Lord shall break the bow, and cut the spear in sunder; not lay them by in store for days of warfare in the future, but break them up as there will be no further use for them.

[Psalms 72:8-9](#). *He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust.*

The Arabs, the wandering Bedouin tribes, unconquered and untamable, "shall bow before him;" and his enemies shall not merely be beaten once or twice, but they "shall lick the dust," they shall be so entirely broken that there shall be no fear of their rebelling in the future.

[Psalms 72:10](#). *The Kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents:*

Britain and some of her sister islands shall do homage to this great Solomon.

[Psalms 72:10](#). *The kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts.*

Ethiopia shall stretch out her hands unto God, and men of swarthy skin shall own the King of the Jews as Lord over all.

[Psalms 72:11](#). *Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him.*

There is a great future for you, Christians, a glorious future for our holy religion. The handful by the side of the lake shall yet become an all conquering host. As it was when that cake of barley bread fell into the midst of the camp of Midian, and overthrew the tent, so that it lay along, and as it was when the shout was heard, “The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon,” so shall it be with us ere long. God’s people having no strength of their own, shall nevertheless break the power of their enemy, when the war- cry shall be heard, “The sword of Christ and of the Lord of Hosts !”.

[Psalms 72:12-13](#). *For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth, the poor also, and him that hath no helper. He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy.*

Now, needy one, here is a promise for thee. Is there one here that hath no helper? Then let that one know that Christ is the Friend of the friendless, and the Helper of the helpless.

[Psalms 72:14-16](#). *He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence: and precious shall their blood be in his sight. And he shall live, and to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba: prayer also shall be made for him continually; and daily shall he be praised.*

There shall be an handful of corn on the earth- Only a handful! O ye birds of the air, how ye long to eat it all up! O ye thorns, how soon would ye choke it to death! It is only a handful of corn.

[Psalms 72:16](#). *Upon the top of the mountains;*

That is a bad place for corn; surely it will die there; the winter snows will chill it; and, exposed to every stormy blast it will never fill the arm of the reaper. But is it so? Listen: —

[Psalms 72:16](#). *The fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon:*

Just as there are peculiar noises heard in a great forest when the wind sweeps through it, — there is an allusion to this in the Hebrew, — there should be such an abundance of fruit from this handful of corn that, as when the forest bows its head before the whirlwind, so shall there be heard a sound as of God rushing among the multitude of his saints.

[Psalms 72:16](#). *And they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth.*

They shall be so many that one might as well attempt to count the blades of grass as to reckon the number of God’s saints.

[Psalms 72:17-20](#). *His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed. Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel, who*

only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.

He had nothing more to pray for. He had his heart's highest and best wish, and therefore he closes his prayer where God had given him all that he could ask.

[PSALMS CONTENTS](#)

PSALM 73

Verses 1-28

“A Psalm Of Asaph.” He was a great singer, but he could not always sing. In the first part of the Psalm he felt rather like groaning than singing; and you shall find that those who sing the sweetest the praises of God sometimes have to hang their harps upon the willows, and are silent. The strong temptation through which Asaph passed is one which is very common. You find another account of it in the 37th Psalm. It may help your memory to notice that it is the 37th and the 73rd Psalm (transpose the figures) which are both upon the same subject—the temptation caused to the people of God by the prosperity of the wicked.

[Psalms 73:1](#). *Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart.*

It must be so. Whatever argument my son may hold about it, I will set that down, to begin with, as a certainty—“Truly, God is good to Israel.” He cannot be unkind or unfaithful to his own people. It cannot be possible, after all—however things may look—that God is an ill-God and an ill-Master to his own servants.

[Psalms 73:2](#). *But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh dipped. Am I, then, one of his people or not? I know he is good to them; but how about myself? Perhaps some here will never question themselves in that way, and if they were led to do so, they would think it was of the devil. I do not think so. I think it is rather of the devil to keep us from questioning ourselves. I remember what Cowper said:—*

“He that hath never doubted of his state,
He may—perhaps he may too late.”

Let us delight in full assurance, but let us keep very clear of presumption; and that assurance which cannot bear self-examination is presumption, depend upon it. When a man declines to search himself and test himself, there is something doubtful, if not rotten in his estate; and it is time he did begin to say, “As for me, my feet were almost gone: my steps had well nigh slipped.” This is how it came about:—

[Psalms 73:3](#). *For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. I know that wicked men are fools.*

Asaph and David had often said that before. Yet says he, “I was a greater fool, still, that I was envious of these fools—when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.”

[Psalms 73:4-5](#). *For there are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men.*

Many of them keep up a hypocritical profession through a long life, and die in a stupefaction, so that conscience never awakens, and they pass out of the world loaded with guilt, and yet talk about being accepted before God. How can this be? Where is the justice of it?

[Psalms 73:6](#). *Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain;*
As kings wear chains of gold, so is their pride to them.

[Psalms 73:6](#). *Violence covereth them as a garment,*

They are not ashamed of it. They get to be so bold in sin that they wear it as an outside cloak.

[Psalms 73:7](#). *Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish.*

Superfluities. They never have to ask where a meal will come from. They have more than they want.

[Psalms 73:8-9](#). *They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens,*

Such big mouths—such blasphemous words—have they, that they attack God himself. There is nothing too high for them to drag it down—nothing too pure for them to slander. “They set their mouth against the heavens.”

[Psalms 73:9](#). *And their tongue walketh through the earth.*

Like the lion seeking its prey, they take long walks in their slander. Nobody is safe from them.

[Psalms 73:10-11](#). *Therefore his people return hither: and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them. And they say, How doth God know? and is there*

knowledge in the most High?

God's sorrowing children have to drink of the bitter cup, while these proud ones are eating of the fat of the land.

[Psalms 73:12-14](#). *Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.*

When Asaph got into this unbelieving state of mind, it did look as if all his care of his character and all his desire to serve God was wasted, for the wicked prospered, while he was chastened. It is a strong description which he gives of his state. "All the day long have I been plagued." Not by the half-hour, but by the whole day, plagued, and weeping as soon as he was out of bed—chastened every morning. He seemed almost to be sorry that he was a child of God, to be so roughly handled. He almost, but not quite, wished that he could take the portion of the wicked, that he might enjoy himself as they did, and might prosper in the world as they did.

[Psalms 73:15](#). *If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should offend against the generation of thy children.*

That was very wise of Asaph. He thought but he did not speak. Some persons say, "You may as well out with it." You may as well keep it in; nay, a great deal better. If you have it in your own heart, it will grieve yourself, but if you speak it out, you will grieve others. If you wear sackcloth, brethren, wear it round your own loins, but do not wear it as your outside garment. There is enough sackcloth in the world without your flaunting it before everybody else's face. If you must fast, remember your Master's words, "Thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head and wash thy face, that thou appear not unto men to fast." He gave us that precept in order to avoid pharisaic ostentation; but we may also follow it from another motive, namely, that we may not spread sorrow in the world. There is enough of depression of spirit, enough of despondency, enough of heartbreak, without our saying a word to increase it among the sons of men.

"Bear and forbear, and silent be:

Tell no man thy misery,"

Lest thou bring another into it, unless, indeed, thou meet with a strong man who can help thee. Then thou mayest tell thy sorrow to get relief. But tell it not to the children.

[Psalms 73:16](#). *When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me.*

“Too painful” to keep it: “too painful” to speak it out and grieve other people.

[Psalms 73:17](#). *Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood their end.*

Asaph went to his God. He got to Christ, whom he foresaw, for the person of Jesus Christ is the sanctuary of God. Some people call these buildings sanctuaries. They have no authority for so doing. “God dwelleth not in temples made with hands.” He may have done so under the old covenant, but not now. Christ is the sanctuary of God, and when we get to him and come into fellowship with God in him, then we begin to learn something. “Then understood I their end.”

[Psalms 73:18](#). *Surely thou didst set them in slippery places:*

There they are—on a mountain of ice, bright and glittering: up aloft, where others see, admire, and wonder at them. But oh! how dangerous their pathway!

[Psalms 73:18](#). *Thou casteth them down into destruction.*

They are not left to slip, but a hand overthrows them—flings them down from the heights of their prosperity to the depths of unutterable woe.

[Psalms 73:19-20](#). *How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when one awaketh; so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image.*

As if God slept today, and let these images of prosperity exist as in a dream; but by-and-by he wakes. His time of judgment comes, and where are these prosperous men? They have gone. The “baseless fabric of a vision” has melted into thin air, and “left not a wreck behind.” It is not. It is gone.

[Psalms 73:21](#). *Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins.*

I felt a heart-pain. I felt my whole nature go amiss, as if there had been calculi causing the deepest possible misery in my reins.

[Psalms 73:22](#). *So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee.*

I saw no farther than a goose. Like a beast that cannot look into the future, I judged these men by today—by the pastures in which they fed, and the fatness which they gathered there. “I was as a beast before thee.” Now notice the splendid connection of these two verses. I will read them again—

the 22nd and the 23rd. “So foolish was I and ignorant, I was as a beast before thee.”

[Psalms 73:23](#). *Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand.*

What a strange mixture a man is! And a godly man is the strangest conglomerate of all. He is a beast, and yet continually with God. View him from one side, he is ignorant: view him from the other, and he hath an unction from the Holy One, and he knows all things. View him from one point of the compass, and he is naked, and poor, and miserable: view him from another quarter, and behold he is complete in Christ and “accepted in the Beloved. “ They know not man who do not know that every true man is two men.

[Psalms 73:24](#). *Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.*

I, the fool that envied fools, yet “thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.”

[Psalms 73:25](#). *Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.*

Now he has got out of the temptation. He is not going to seek for prosperity that he may rival the wicked in their wealth. No! He sees that, in having God, he has all he wants. Even though he should continually be plagued all the day long, and chastened every morning, his portion in God is quite enough for him. He will not murmur any more.

[Psalms 73:26](#). *My flesh and my heart faileth:*

I see what a poor thing I am. I allowed my flesh and my heart to get the mastery over me, and I got caught in this trap.

[Psalms 73:26-27](#). *But God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever. For, lo, they that are far from thee shall perish: thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee.*

A strong word, but none too forcible; for every heart that seeks delight away from God is an unchaste heart. It has got away from true purity even for a moment in pouring out its love upon the creature.

[Psalms 73:28](#). *But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all thy works.*

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 73; [Psalms 37:1-10](#).

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Psalm Chapter 74

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

Psalm Chapter 75

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

Psalm Chapter 76

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

PSALM 77

Verses 1-20

[Psalm 77:1](#). *I cried unto God with my voice, even unto God with my voice; and he gave ear unto me.*

The writer was in very deep trouble. The trouble forced from him a loud and bitter cry. His heart was wrung with anguish, but the cry which was the weakness of the flesh was, by divine grace, turned upward, and so became the strength of his grace. He cried, but it was to God, not to men, as many of us do. "Unto God," says he twice over, "did I cry." But God hears when others hear not, and, blessed be his name, he answers when others cannot. There are so many instances in which God has heard the prayer of persons in deep trouble, that the most troubled of all men ought to be encouraged to pray. Did not Jonah pray, even out of the belly of the whale, and God delivered him? Did not Manasseh pray out of the low dungeon? Great sinner as he was, God delivered him — Oh! let us believe that there is power in prayer, for God hearkens to the request of those that seek his face.

[Psalm 77:2](#). *In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord: my sore ran in the night, and ceased not: my soul refused to be comforted.*

He would not take the common comfort which friendly words would have yielded him: his case was so desperate that he must have divine

comfort, and nothing else. I will not be comforted till Jesus comfort me, and this is a very good and holy resolution. I wish that some who snatch at comfort — unhealthy comfort — too soon, would resolve upon this, “My cry shall go to God, and God only, and I will take no comfort till God the Holy Spirit bring it to me.”

[Psalms 77:3](#). *I remembered God, and was troubled:*

Yet it was the right thing to do to remember God — the most comfortable thing in the world, and though it failed at first, it did not fail in the long run,

[Psalms 77:3](#). *I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed.*

It is no new thing, then, for the best of God’s people to be in the deepest trouble. The path which you are traveling, O mourner, is well marked with footprints.

[Psalms 77:3-5](#). *Selah. Thou holdest mine eyes waking: I am so troubled that I cannot speak. I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times.*

Turned through the experience of thy people written in thy Word to see if ever thou didst forsake one of them.

[Psalms 77:6](#). *I call to remembrance my song in the night:*

To see whether thou didst forsake me in days gone by — marked my past experience of thy faithfulness.

[Psalms 77:6-9](#). *I commune with mine own heart: and my spirit made diligent search. Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? Doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?*

Will he be favorable no more? Very proper questions to put. They answer themselves when we put them plainly, but while they lie festering in our spirits, misshapen things like ghosts that haunt our heart, then they alarm us. It is well to come to plain dealings, with our soul and to say, “Why art thou cast down, O my soul; why art thou disquieted within me?”

[Psalms 77:9-10](#). *Selah. And I said,*

When I came to reckon all up, and make a righteous judgment; when I bid my fears lie still awhile, and let me listen to reason, I said: —

[Psalms 77:10](#). *This is my infirmity: but I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High.*

I will remember God's faithfulness in the past, in years when I lived at his right hand and basked in the sunlight of his love: I will snatch firebrands from the altars of the past to light up the fires of today.

[Psalms 77:11-13](#). *I will remember the works of the LORD: surely I will remember thy wonders of old. I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of thy doings. Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary:*

Or better, "Thy way is in holiness." What thou doest is right, my God. I feared and trembled, but now I know it is so.

[Psalms 77:13-14](#). *Who is so great a God as our God? Thou art the God that doest wonders: thou hast declared thy strength among the people.*

Oh! if we could all tell out what God has done for us, we could prove it true that God has declared his strength among us; the might of his grace has he displayed in our case.

[Psalms 77:15](#). *Thou hast with thine arm redeemed thy people, the sons of Jacob an Joseph.*

Saints in the olden times were very fond of falling back upon the redemption of Israel out of Egypt. It was a favorite subject of their contemplation; it yielded them great comfort, and very, very frequently they turned it into sacred song. Now in heaven we shall do the same, for we shall sing the song of Moses and the Lamb. Let not the Church in modern times forget to draw consolation out of that well. Here the Psalmist gives us a description, as I think it is, of the passage of the Red Sea — giving it as a sort of type of the way in which God will always deliver his people to the world's end.

[Psalms 77:16-20](#). *The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee; they were afraid: the depths also were troubled. The clouds poured out water: the skies sent out a sound: thine arrows also went abroad. The voice of thy thunder was in the heaven: the lightnings lightened the world: the earth trembled and shook. Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known. Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.*

For one moment just look at this picture. You will be delivered, and God will be glorified in your deliverance just as he was in the coming out of Egypt, but it will be by a mysterious way, perhaps — way little guessed at by you. God's path will be in the great waters. You will see the power, but before you see it you will little guess how it will be displayed. Only follow where he leads, for as amidst the thunder and the lightning he led his people

as calmly on as a shepherd leads his flock, so shall you, whatever happens, with Jehovah for your shepherd, be led safely on till you come to the celestial city. Let us sing the song of the Red Sea.

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 77; [Revelation 1:15-20](#).

[PSALMS CONTENTS](#)

PSALM 78

Verses 9-72

This story of the children of Israel, after they came out of Egypt, is like a looking-glass in which we may, with great sadness, see ourselves reflected.

[Psalms 78:9](#). *The children of Ephraim, being armed, and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle.*

They had every opportunity of serving their God; he had provided them with fit weapons for the war, but they were cowardly, so they “turned back in the day of battle.”

[Psalms 78:10-11](#). *They kept not the covenant of God, and refused to walk in his law; and forgot his works, and his wonders that he had shewed them.*

Let each one of us ask, “Does the psalmist describe me?”

[Psalms 78:12-13](#). *Marvellous things did he in the sight of their fathers, in the land of Egypt, in the field of Zoan. He divided the sea, and caused them to pass through; and he made the waters to stand as an heap.*

What a marvelous miracle that dividing of the Red Sea was! Did it not make an abiding impression upon them? I will be bound to say that many of them said, “We shall never doubt God again.” Yet, soon they did doubt, and murmur, and rebel against him!

[Psalms 78:14-16](#). *In the daytime also he led them with a cloud, and all the night with a light of fire. He clave the rocks in the wilderness, and gave them drink as out of the great depths. He brought streams also out of the rock, and caused waters to run down like rivers.*

It seemed as if there was nothing that the Lord would not do for them; all that they needed for food and refreshment was given to them freely.

[Psalms 78:17-18](#). *And they sinned yet more against him by provoking the most High in the wilderness. And they tempted God in their heart by asking meat for their lust.*

He had given them food for their necessities, but now they must have meat for their lusts.

[Psalms 78:19](#). *Yea, they spoke against God; they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?*

So you see, dear friends, what speaking against God really is; I am afraid that we also have often done that. To question God's power, is to speak against him. Perhaps you have thought lightly of your unbelieving speeches, but God does not think lightly of them; to my mind it seems that there is hardly anything that so grieves him as the doubts of his people concerning him.

[Psalms 78:20](#). *Behold, he smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed; can he give bread also? can he provide flesh for his people?*

There ought to have been no question as to the Lord's power; the God who could fetch water out of a rock could, if he pleased, make loaves of bread out of the sand under their feet, or cause the very stars to drop with meat for them if necessary.

[Psalms 78:21](#). *Therefore the Lord heard this, and was wroth:*

He was really angry with his people because they doubted him. He loved them, and because he loved them, it cut him to the quick that they should have questioned his power to bless them.

[Psalms 78:21-23](#). *So a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel; Because they believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation: Though he had commanded the clouds from above, and opened the doors of heaven,*

Unbelief is very hard to kill. God opens the doors and windows of heaven to feed his people; yet, nevertheless, the next time they are in trouble, they begin to stagger at the promise. Oh, shameful unbelief!

[Psalms 78:24-29](#). *And had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them of the corn of heaven. Man did eat angels' food: he sent them meat to the full. He caused an east wind to blow in the heaven : and by his power he brought in the south wind. He rained flesh also upon them as dust, and feathered fowls like as the sand of the sea: and he let it fall in*

the midst of their camp, round about their habitations. So they did eat, and were well filled: for he gave them their own desire;

Yet that was not a blessing to them; and, brethren, let us ever be afraid of our own desire, unless that desire comes from the Lord. You know how David puts it in the 37th Psalm: “Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.” If, however, thou findest thy delight in any earthly thing, it shall be a plague to thee to have the desire of thy heart: “He gave them their own desire; “ —

[Psalms 78:30](#). *They were not estranged from their lust.*

For the more last gets, the more lust wants. It is like the daughter of the horse-leech, that always cries, “Give! Give!” God can satisfy the longing soul, but all the world cannot satisfy the cravings of lust.

[Psalms 78:30-31](#). *But while their meat was yet in their mouths, the wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fattest of them, and smote down the chosen men of Israel.*

They received what they pined for, but they had a curse with it. Affliction with a blessing is far better than prosperity with a curse.

[Psalms 78:32](#). *For all this they sinned still, and believed not for his wondrous works.*

They were dyed ingrain with unbelief, so that it seemed as if it could not be washed out of them.

[Psalms 78:33](#). *Therefore their days did he consume in vanity, and their years in trouble.*

A great part of our trouble is the fruit of our own unbelief. It is like hemlock in the furrows of the field. They who distrust God are making a rod for their own back; and before they have done with it, they will have to rue the day in which they thought themselves wiser than God.

[Psalms 78:34-36](#). *When he slew them, then they sought him : and they returned and inquired early after God. And they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their redeemer. Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues.*

Some men are like dull animals that will not go without the whip. Many of us cannot be kept right without constant affliction; if our God gives us a little smooth walking, we go half-asleep, or we trip and stumble; so he is compelled, as it were, to make our way very rough, and often to strike us with the rod, to keep us from falling altogether into sinful slumber. How many there are who, when they do seem to turn to God, in times of

sickness, are not truly penitent! A death-bed repentance may be true; but, oh, what a risk there is that it may be false!

[Psalms 78:37-51](#). *For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant. But he, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not: yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath. For he remembered that they were but flesh; a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again. How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness, and grieve him in the desert! Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel. They remembered not his hand, nor the day when he delivered them from the enemy. How he had wrought his signs in Egypt, and his wonders in the field of Zoan : and had turned their rivers into blood; and their floods, that they could not drink. He sent divers sorts of flies among them, which devoured them; and frogs, which destroyed them. He gave also their increase unto the caterpillar, and their labour unto the locust. He destroyed their vines with hail, and their sycamore trees with frost. He gave up their cattle also to the hail, and their flocks to hot thunderbolts. He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, wrath, and indignation, and trouble, by sending evil angels among them. He made a way to his anger; he spared not their soul from death, but gave their life over to the pestilence; and smote all the firstborn in Egypt; the chief of their strength in the tabernacles of Ham:*

This is what God did with their enemies who had oppressed them, that he might set his people at liberty. After all that, ought they not to have trusted him as a little child trusts its mother, without ever a question or a doubt While he thus overthrew their enemies, see what he did for his own people.

[Psalms 78:52-56](#). *But made his own people to go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock. And he led them on safely, so that they feared not: but the sea overwhelmed their enemies. And he brought them to the border of his sanctuary, even to this mountain, which his right hand had purchased. He cast out the heathen also before them, and divided them an inheritance by line, and made the tribes of Israel to dwell in their tents. Yet they tempted and provoked the most high God, and kept not his testimonies;*

This sad note seems to come over and over again, as if they never could have too much of grieving God; yet the Lord was still tender towards them. Well may we sing, —

“Who is a pardoning God like thee?
Or who has grace so rich and free?”

[Psalms 78:57-64](#). *But turned back, and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers: they were turned aside like a deceitful bow. For they provoked him to anger with their high places, and moved him to jealousy with their graven images. When God heard this, he was wroth, and greatly abhorred Israel: so that he forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent which he placed among men; and delivered his strength into captivity, and his glory into the enemy's hand. He gave his people over also unto the sword; and was wroth with his inheritance. The fire consumed their young men; and their maidens were not given to marriage. Their priests fell by the sword; and their widows made no lamentation.*

They were dumb with excess of grief. When God chastises his children, he does not play at it. Sometimes, when he is angry at their sin, he lays on the blows fast and heavily, till their very bones are broken, so that they may hate sin as God hates it, and seek after holiness even as God loves it. So, dear friends, I pray that, if any of us have lost the consolations of God, and are feeling the weight of his rod, we may begin to inquire what secret thing it is in us which has angered him, and go back to him, and seek to stand before him as once we did; for, otherwise, he will smite, and smite, and smite yet again and again. But, notice, that the Lord never delights in chastening his children; he is glad to have done with the necessary correction. So, when their enemies were most cruel with them, —

[Psalms 78:65-69](#). *Then the Lord awaked as one out of sleep, and like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine. And he smote his enemies in the hinder parts: he put them to a perpetual reproach. Moreover he refused the tabernacle of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim: but chose the tribe of Judah, the mount Zion which he loved. And he built his sanctuary like high palaces, like the earth which he hath established for ever.*

You see that we are getting into clear water now; it was all broken water, storm and hurricane, while we heard of what Israel did; but when we come to deal with God in Christ, of whom David is the type, then how sweetly everything goes!

[Psalms 78:70-72](#). *He chose David also his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds: from following the ewes great with young he brought him to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance. So he fed them according*

to the integrity of his heart; and guided them by the skillfulness of his hands.

Blessed be God who puts away the sin of his people, because he delighteth in mercy!

Verses 10-61

The story of how the children of Israel behaved themselves towards their gracious God.

[Psalms 78:10-16](#). *They kept not the covenant of God, and refused to walk in his law; and forgat his works, and his wonders that he had shewed them. Marvellous things did he in the sight of their fathers, in the land of Egypt, in the field of Zoan. He divided the sea, and caused them to pass through, and he made the waters to stand as an heap. In the daytime also he led them with a cloud, and all the night with a light of fire. He clave the rocks in the wilderness and gave them drink as out of the great depths. He brought streams also out of the rock, and caused waters to run down like rivers.*

In such a scene of miracles, surrounded by such prodigies of goodness, what did they do?

[Psalms 78:17](#). *And they sinned yet more against him by provoking the most High in the wilderness.*

What a fierce fire must sin be that it is even fed by the rivers of God's goodness, and burns by means of that which ought to have quenched every spark of it. Yet there is such a fire as that raging in our hearts, and even God's mercies will make us more sinful unless his abounding grace comes with them to teach us how to use them aright.

[Psalms 78:18](#). *And they tempted God in their heart by asking meat for their lust.*

Not for their needs, but "for their lust." It is a dreadful thing when prayer itself is prostituted, and the mercy-seat becomes a place for the expression of sinful desires which ought never to have been in our hearts. It was so, however, with these children of Israel.

[Psalms 78:19](#). *Yea, they spake against God;*

As you read that "they spake against God," you naturally suppose that they uttered some blasphemy, or some denial of his Deity. Listen and learn:

—

[Psalms 78:19](#). *They said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?*

That is speaking against him, — to speak unbelievably, — to speak in a questioning way concerning his power. I am afraid that there are very few of us who can plead innocence on this score.

[Psalms 78:20](#). *Behold, he smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed; can he give bread also? Can he provide flesh for his people?*

These things, which they lusted after, they also turned into subjects for unbelief; and they even misused the miracle, which they dared not deny.

[Psalms 78:21-22](#). *Therefore the LORD heard this, and was wroth: so a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel; . Because they believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation:*

This was the provoking sin. The Lord would not endure such wanton and wicked unbelief as this. After he had turned the rocks into rivers, could he not turn the stones into bread, and the dust of the desert into flesh, if he chose to do so?

[Psalms 78:23-32](#). *Though he had commanded the clouds from above, and opened the doors of heaven, and had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them of the corn of heaven. Man did eat angels' food: he sent them meat to the full. He caused an east wind to blow in the heaven: and by his power he brought in the south wind. He rained flesh also upon them as dust, and feathered fowls like as the sand of the sea: and he let it fall in the midst of their camp, round about their habitations. So they did eat, and were well filled: for he gave them their own desire; they were not estranged from their lust. But while their meat was yet in their mouths, the wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fattest of them, and smote down the chosen men of Israel. For all this they sinned still,*

Mercy failed to move them, and judgment failed too. The right hand of God's gifts and the left hand of his chastisement were equally ignored.

[Psalms 78:32-34](#). *And believed not for his wondrous works. Therefore their days did he consume in vanity, and their years in trouble. When he slew them, then they sought him: and they returned and enquired early after God.*

Perhaps some of them fought him even while they were dying; and the remnant that survived trembled, and “returned and enquired early after God.”

[Psalms 78:35-36](#). *And they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their redeemer. Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth,*

and they lied unto him with their tongues.

Oh, this is terrible! One would have thought that they would have been sincere when they were broken down with sorrow, but it was not so. And I fear that the kind of religion which has to be whipped into us is never good for much. It must have in it the element of spontaneousness if it is to be sincere; it was not so with these people.

[Psalms 78:37-41](#). *For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant. But he, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not: yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath. For he remembered that they were but flesh, a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again. How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness, and grieve him in the desert! Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel.*

In their unbelieving imagination, they circumscribed his power; they thought that he could do something, but not everything; they believed him one day, and doubted him the next.

[Psalms 78:42-45](#). *They remembered not his hand, nor the day when he delivered them from the enemy. How he had wrought his signs in Egypt, and his wonders in the field of Zoan: and had turned their rivers into blood; and their floods, that they could not drink. He sent divers sorts of flies among them, which devoured them; and frogs, which destroyed them.*

All these judgments fell upon their enemies, but they failed to remember them,

[Psalms 78:46-56](#). *He gave also their increase unto the caterpillar, and their labour unto the locust. He destroyed their vines with hail, and their sycamore trees with frost. He gave up their cattle also to the hail, and their flocks to hot thunderbolts. He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, wrath, and indignation, and trouble, by sending evil angels among them. He made a way to his anger; he spared not their soul from death, but gave their life over to the pestilence; and smote all the firstborn in Egypt, the chief of their strength in the tabernacles of Ham: but made his own people to go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock. And he led them on safely, so that they feared not: but the sea overwhelmed their enemies. And he brought them to the border of his sanctuary, even to this mountain, which his right hand had purchased. He cast out the heathen also before them, and divided them an inheritance by line, and made the tribes*

of Israel to dwell in their tents. Yet they tempted and provoked the most high God, and kept not his testimonies:

Oh, these terrible “yets”! Though God was faithful to the end, and kept his covenant, and brought them into the land which he swore to their fathers that he would give them. Yet they tempted and provoked the most high God, and kept not his testimonies.”

[Psalms 78:57-61](#). *But turned back, and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers: they were turned aside like a deceitful bow. For they provoked him to anger with their high places, and moved him to jealousy with their graven images.*

When God heard this, he was wroth, and greatly abhorred Israel: so that he forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent which he placed among men; and delivered his strength into captivity, and his glory into the enemy’s hand.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Psalms 78:10-61](#); and [1 Peter 4:1-13](#).

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Psalm Chapter 79

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

PSALM 80

Verses 1-19

[Psalms 80:1-3](#). *Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that ledest Joseph like a flock; thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth. Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh stir up thy strength, and come and save us. Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.*

To whom could Israel go, in times of distress, but unto her God? It was well that her psalmists should teach her thus to pray. Notice the form of this prayer: “Come and save us. Turn us again, O God.” We cannot be saved except by being turned from the ways of sin into the path of holiness.

But who shall turn us? What power can reverse the current of the human soul? As well might Niagara begin to ascend of its own accord as for man to turn to God except as God turns him.

[Psalms 80:4-7](#). *O LORD God of hosts, how long wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people? Thou feedest them with the bread of tears; and givest them tears to drink in great measure. Thou makest us a strife unto our neighbours: and our enemies laugh among themselves. Turn us again, O God of hosts, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.*

Israel was evidently in very deep distress, yet still God's own. It is no evidence of our having ceased to be God's people that we are made to drink deep draughts of tears. We are not to imagine that God has cast us off because he chastens us; nay, rather are we to argue the other way, "for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth."

[Psalms 80:8-15](#). *Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt: thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it. Thou preparedst room before it, and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land. The hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars. She sent out her boughs unto the sea, and her branches unto the river. Why hast thou then broken down her hedges, so that all they which pass by the way do pluck her? The boar out of the wood doth waste it, and the wild beast of the field doth devour it. Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts: look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine; and the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted, and the branch that thou madest strong for thyself.*

Notice how a soul, in deep distress, usually gets to God. Under some aspect or other, by some way or another, the heart gropes its way till it finds him out. If poor Israel be as a vineyard given up to the wild boar of the wood, there is still hope through that "righteous Branch" of whom the Lord said to Jeremiah, "In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely."

[Psalms 80:16-17](#). *It is burned with fire, it is cut down: they perish at the rebuke of thy countenance. Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself.*

"If thou wilt not hear us, yet hear him. If thou wilt put no honour upon us, we will ask thee to put the highest honours upon him. Save us for his sake. Deliver thy vineyard from the wild boar and restore the hedges that have been broken down, for is not this the vineyard of red wine which all belongs to him?"

[Psalms 80:18-19](#). *So will not we go back from thee: quicken us, and we will call upon thy name. Turn us again, O LORD God of hosts, cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.*

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 80; and [Matthew 9:36-38](#); Matthew 10.

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PSALM 81

Verses 1-16

Psalms 81:1. *Sing aloud unto God our strength: make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob.*

In these days, the Psalm would have to be altered if they are to suit the dogmas of modern thought, for “the God of Jacob” is altogether rejected by those wondrous thinkers who think they know so much. The God of the New Testament, they say, is a very different Being from the God of the Old Testament. According to them, the Old Testament God is too stern; but the New Testament God is far softer, quite effeminate, indeed, if they rightly describe him. But we do not hesitate to say, over and over again that the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob,-the immutable and unchangeable One,-the God of Sinai, is as much our God as the God of Calvary, so we delight “to make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob.”

Psalms 81:2-6. *Take a psalm, and bring hither the timbrel, the pleasant harp with the psaltery. Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day. For this was a statute for Israel, and a law of the God of Jacob. This he ordained in Joseph for a testimony, when he went out through the land of Egypt: where I heard a language that I understood not. I removed his shoulder from the burden: his hands were delivered from the pots.*

Child of God, have you forgotten the time of your deliverance? God has not; and here he reminds his people Israel of their deliverance out of Egypt. So he says concerning you, “I removed his shoulder from the burden: his hands were delivered from the pots.” Do you not remember the joy of that glad moment when the burden of sin was taken away from you, and the pots of your own self-salvation lay broken at your feet? Glory be to him who brought us out from that terrible house of bondage!

Psalms 81:7. *Thou calledst in trouble, and I delivered thee; I answered thee in the secret place of thunder: I proved thee at the waters of Meribah. Selah.*

But how sadly did they stand the test! You and I, too, have not only received much mercy at the hand of God, but we also have had our testing-times. We can look back to the waters of strife with deep regret that there we failed so sadly.

Psalms 81:8-10. *Hear, O my people, and I will testify unto thee: O Israel, if thou wilt hearken unto me; there shall no strange god be in thee; neither shalt thou worship any strange god. I am the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.*

What a wondering verse this is! We have been so accustomed to hear the expression, "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt," followed by the law; but here it is followed by a gracious encouragement to us to pray: "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." Whatever force the law derived from that preface, this exhortation derives the same force, and no child of God ought to forget that. He who delivered you from the burden of sin bids you open your mouth wide, and he will fill it; and after your deliverance from guilt, do you not feel that you may well ask great things of such a gracious God?

Psalms 81:11-15. *But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me. So I gave them up unto their own heart lust: and they walked in their own counsels. Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways! I should soon have subdued the enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries. The haters of the LORD should have submitted themselves unto him: but their time should have endured for ever.*

Alas, poor Israel! Through what sufferings and captivities didst thou go because thou wouldst not trust in the Lord, and how often some of God's children have had to go through years of sorrow and spiritual captivity because of their lack of close walking with their God, and complete obedience to him! May we learn from the sins of others, and be helped to walk closely with our Master!

Psalms 81:16. *He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat: and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee.*

If the Word of God does not seem to feed us as once it did, it will surely be because we have not hearkened to our Lord, or walked in his ways. May

he give us grace to render complete obedience to his holy will!

“So shall thy choicest gifts, O Lord,

Thy faithful people bless,

For them shall earth its stores afford and heaven in happiness.”

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Psalm Chapter 82

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

PSALM 83

Verses 1-18

This is a Psalm that is not often read, and very seldom expounded, I should think. According to the title, it is “A Song or Psalm of Asaph.” Asaph is one of a little group of poets who flourished side by side with David. This is a patriotic hymn. The nation was about to be attacked by many adversaries; so, like a true patriot, the poet desired that God would give the victory to his people, and deliver them. You may regard this Psalm as a prophecy, it reads like a prayer or wish of the writer, and no doubt it is so; but it may also be read as a prophecy of what will happen to the enemies of God’s people.

[Psalms 83:1-2](#). *Keep not thou silence, O God: hold not thy peace, and be not still, O God. For, lo, thine enemies make a tumult: and they that hate thee have lifted up the head.*

God’s enemies are making a noise, and the psalmist’s prayer is that the Lord himself will speak and answer them. God’s voice made the heavens and the earth: “He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.” A single word from him will win the day. The poet’s prayer is not, “Grant a leader bold and brave,” but, “Lord, speak, speak!” “For, lo, thine enemies make a tumult.” The enemies of Israel were the enemies of God. If they were our enemies only, we might keep silence; but as they are also the enemies of God, our loyalty to the Lord compels us to cry unto him to speak against them.

[Psalms 83:3](#). *They have taken crafty counsel against thy people, and consulted against thy hidden ones.*

Craft goes with power in plotting against God's people. The seed of the serpent are like him from whom they came, and of him it is said, "Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made;" and the seed of the serpent are very full of crafty counsel and subtlety. This the psalmist mentions in his prayer, and then he looks to God to countermine their mines, to baffle their craft, and by his wisdom to save his people.

[Psalms 83:4](#). *They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance.*

So terrible was the anger of these nations against God's people that nothing would content them but the destruction of Israel, the blotting out of its very name from the memory of men; and I am sure that, if the world could have its way, it would extinguish the Church of Christ. You notice, in these days of boasted liberality and pretended charity, that the charity is only for error; but for the old gospel there is no charity. The cry concerning it is, "Let it be cut to pieces; let it be destroyed. It is an old nuisance, put it out of the way." This is how the enemies of God would have it, "that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance."

[Psalms 83:5](#). *For they have consulted together with one consent: they are confederate against thee:*

There were many nations of heathens, and they were agreed in nothing except in their hatred of Israel. There they were agreed, as Herod was the friend of Pilate while Christ was under examination, but not at any other time. The psalmist mentions ten different nations which had banded themselves together against God's chosen people Israel. Ten against one is long odds but then God was on the side of Israel. One man with God is in the majority, however many there may be on the other side, for God counts for more than all who can be against him.

[Psalms 83:6](#). *The tabernacles of Edom,*

These descendants of Esau, Jacob's twin brother, ought to have been the best friends of Israel, but they were the worst of their enemies. How often does it happen that kinship in blood makes no kinship in grace! "A man's foes shall be they of his own household."

[Psalms 83:6](#). *And the Ishmaelites;*

These again were near akin to the seed of Abraham and Isaac; but the Ishmaelites were always among the most bitter enemies of Israel.

[Psalms 83:6](#). *Of Moab,*

Moab was descended from a daughter of Lot.

[Psalms 83:6](#). *And the Hagarenes;*

Perhaps descended from Hagar by some other husband.

[Psalms 83:7](#). *Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek;*

All these were hereditary enemies of Israel, Amalek especially so, for God had determined that there should be war with Amalek throughout all generations.

[Psalms 83:7](#). *The Philistines —*

These were the old enemies of Israel. Remember how Samson fought with them, and what tugs of war David had with them.

[Psalms 83:7](#). *With the inhabitants of Tyre;*

What were they about in warring against God's people? They were merchants, shippers. Yes; but it sometimes happens that, when worldly craft is in danger, men of trade and commerce can be as bitter against true religion as anybody else.

[Psalms 83:8](#). *Assur also is joined with them: they have holpen the children of Lot. Selah.*

Here is a mention of the growing power of Assyria. What a host there was, what a band of enemies against God's people! Oh, dear friends, I trust that none of us will have our names written in this black list! Be not enemies of God and of his truth; for, if so, you will wage a losing battle. Let the tow fight with the flame, or the dust with the wind, they will speedily be overcome, and woe be unto the man who contends with his Maker! What can he do? Let us, brethren, be on God's side. God grant, of his grace, that we may never lift a hand against his cause!

Now comes the prayer or prophecy of the poet.

[Psalms 83:9-10](#). *Do unto them as unto the Midianites; as to Sisera, as to Jabin, at the brook of Kison: which perished at Endor: they became as dung for the earth.*

In those great battles the enemies of the Lord and his people were utterly cut in pieces. Mighty men as they were, they left their corpses to manure the soil.

[Psalms 83:11](#). *Make their nobles like Oreb, and like Zeeb: yea, all their princes as Zebah, and as Zalmunna.*

These were four princes who were slain by Gideon and his allies; two of them bore the names of wolf and raven, — cruel names, and war is ever a cruel thing. But what had they done, these men of arms, these mighty warriors? The psalmist tells us: —

[Psalms 83:12](#). *Who said, Let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession.*

They were not content with their own houses, they wanted God's houses; and there are some men who can never rest except when they are doing mischief to the cause and cross of Christ. Woe unto them, for the fate of Oreb and Zeeb shall be theirs in due time!

[Psalms 83:13](#). *O my God, make them like a wheel; as the stubble before the wind.*

Or rather, "Thou shalt make them a wheel," never still. The real translation, I think, would be, "Make them like those light dry flowers which are blown by the wind across the plains." Mr. Thomson, in his *Land and the Book*, speaks of the branches of the wild artichoke which form a sphere or globe a foot or more in diameter, and he says that he has seen thousands of them come wheeling along. Isaiah calls them, "a rolling thing before the whirlwind." A puff of wind would come and take them in one direction, and then a contrary wind would drive them in quite another direction, they are so light, downy, gossamer-like, that they never can rest. Now this is just what happens to many men who set themselves against God and his grace. They are like rolling things never at rest, believing nothing, knowing nothing, hoping nothing, comforted by nothing, they are like a wheel. Oh, that we may never know by personal experience what this means, "Make them like a wheel, as the stubble before the wind"! You know how that is; the stubble is blown up, down, to the right, to the left, whichever way the wind blows. Are any of you like that tonight? Have you no stability? Have you no good hope for the future? When you think about death and eternity, are you like the stubble before the wind? If so, God have mercy upon you, and bring you to the only place where you can obtain salvation and stability!

[Psalms 83:14](#). *As the fire burneth a wood, and as the flame setteth the mountains on fire;*

Travelers tell us that they have sometimes seen the sides of mountains all ablaze where the timber, growing old, and everything being dry in the heat of summer, a chance spark has set the whole on a flame. This is what

God will do with his enemies. He will as certainly and as readily destroy them as the wood is burnt with fire, or the mountain's side is consumed by the raging flames. Who will stand against God then? Who will dare attempt it? Consider his great might, and flee from his wrath.

[Psalms 83:15](#). *So persecute them with thy tempest,*

Or, "Thou wilt so follow them up with thy tempest."

[Psalms 83:15-16](#). *And make them afraid with thy storm. Fill their faces with shame; that they may seek thy name, O LORD.*

That is the prayer which we might pray tonight for all those who are denying the Godhead of Christ, and his great sacrifice of the Cross, and for all who reject the inspiration of Scripture and the blessed doctrines of grace. "O Lord, fill their faces with shame, that they may seek thy name!" Oh, that men did but know their own character! If they did but feel ashamed of their own sin, they might be led to seek the name of God.

[Psalms 83:17](#). *Let them be confounded and troubled for ever;*

Or rather, "They shall be confounded and troubled for ever." That is an awful passage, "Confounded and troubled for ever."

[Psalms 83:17-18](#). *Yea, let them be put to shame, and perish: that men may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the most high over all the earth.*

You notice that, when I read the Scriptures, wherever I find the word LORD in capital letters, I read it as Jehovah, for so it should be. I wish that the translators of the Revised Version had had the courage of their convictions, and had so translated it, for we want that grand name back, Jah, Jehovah. Let me entreat you never to trifle as some do with that sacred word Hallelujah, or Hallelujah, praise to Jehovah.

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PSALM 84

Verses 1-12

To the chief Musician upon Gittith, A Psalm for the sons of Korah. It is thought, by some interpreters, that Gittith signifies the winepress. They must have been a very godly people who sang such songs as this in the time of the treading out of the grapes. Oh, that the day were come when the common places of our ordinary industries should be sanctified by psalms,

and hymns, and spiritual songs! Alas, at the winepress, men too often sing loose and lascivious songs; but these ancient people of God did not so. This Psalm is a song to the chief musician, and it is mainly concerning the house of God and the pilgrimage to it. Every sacred song should be sung at its best, we should call out the chief musician in every hymn that is dedicated to the service of the Lord.

“To the chief Musician upon Gittith, A Psalm for the sons of Korah.” I have often reminded you that these sons of Korah owed their continued existence to an act of special sovereign grace. Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and all their company, were swallowed up alive, they went down to the pit because of their rebellion; but in the Book of Numbers we read, “Notwithstanding the children of Korah died not.” Why they were spared, we cannot tell; but, ever after, they were made to be the singers of the sanctuary. They who are saved by sovereign grace are the most fit to praise the name of the Lord. The sons of Korah also became door-keepers to the house of the Lord; and hence, probably, is the allusion to a doorkeeper which we find in this Psalm.

[Psalms 84:1](#). *How amiable are thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts!*

“How amiable “ — how lovely “are thy tabernacles!” The temple was not then built; the Lord’s house was as yet only a tent, so that it is not the glory of architecture that makes the house to be lovely, the glory of it is the indwelling God. “How amiable are thy tabernacles!” That is to say, every part of it is lovely. The outer court, the inner court, the Holy of Holies, all the different parts in that ancient sacred shrine were lovely to the psalmist’s eye. He does not tell us how lovely they were; he leaves off with a note of exclamation, as if he could not measure with his golden rod this city of the great King. “How lovely are thy tabernacles, O Jehovah of hosts,’ — lovely because they are thine! They are our tabernacles if we gather in them; but they are thine because thou art there, and therefore are they most lovely to our eyes.”

[Psalms 84:2](#). *My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.*

His soul longed until, as it were, it grew pale, — for so the Hebrew may be rendered, — it grew white with faintness in the intensity of his desire to get up to the courts where God was to be found. God is a King, his ancient tabernacle was one of his royal palaces, so David longed to be a courtier there, that he might dwell in the courts of Jehovah. When he says that his

flesh cried out for the living God, he does not mean flesh in the sense in which Paul uses the term, for in that flesh there dwelleth no good thing; but the psalmist means to express here the whole of his nature, “My soul, my heart, and my flesh.” The combination of his entire manhood, spirit, soul, and body, was moved with such intense agony of desire that it must express itself, and it could only express itself in a cry: “My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.” If it be so with you, my brethren, at this time, you shall have a feast of fat things. He who cometh to God’s table with a good appetite shall never go away unsatisfied. It is want of desire which often hinders us from spiritual delight; but when the desire is set upon God, it shall be satisfied. I fear that we often come to the wells of salvation, and yet get nothing, because merely coming to the wells is nothing. We read in Isaiah, “With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.” It is not the wells, but the water out of them, which will refresh the weary one. Do not be content with being here, in your pew, in the midst of this great congregation; but long after the living God himself, for he alone can refresh and revive your soul and spirit. Say, with David, “My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.”

[Psalms 84:3](#). *Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O LORD of hosts, my King, and my God.*

These little birds, so insignificant in themselves, were full of holy courage, and with sweet familiarity they came even into the sacred place. They hung upon the caves of God’s house, they even dared to make their nests there.

“O make me like the sparrows blest,
To dwell but where I love!”

O my Lord, give me the privilege of the swallow; not only to dwell with thee, but to see my young ones, too, all round thine altars, that I may find with thee, my God, a nest where I may lay my young! Is not this your desire, my brother, my sister, to have God for yourself, and God for your boys, and God for your girls, — to be yourself God’s servant, and to have all your children his children, too? If so, God grant you the desire of your heart! How sweetly does David address the Lord: “O Jehovah of hosts, my King, and my God!” The people of God are very fond of my’s, they love possessive pronouns: “my King, and my God.” God is good, but what is another man’s God to me if he be not mine? I must have him for my King,

and my God, or else I shall not really long for him, or cry out after him, or delight in him.

[Psalms 84:4](#). *Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee.*

The nearer to God you are in your life, the sweeter and more constant will be your song to him. They who dwell with God dwell where there must be singing.

“Where God doth dwell, sure heaven is there,

And singing there must be:

Since, Lord, thy presence makes my heaven,

Whom should I sing but thee?”

Blessed are they who always dwell where thou dwellest, O my God!
“They will be still praising thee.”

[Psalms 84:4](#). *Selah.*

Screw up the harp strings, set the music to a higher key; lift up the heart also, let the soul rise to something sweeter still in praise of Jehovah.

[Psalms 84:5](#). *Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways —*

Or,” Thy ways.” It is not every man who is in God’s house who is blessed; the blessed man is the one who has brought his heart with him. It is not every man who is in God’s ways who is blessed; but the man whose strength is in those ways, who throws his whole heart and soul into the worship. Half-hearted worship is dreary work, it is like a blind horse going round in a mill; but when the heart is in the service, we feel then as if we could dance for joy in the presence of the Lord our God: “Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee, in whose heart are thy ways.”

[Psalms 84:6-7](#). *Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools. They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.*

We do not know at this date what that valley of Baca was, for the land has been to so large an extent destroyed. This ancient song retains the name of the valley of Baca, but it does not explain to us where or what the place was. Peradventure, it was a dry and thirsty valley in which, in order to pass through it at all, the pilgrims digged wells that there might be refreshment for their journey. There are many such valleys on the road to heaven, — dark and lonesome, dry and barren, — but God’s people learn to dig wells there. Only mark that, though we dig the wells, the water to fill them does

not rise up from the bottom, it falls down from above: “The rain also filleth the pools.” In the kingdom of heaven, there are some analogies with the kingdom of nature; but there are a great many heavenly things that have no earthly analogy at all, and you cannot with any accuracy argue from natural laws into the spiritual world. For instance, we have “an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast,” and we throw that anchor up: “which entereth into that within the veil.” Whereas earthly mariners drop their anchors down into the sea, we fling ours up into heaven. That is odd, but it is true; so, we dig a well, but it does not get filled from the bottom: “The rain also filleth the pools.” This is a new kind of well, and it teaches us that we must use the means, but that everything depends upon God. We have not to depend upon the means, but upon the God of the means: “The rain also filleth the pools.” See, further, brethren, what the way to heaven is; it is a growing way, an increasing way: “They go from strength to strength.” Those who begin in their own strength go from weakness to weakness; but (those who know their own weakness, and trust in the Almighty God, shall go from strength to strength. In the natural world, as we grow older, we get weaker; but in the moral and spiritual world, when it is as it should be, the older we grow, the stronger we become in God and in the power of his might. What a mercy it is to be on the road to heaven, which is a road ever upwards! From step to step, from hill to hill, from mount to mount, they climb who shall ultimately end their pilgrimage in the King’s palace above: “Every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.”

[Psalms 84:8-9](#). *O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer: give ear, O God of Jacob. Selah. Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed.*

See what a rise there is in the music here, from “Hear my prayer,” to “Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed.” “When thou canst not look on me, look on thine Anointed.”

“Him, and then the sinner see,
Look through Jesus’ wounds on me.”

When God looks at us, he may well be angry; but when he looks upon Christ, he must be glad and full of love.

[Psalms 84:10](#). *For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand.*

That is, better than a thousand spent anywhere else. You see, we have not yet come to the country where we can keep at God’s public worship all the year together, we have to get it a day at a time. Have you not often

wished that there were seven Sundays in the week? I am sure that you have when God has fed your souls, and made your spirits merry in the house of prayer.

Then have you sighed for the land —
“Where congregations ne’er break up,
And Sabbaths have no end.”

If you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, you shall come there by-and-by; but, at present, you must be satisfied with a day at a time in the courts of the Lord, yet the Lord can crowd mercies into one day with such a marvellous compression of grace that we shall seem to get three years’ food in a single day. The Lord make this day to be a sort of millennial day “A day in thy courts is better than a thousand” spent anywhere else.

[Psalms 84:10](#). *I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.*

As I said before, the sons of Korah were door-keepers to the house of the Lord, and this Psalm is for them. You know that our poor door-keepers generally have many to find fault with them, somebody or other is sure to feel disobliged; door-keeping is no very remunerative work, no very easy and pleasing task; “yet,” says David, King David himself, — “I would take off my crown of gold, and turn pew-opener; I would wish to be even a door-keeper in the house of the Lord, so long as I might but be with my God; and that position would be far better than feasting and rioting in royal pavilions with the wicked.”

[Psalms 84:11](#). *For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.*

Take notice of the whole of that last sentence; do not go and quote half of it, and say, “God has promised that he will withhold no good thing.” It is only promised to “them that walk uprightly”; and if you walk crookedly, the promise does not belong to you. It is upright walking that brings downright blessing. You shall lack no good thing from God, when your whole heart is made good towards God.

[Psalms 84:12](#). *O LORD of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee.*
May all of us know this blessedness! Amen.

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PSALM 85

Verses 1-13

In my brief comments upon this Psalm, I shall not feel bound to keep to the immediate occasion for which it was written, but shall seek to find a use for it in the present circumstances of God's saints.

[Psalms 85:1](#). *Lord, thou hast been favourable unto the land: thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob.*

Whenever you are in a low state of mind or heart, remember God's past lovingkindnesses. Recall the record of what he has done for his people in ages long gone by, for he is the same God for ever and ever, and, therefore, what he has done in the past, he will do in the future. As the wise man said, "The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the Sun." It is certainly so concerning God's dealings "Lord thou hast been favorable unto thy land," even when it was stoned with 'sin' "thou hast brought Back the captivity of Jacob." even when that captivity was brought upon the people by their own fault. Lord, bring back my captivity! Be favourable unto me; Deliver me from my spiritual declensions, and give me back my joy and peace:

[Psalms 85:2](#). *Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, thou hast covered all their sin. Selah.*

What a sweet subject for our meditation we found, last Lord's-day morning, in those words of the psalmist, "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities"! Now, if God has indeed blotted out the sin of his people, at a plea this is to use with him for all that we still need from him! Will he pardon us, and yet leave us to perish? Will he pay such a ransom price as the blood of his well-beloved Son to set us free from the bondage of sin, and then will he not help us even to the end? Will he not lift up our heavy heart, and revive our drooping spirit? Ah! that he will if we know how to plead his former mercy, and to urge upon him that, because he has forgiven our iniquity, and covered all our sin, he should now heal our diseases, redeem our life from destruction, and crown us with loving-kindness and tender mercies.

[Psalms 85:3-4](#). *Thou hast taken away all thy wrath: thou hast turned thyself from the fierceness of thine anger. Turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause thine anger toward us to cease.*

“Let us have a special application of the general mercy. Thy wrath to thy children has passed away; so let us no longer sit down, and cower beneath it, fearful of its terrors. Lord, bring us back to thee! Our heart desires conversion, but thou alone canst give it to us to the full. Turn us, O God of our salvation, and we shall be turned.”

[Psalms 85:6](#). *Wilt thou be angry with us for ever? Wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations?*

“Thou mightest well do so if thou wert dealing with us only according to the strict requirements of thy righteous law; but we are thy children, Lord; and is a father always angry with his children? Thou hast forgiven us our iniquity; and, therefore, the great cause of thy wrath against us is gone. Now, O Lord, reveal thy love to us! Let us not any longer be under the sense of our guilt, or feel the absence of the joy and peace which thou givest unto those whom thou forgivest.”

[Psalms 85:6](#). *Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?*

“We have got down very low, great God. We have been, these last six days, mixing with the world, and perhaps we have forgotten thee. Come to us, we pray thee. Give us fresh life; ‘revive us again.’ Many a time hast thou, spiritually, raised us up as from the grave’s mouth; wilt thou not do it again? All that thou hast done for us in the past will be lost if thou dost not continue thy mercy to us. ‘Wilt thou not revive us again?’ Thou lovest to see us happy, and thou art thyself the happy God; oh, make us happy, too, by reviving us, ‘that thy people may rejoice in thee!’”

[Psalms 85:7](#). *Shew us thy mercy, O LORD, and grant us thy salvation.*

So far, the Psalm is a prayer. Now the psalmist seems to stop, and wait for the answer to his supplication. Beloved, always do that when you pray. When you have spoken to God, wait for him to speak to you. Do not let it appear that your prayer needs no answer; but really expect a reply to it, and then, in patience and in silence, wait for it.

[Psalms 85:8](#). *I will hear what God the LORD will speak: for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints: but let them not turn again to folly.*

For, if they do, their darkness will return, and they will again have to mourn their Lord’s absence. Peradventure, the rod will fall more heavily upon them, and their souls will sink into a deeper despondency. For a

Christian to be a fool once, is a sad thing; but for him to turn again to folly, is a multiplied form of iniquity which God will surely punish.

[Psalms 85:9](#). *Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him; that glory may dwell in our land.*

O beloved brethren and sisters, lay hold on that salvation which is nigh unto you, and exalt in it; and, even now, let your spirits feel the glow of his glory shining in your soul!

[Psalms 85:10](#). *Mercy and truth are met together;*

But only at one place,—the cross of Calvary, where Jesus died; there, “mercy and truth are met together;”

[Psalms 85:10](#). *Righteousness and peace have kissed each other.*

Through Christ’s death, sin has been punished, sinners are saved, God’s law is vindicated, and the depths of his mercy are displayed: “Righteousness and peace have kissed each other.”

[Psalms 85:11](#). *Truth shall spring out of the earth;--*

Promises, which lay hidden in God’s Word, like seeds buried in the earth, shall spring up before our eyes, like flowers carpeting the earth with beauty: “Truth shall spring out of the earth;” —

[Psalms 85:11](#). *And righteousness shall look down from heaven.*

As if so pleased with the state of things brought about by the atoning sacrifice of Christ that it flung up the windows of heaven to look down and see this great sight: “Righteousness shall look down from heaven.”

[Psalms 85:12-13](#). *Yea, the LORD shall give that which is good; and our land shall yield her increase. Righteousness shall go before him; and shall set us in the way of his steps.*

May God thus revive us, by his Holy Spirit, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

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Psalm Chapter 86

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

Psalm Chapter 87

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

PSALM 88

Verses 1-18

A Song or Psalm for the sons of Korah, to the chief Musician upon Mahaloth Leannoth, Maschil of Heman the Ezrahite. I think that this is the darkest of all the Psalms; it has hardly a spot of light in it. The only bright words that I know of are in the first verse the rest of the Psalm is very dark, and very dreary. Why, then, am I going to read it? Because, it may be, there is some poor heart here that is very heavy; you cannot tell out of this great crowd how many sorrowing and burdened spirits there may be amongst us; but there may be a dozen or two of persons who are driven almost to despair. My dear friend, if this is your case, I want you to know that somebody else has been just where you are. Remember how the shipwrecked man upon the lonely island all of a sudden came upon the footprints of another human being; so here, on the lone island of despondency, you shall be able to trace the footprints of another who has been there before you. Hear how he prays

[Psalms 88:1](#). *O LORD God of my salvation, I have cried day and night before thee:*

It was only a cry, a cry as of an animal in pain, or at best the cry as of a child that has lost its mother: "I have cried day and night before thee."

[Psalms 88:2](#). *Let my prayer come before thee:*

"Give me an audience, O Lord. Do not shut the door in my face. My prayer has been knocking, knocking, knocking, at thy gate; open to it. 'Let my prayer come before thee.'"

[Psalms 88:2](#). *Incline thine ear unto my cry;*

"Stoop down to me out of heaven, O Lord. Bow that ear of thine to hear even my feeble and unworthy cry. I know that I do not deserve it. I know that it will be a great act of condescension on thy part; but do 'incline thine ear unto my cry.'"

[Psalms 88:3](#). *For my soul is full of troubles:*

"Full of troubles, brimming over with grief, and every drop of it is as bitter as gall."

[Psalms 88:3-4](#). *And my life draweth nigh unto the grave. I am counted with them that go down into the pit:*

“They put me down as a dead man. They that see the lines of fierce despair upon my face reckon that I cannot live long: ‘I am counted with them that go down into the pit.’” These were his pleas in crying unto God,-“

Distresses round me thicken,
My life draws nigh the grave;
Descend, O Lord, to quicken,
Descend, my soul to save!”

[Psalms 88:4](#). *I am as a man that hath no strength:*

Here is one, in the time of manhood when he should be strongest, who yet says, “I am as a man that hath no strength.” This subject may not interest some of you, just now; but it is here, so we must mention it; and it may be wanted even by you one of these days. Bright eyes are not always bright, and the earthly joy that leaps and dances does not abide for ever. The dry may come when you will turn to this Psalm with the two eights to it, and find comfort in it because it describes your case also.

[Psalms 88:5](#). *Free among the dead,-*

A freeman of the sepulcher, at home at death’s dark door: “Free among the dead,”

[Psalms 88:5](#). *Like the slain that lie in the grave, whom thou rememberest no more: and they are cut off from thy hand.*

This is perhaps the most awful depth of the whole Psalm. The writer bemoaned that he was not remembered even by God any more, and that he was cut off from God’s hand at least, so he thought.

[Psalms 88:6-7](#). *Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps. Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves. Selah,*

Very properly here comes a “Selah.” Such a strain upon the harp-strings had put them all out of tune; so the players had notice to retune their harps, and the singers were bidden to lift up the strain of their song. It seems to me as if the writer here lifted his head above the waves of the tempestuous sea, and still kept on swimming.

[Psalms 88:8](#). *Thou hast put away mine acquaintance far from me; thou hast made me an abomination unto them: I am shut up, and I cannot come forth.*

This is the utterance of a soul imprisoned in solitary confinement, nobody able to come to it to breathe out consolation: “Thou hast put away mine acquaintance far from me. They cannot come to me, and I am shut up, and I cannot come forth to them.”

[Psalms 88:9](#). *Mine eye mourneth by reason of affliction: LORD, I have called daily upon thee, I have stretched out my hands unto thee.*

Now hear how the psalmist pleads with the Lord. Prayer is always best when it rises to pleading. The man who understands the sacred art of prayer becomes a special pleader with God.

[Psalms 88:10](#). *Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead? shall the dead arise and praise thee? Selah.*

“Shall the dead arise, and praise thee?” Not in this life, though the godly will praise the Lord in the world to come. But now, when a Christian man dies, God loses a chorister from the choirs of earth, there is one the less to sing his praises here; and the psalmist therefore pleads: “Lord, if I live, thou canst show thy wonders to me; but wilt thou show thy wonders to the dead? If I am alive, I can praise thee; but shall the dead arise, and praise thee?”

[Psalms 88:11-12](#). *Shall thy lovingkindness be declared in the grave? or thy faithfulness in destruction? Shalt thy wonders be known in the dark? and thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?*

He pleads that, if he dies, he shall not be able to tell out the mercy of the Lord. God will lose a singer from his earthly choir, a witness from his earthly courts, a testifier of his lovingkindness, and faithfulness, and righteousness.

[Psalms 88:13](#). *But unto thee have I cried, O LORD and in the morning shall my prayer repent thee.*

“I will be up betimes, before thou comest to me. I will be first to approach thee. I will salute the rising sun with my rising prayer.”

[Psalms 88:14](#). *LORD, why castest thou off my soul? why hidest thou thy face from me?*

Note again the earnestness of the psalmist’s pleadings. We have had many of them already; each verse has, I think, had at least two pleadings in it. If thou wouldst be heard with God, take care that thou dost reason with him, and press thine arguments with the Most High. He delights in this exercise of persevering supplication which will take no denial.

[Psalms 88:15-18](#). *I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up: while I suffer thy terrors I am distracted. Thy fierce wrath goeth over me;*

thy terrors have cut me off. They came round about me daily like water; they compassed me about together. Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness.

There the Psalm ends. It is a sorrowful wail, and it comes to a close when you do not expect it to finish. It really has no finish to it, as when men wind up their songs with proper finales; but it is broken off, like a lily snapped at the stalk. I have read you this eighty-eighth Psalm as an example of persevering prayer. The man who wrote it—"Heman the Ezrahite"—kept on praying even when he did not seem to be heard, and thus he is a pattern to us. Yet notice how the next Psalm begins: "I will sing of the mercies of the Lord." It is not always the sorrowful sackbut that is to be in our hand; we can play the joyous harp as well. "I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever." "I will never leave off praising him." "With my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations."

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PSALM 89

Verses 1-37

[Psalms 89:1-2](#). *I will sing of the mercies of the LORD for ever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations. For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever: thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens.*

So far, the gracious man declares the resolution of his heart to praise his God for ever, and gives the reason for that resolve. Now he quotes the Lord's covenant with David —

[Psalms 89:3-4](#). *I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations. Selah.*

That covenant, as you well know, was not only made with David, but it had a higher spiritual bearing, for it related to that great and glorious Son of David who still reigns, and shall reign for ever, and in whom every covenant blessing is secured.

[Psalms 89:5](#). *And the heavens shall praise thy wonders, O LORD: thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints.*

It is often very profitable, when we are enjoying fellowship with God, for us to speak to God, and then wait for God to speak to us. It is so here you see. First the psalmist says that he will praise God for ever, then God tells him of his covenant, and explains to him the reason why mercy shall be built up for ever, and then the man of God begins to praise God again. That will give you a hint for your own private devotion. Sometimes you feel that you cannot praise God, and cannot pray to him. Well, then, if you cannot speak to God, sit still, and let him speak to you. Read a portion of Scripture, and then, perhaps, some suggestive verse or word in it will set you praying; and then, when you have prayed, stop a little while, and read again; and so a blessed conversation shall be carried on between you and your God. Thus the psalmist takes his turn again: “And the heavens shall praise thy wonders, O Lord: thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints.”

[Psalms 89:6-7](#). *For who in the heaven can be compared unto the LORD? Who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the LORD? God is greatly to be feared —*

That is, revered, —

[Psalms 89:7-9](#). *In the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him. O LORD God of hosts, who is a strong LORD like unto thee? or to thy faithfulness round about thee? Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them.*

He lets them arise, and he bids them sink down again. All the providential dealings of God seem to be illustrated in the ever-varying phenomena of the sea. The Lord sometimes lets tempests arise in our circumstances, and anon with a Word he stills them, and there is a great calm.

[Psalms 89:10](#). *Thou hast broken Rahab in pieces as one that is slain; — The great crocodile of Egypt; —*

[Psalms 89:10-12](#). *Thou hast scattered thine enemies with thy strong arm. The heavens are thine, the earth also is thine: as for the world and the fullness thereof, thou hast founded them. The north and the south thou hast created them: Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in thy name.*

Oh, what a blessed spirit the spirit of true devotion is! There is such life in it that it seems to quicken all inanimate creation, and make the rocks and mountains to sing, and the trees of the wood to clap their hands, and the waves of the sea to praise the great Creator. So the whole world is like a

great organ, and man, guided by God's Spirit, puts his fingers on the keys, and wakes the whole to the thunder of adoration and praise. Oh to be taught of God to have a praiseful heart, for then all around us will be more likely also to praise Jehovah.

[Psalms 89:13-14](#). *Thou hast a mighty arm: strong is thy hand, and high is thy right hand. Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face.*

There are wells of joy in this verse to those who know how to draw it up. It is a great delight to every man who is oppressed to know that justice and judgment stand, like armed sentinels, on either side of the throne of God and to every human soul, conscious of unworthiness, it is an unspeakable delight that mercy and truth, like royal heralds, go before God wherever he goes. It has been well said that a God all mercy would be a God unjust; but a God all justice without mercy would be terrible indeed.

[Psalms 89:15-21](#). *Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day: and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted. For thou art the glory of their strength: and in thy favour our horn shall be exalted. For the LORD is our defence; and the Holy One of Israel is our king. Then thou spakest in vision to thy holy one, and saidst, I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people. I have found David my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him: with whom my hand shall be established: mine arm also shall strengthen him.*

David was a great blessing to the nation over which God made him king. Among the choicest gifts that God ever gives to men are men; and therefore we read, concerning Christ, "When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men;" and those gifts were men, for "he gave some, apostles, and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." These were the choice ascension gifts of Christ. Yet, while these verses primarily refer to David the king of Israel, we must believe that a greater than David is here, even Christ, who deigns to call himself God's servant, who has been anointed by the Spirit of God, with whom God's hand is always established, and who is ever strengthened by the arm of Omnipotence.

[Psalms 89:22-25](#). *The enemy shall not exact upon him; nor the son of wickedness afflict him. And I will beat down his foes before his face, and plague them that hate him. But my faithfulness and my mercy shall be with*

him: and in my name shall his horn be exalted. I will set his hand also in the sea and his right hand in the rivers.

Do not believe, dear friends, any of the prophecies that some men make concerning the destruction of the kingdom of Christ and the failure of his Church; but be certain that the Lord will not suffer Christ to fail or be discouraged, and rest assured that the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hands. The history of the Church of Christ is a history of conflict, but it shall be a history of victory before it is completed: “I will set his hand also in the sea, and his right hand in the rivers.”

[Psalms 89:26-34](#). *He shall cry unto me, Thou art my father, my God, and the rock of my salvation. Also I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth. My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him. His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven. If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, or alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.*

If, then, you are in the covenant, you will have the rod; you may rest sure of that. If you do not walk in God’s ways, but break his statutes, you will not be allowed to go unchastened. If a father saw some boys in the street breaking windows or otherwise misbehaving themselves, and he gave one of the boys a box on the ears, you may be pretty certain that the boy is his own son. And when God sees men doing wrong, he often permits the wicked to go unpunished in this life; but as for his own people, it is written, “You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.” Our heavenly Father’s hand still holds the rod, and uses it when necessary; but it is in love that he corrects us. Let us, therefore, when he chastens us, plead the covenant that is here recorded, and say to him, “Thou hast said, ‘Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.’”

[Psalms 89:35-37](#). *Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven. Selah.*

Verses 1-52

[Psalms 89:1-2](#). *I will sing of the mercies of the LORD for ever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations. For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever: thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens.*

Here is an eternal song concerning eternal mercy. The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting, so the saints' praise for the never-ending mercy must itself be without end. The psalmist has made known God's faithfulness to all generations, not only by speaking of it, but especially by writing of it, for that which is written abides when that which is merely spoken is soon forgotten. God's faithfulness concerns heaven as well as earth, and he will establish it "in the very heavens."

[Psalms 89:3-4](#). *I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations. Selah.*

The complete fulfillment of this glorious covenant promise concerns, not only David and his seed, but "great David's greater Son" and his spiritual seed, the chosen people with whom the Lord has made "an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure."

[Psalms 89:5-7](#). *And the heavens shall praise thy wonders O LORD: thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints. For who in the heaven can be compared unto the LORD? who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the LORD? God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him.*

A holy reverence is becoming in all who draw near to the thrice-holy Jehovah, whether in the upper sanctuary or in the congregation of the saints on earth. In his gracious condescension, he allows his people wondrous familiarity in their approaches to him, yet this must never make them forget the infinite distance that separates the Creator from even the highest and holiest of his creatures.

[Psalms 89:8-10](#). *O LORD God of hosts, who is a strong LORD like unto thee? or to thy faithfulness round about thee? Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them. Thou hast broken Rahab in pieces, as one that is slain; thou hast scattered thine enemies with thy strong arm.*

The ruling of the raging of the sea, the stilling of the stormy waves, and the breaking and scattering of the might of Egypt are used by the psalmist to illustrate the omnipotence of Jehovah, before which the mightiest monarchy on earth had no more power than if it had been a corpse.

[Psalms 89:11-12](#). *The heavens are thine, the earth also is thine: as for the world and the fullness thereof, thou hast founded them. The north and the south thou hath created them: Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in thy name.*

The psalmist rejoices in the Lord as the Creator and Possessor of the heavens above and the earth beneath. “All things were created by him, and for him.”

[Psalms 89:13](#). *Thou hast a mighty arm: strong is thy hand, and high is thy right hand.*

Amid all the varying expressions that the psalmist uses, he continues to admire and magnify God’s majestic might. Whether for the defense of his people or the overthrow of his enemies, his arm is mighty, yea, more than that, for it is almighty. No human language can adequately describe that glorious hand which has only to be opened to satisfy the desire of every living thing.

[Psalms 89:14](#). *Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face.*

What blessed heralds does the Lord employ! “Mercy and truth shall go before thy face.” It is these gracious attributes, especially as they are displayed in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, that enable us even to welcome those sterner attributes, “justice and judgment,” which are the habitation of God’s throne.

[Psalms 89:15](#). *Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound:*

There are many that hear it, but perhaps not one out of a thousand of them that really know it. The hearing of the joyful sound is not sufficient to make people blessed, though faith cometh by hearing; it is the understanding of what is meant by the glad tidings, it is the reception of the gospel message which brings immediate and eternal blessedness.

[Psalms 89:15](#). *They shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance.*

The practical effect of a saving knowledge of the gospel is a holy walk, a walk of communion with God. Dear friends, do you walk in that way? Do you know the joyful sound? Can you discern the difference between the true and the false gospel? Can you distinguish the contrast between the

harmonies of the one and the discords of the other? Do you know the inner secret of the heavenly music? Has it ever vibrated in your own souls? Happy are ye if this be the case with you. The psalmist goes on to show how such people are blessed.

[Psalms 89:16](#). *In thy name shall they rejoice all the day:*

They shall not have mere passing fits of joy, but they shall be glad from morning to night.

[Psalms 89:16](#). *And in thy righteousness shall they be exalted.*

They shall mount to a higher platform of joy than that on which the men of the world are standing; they shall be lifted up in soul and spirit by the righteousness of God, especially as they see how that great attribute guarantees their eternal salvation.

[Psalms 89:17-19](#). *For thou art the glory of their strength: and in thy favour our horn shall be exalted. For the Lord is our defense; and the Holy One of Israel is our king. Then thou spakest in vision to thy holy one, and saidst, I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people.*

This is the very marrow of the gospel; this is indeed “the joyful sound” which makes us truly blessed,—the feat that God did, of old, exalt “One chosen out of the people,” with whom he entered into an eternal covenant, pledging himself to bless us through him.

[Psalms 89:20](#). *I have found David my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him:*

David was the means of bringing great blessings to the people over whom he ruled. God blessed the whole nation through him, and the covenant made with David was virtually a covenant made with all the people of Israel. In like manner, the covenant made with “great David’s greater Son” is virtually made with all those for whom he stood as Surety and Representative. The essence of the gospel lies in the covenant which God has made with his Son, Jesus Christ, on behalf of all his chosen people. Notice that God found David, and anointed him as king, even as he has taken the Lord Jesus, and anointed him with the oil of gladness above his fellows.

[Psalms 89:21](#). *With whom my hand shall be established: mine arm also shall strengthen him.*

The omnipotence of God is manifested in Christ, for he is “the power of God” as well as “the wisdom of God.”

[Psalms 89:22](#). *The enemy shall not exact upon him; nor the son of wickedness afflict him.*

“The son of wickedness” did afflict David for a while, but afterwards he came to the throne, and ruled gloriously over God’s ancient people. So is it with our covenant Lord and King. The wicked cannot now exact upon him, nor afflict him; he sits upon the throne in glory far beyond their reach.

[Psalms 89:23](#). *And I will beat down his foes before his face, and plague them that hate him.*

Who can ever stand up in opposition to Christ? He is that stone of which he himself said, “Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.”

[Psalms 89:24](#). *But my faithfulness and my mercy shall be with him: and in my name shall his horn be exalted.*

God is ever with his Son, Jesus Christ, in the plenitude of his faithfulness and mercy, to make him a continual blessing to his people.

[Psalms 89:25](#). *I will set his hand also in the sea, and his right hand in the rivers.*

Our King is a great King, and he rules over sea and land; there is no bound to his dominions, and there will be no end to his righteous rule.

[Psalms 89:26](#). *He shall cry unto me, Thou art my father, my God, and the rock of my salvation.*

All God’s children are a praying family, and his only-begotten and well-beloved Son sets a noble example in this respect as well as in everything else. He is still the great Intercessor before the throne of his Father.

[Psalms 89:27](#). *Also I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth.*

Christ is indeed “higher than the kings of the earth,” for he is “King of kings and Lord of lords.” Do not your hearts rejoice as you think of this blessed King with whom God has entered into a covenant to bless all who are trusting in him, even the very poorest and feeblest of them? What a joy it is to us to see Jesus striking hands with the Eternal, and entering into an everlasting covenant on our behalf!

[Psalms 89:28-29](#). *My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him. His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven.*

There can never be an end to the throne of Christ, for his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom; and there can never be an end to the family of Christ,

for his seed shall endure for ever.

[Psalms 89:30-32](#). *If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then-*

“Then”-what? “I will destroy them, and sweep them away for ever”? Oh, no! “Then”-

[Psalms 89:32](#). *Will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes.*

There is no sword in God’s hand to be used against his own children, but he does hold a rod, and that rod makes us smart, and causes the blueness of the wound which cleanseth away evil. We are grieved when we feel its strokes, yet there is covenant mercy in them. The rod of the covenant is one of the best things that ever comes to us, since it whips our folly out of us. God grant us grace to kiss the rod whenever we transgress against him, and he visits our iniquity with stripes!

[Psalms 89:33](#). *Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.*

Notice the use of the word “him” here, as if it was intended to teach us that God’s love to his dear Son, and to his people in him, is so great that though he may chasten us for our transgressions, he will never cast us away.

[Psalms 89:34-37](#). *My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven. Selah.*

In the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, the dynasty of David shall endure for ever, and the spiritual seed of Christ shall also never come to an end. By the most binding covenant, and the most solemn pledge, and the most saved oath, Jehovah has guaranteed the everlasting kingdom of his Son and the eternal endurance of “his seed.”

[Psalms 89:38-45](#). *But thou hast cast off and abhorred, thou hast been wroth with thine anointed. Thou hast made void the covenant of thy servant: thou hast profaned his crown by casting it to the ground. Thou hast broken down all his hedges; thou hast brought his strong holds to ruin. All that pass by the way spoil him: he is a reproach to his neighbours. Thou hast set up the right hand of his adversaries; thou hast made all his enemies to rejoice. Thou hast also turned the edge of his sword, and hast not made him to stand in the battle. Thou hast made his glory to cease, and cast his throne*

down to the ground. The days of his youth hast thou shortened: thou hath covered him with shame. Selah.

Spiritually, this sad description reveals the sorrowful state of the professing church of Christ in the times in which we live.

[Psalms 89:46](#). *How long, LORD? wilt thou hide thyself for ever? shall thy wrath burn like fire?*

That was the wisest thing for the psalmist to do, and it is our best course also; in the darkest days of the most sinful age we can always resort to prayer, let us do so.

[Psalms 89:47-48](#). *Remember how short my time is: wherefore hast thou made all men in vain? What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave? Selah.*

The brevity of life makes it all the more important that we should waste none of it, and that we should appeal to the Lord to interpose, speedily on the behalf of the truth and those who love it.

[Psalms 89:49-52](#). *Lord, where are thy former lovingkindnesses, which thou swarest unto David in thy truth? Remember, Lord, the reproach of thy servants; how I do bear in my bosom the reproach of all the mighty people; wherewith thine enemies have reproached, O LORD wherewith they have reproached the footsteps of thine anointed. Blessed be the LORD for evermore. Amen and Amen.*

The Psalm ends upon its keynote of praise unto Jehovah. There had been much to sadden the writer, as there is much to sadden us in these days; but we can unite with him in saying, “Blessed be the Lord for evermore. Amen and Amen.”

[PSALMS CONTENTS](#)

PSALM 90

Verses 1-17

Psalm 90 is entitled “A Prayer of Moses the man of God,” and it furnishes a suitable prayer for every man of God. Any men of God who have had experience as deep, and trying, and varied as that of Moses will be the better able to enter into the spirit of the Psalm.

[Psalms 90:1](#). *LORD thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations.*

“This world in which we live is no home for our immortal spirits. Thou givest us habitations for our bodies, but they are no dwelling places for our spirits that are of a nobler order. We dwell in thee, O Lord; thou art our home. Beneath thy wide wings we find blessed shelter, and in communion with thee our hearts are kept in perfect peace. Lord, thou art the home of thy people in all generations; — not only in the generations that are past, when Noah, and Abraham and Moses, and David, and all thine ancient servants found a refuge in thee, but even to this day thou art still our strong castle and our high tower our refuge and place of defense, our dwelling place even in this generation.”

[Psalms 90:2](#). *Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.*

When compared with God, those hoary hills are but as infants of a day, and the whole round world itself is but as a new-born child. “From everlasting” has he existed, — when all created things slept in his infinite mind like unborn forests sleep in an acorn cup, and so on for ever, “to everlasting,” — when all created things shall have dissolved, when back to nothing this fair world shall have gone, — God shall still be the same. He is a rock that cannot be removed. There is no terra firma upon this earth; but while all things are whirling around us, we find a firm dwelling place beyond the stars in the ever-living and immutable Jehovah. No man’s home is safe unless it is built on something more stable than this poor trembling earth, but he who rests on God, and lives in God, has the best of all habitations wherein to dwell in safety for ever.

[Psalms 90:3](#). *Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men.*

Man is mortal, conspicuously so. As we walk about our streets, how we miss our old companions one by one. They have returned to the bosom of mother earth whence they first sprang. The inhabitants of this world seem to pass in procession before our eyes; those who were here a few minutes ago are gone past, and another rank has come, and another, and another and they will soon all be gone, and we shall be gone too. He, then, who hopes to find a home amongst the sons of men will miss it, but he who makes the eternal God his habitation shall still be at home in the Lord even when wife, and child, and brother, and friend all sleep in the silence of the sepulcher.

[Psalms 90:4](#). *For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.*

Our measurements of time are nothing to God. There is nothing past and nothing future with him, all things are present in the eternal Now of God. What a wonderful truth this is of the eternal existence of God, and what boundless comfort it brings to the man who feels that this God is his God, his Father, his Friend, and his All-in-all!

[Psalms 90:5-6](#). *Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep: in the morning they are like grass which groweth up. In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down, and withereth.*

Such is the best estate of man, a field bedecked with daisies, kingcups, and other frail flowers, but the mower's scythe is near, you may hear him sharpening it; and, soon, along the sword all the sons of men shall fall, and thou who hast found thy hope, thy heaven, thy confidence here, how poor wilt thou be in the end thereof; but O thou who hast sent all thine hearts desires upwards to thy God, thou who art living in the future, living in the infinite, how secure art thou, for no rust shall fret thy gold, no moth consume thy garments! Thou art blessed indeed.

[Psalms 90:7](#). *For we are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath are we troubled.*

Yes, if the Lord lets even a little of his wrath out for a while against his servants, how greatly do we suffer! Blessed be his name, it never is real anger against his own chosen people. He does but hide his love under the form of wrath, just as a father never really hates his child, and even though he is angry with him for his faults, and chastises him, yet there is more love than wrath in every blow of the rod. Still, it is a sad thing to lose the sense of God's love in the heart, it consumes us and troubles us. We could bear sickness, we could bear slander or persecution, or almost anything out the absence of the light of God's countenance; that is the worst of trials to his children.

[Psalms 90:8-10](#). *Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance. For all our days are passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told. The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.*

A long life or a short life, what a little difference it makes when the last hour comes! The patriarch as well as the child descendeth to the grave and all, as they sleep in their separate graves, seem only to have lived for a little moment, and then to have passed away.

[Psalms 90:11](#). *Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to they fear, so is thy wrath.*

God grant that none of us may ever know experimentally the power of his anger; but may we know it, as a matter of faith, so as to tremble concerning it, and so as to flee to Christ to be delivered from it! But what must it be really to feel the power of God's anger? I implore you never to believe any teaching that seems to make God's anger less terrible than you thought it to be. It is not possible to exaggerate here, the power of God's anger is immeasurable, and that is why the power of Christ's atonement is infinite.

[Psalms 90:12](#). *So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.*

That is the great matter, after all, to get the heart applied to wisdom, to learn what is the right way, and to walk in it in the practical actions of daily life. It is of little use for us to learn to number our days if it merely enables us to sit down in self-confidence and carnal security; but if our hearts be applied to true wisdom, the Lord's teaching has been effectual.

[Psalms 90:13-14](#). *Return, O LORD, how long? and let it repent thee concerning thy servants. O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.*

Dear young people, here is a suitable prayer for you to present to God: "O satisfy us early with thy mercy." Believe me, there is no joy for a lad like that of loving the Lord Jesus Christ while he is yet young; and O ye maidens, there is no fairer jewel that you can ever wear than that of love to Jesus Christ.

"'Twill save us from a thousand snares
To mind religion young;
Grace will preserve our following years,
And make our virtues strong."

And each one of us may pray this prayer. "Lord, now give us thy mercy! If we are unsaved, let us not remain so! If we have lost the comfort of thy presence for a while, restore it to us now! Leave us not long in darkness, but satisfy us early with thy mercy!"

[Psalms 90:15](#). *Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil.*

It is right, then, to pray for joy. Indeed, joy is so conspicuous a blessing to a Christian, it is so closely connected with the healthfulness of all his virtues that he should seek after it until he finds it.

[Psalms 90:16](#). *Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children.*

“Lord, let us see thy work here! Oh, for thy name’s sake, take thy right hand out of thy bosom, and work mightily in our midst! Withdraw not the working of the Holy Ghost from us thy people! Let thy work of conversion, thy work of edification, thy work of the conquest of the world, appear unto thy servants!”

[Psalms 90:17](#). *And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.*

“Let not what we do for thee fall to the ground like a badly-built wall! Let not our work be consumed in the great testing fire, ‘but the work of our hands establish thou it!’”

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 90.; and [Acts 27:1-26](#).

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 91

Verses 1-16

[Psalms 91:1](#). *He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.*

It is not every man who dwells there; no, not even every Christian man. There are some who come to God’s house; but the man mentioned here dwells with the God of the house. There are some who worship in the outer court of the temple; but “he that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High” lives in the Holy of Holies; he draws near to the mercy-seat, and keeps there; he walks in the light, as God is in the light; he is not one who is sometimes on and sometimes off, a stranger or a guest, but like a child at home, he dwells in the secret place of the most High. Oh, labour to get to that blessed position! You who know the Lord, pray that you may attain to

this high condition of dwelling in the inner shrine, always near to God, always overshadowed by those cherubic wings which indicate the presence of God. If this is your position, you “shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.” You are not safe in the outer courts; you are not protected from all danger anywhere but within the veil. Let us come boldly there; and, when we once enter, let us dwell there.

[Psalms 91:2](#). *I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.*

This is a daring utterance, as if the psalmist would claim for himself the choicest privileges of any child of God. When you hear a glorious doctrine preached, it may be very sweet to others; but the honey lies in the particular application of it to yourself. You must, like the bee, go down into the bell of the flower yourself, and fetch out its nectar. “I will say of the Lord, He is my” — then come three my’s, as if the psalmist could grasp the Triune Jehovah, — “my refuge, my fortress, my God; in him will I trust.” What a grand word that is, “My God”! Can any language be loftier?

Can any thought be more profound? Can any comfort be surer?

[Psalms 91:3](#). *Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler,*

If you dwell near to God, you will not be deceived by Satan. In the light of the Lord you will see light; and you will discover the limed twigs and the nets and the traps that are set to catch you: “He shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler.”

[Psalms 91:3](#). *And from the noisome pestilence.*

The pestilence is something that you cannot see. It comes creeping in, and fills the air with death before you perceive its approach; but “He shall deliver thee from the noisome pestilence.” There is a pestilence of dangerous and accursed error abroad at this time; but if we dwell in the secret place of the most High, it cannot affect us; we shall be beyond its power. “Surely,” oh, blessed word! there is no doubt about this great truth, Surely, he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence.”

[Psalms 91:4](#). *He shall cover thee with his feathers,*

The psalmist uses a wonderful metaphor when he ascribes “feathers” to God, and compares him to a hen, or some mother-bird, under whose wings her young find shelter. Yet the condescension of God is such that he allows us to speak of him thus: “He shall cover thee with his feathers.”

[Psalms 91:4](#). *And under his wings shalt thou trust:*

God is to his people a strong defense and a tender defense. “His wings” and “his feathers” suggest both power and softness. God hides not his people in a casing of iron; their shelter is stronger than iron, yet it is soft as the downy wings of a bird for ease and comfort. As the little chicks bury their tiny heads in the feathers of the hen, and seem happy, and warm, and comfortable under their mother’s wings, so shall it be with thee if thou dwellest with thy God: “He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust.”

[Psalms 91:4](#). *His truth shall be thy shield and buckler.*

Twice is he armed who hath God’s truth to be his shield and buckler.

[Psalms 91:5](#). *Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night;*

Nervous as you are, and naturally timid, when you dwell near to God, your fears shall all go to sleep. That is a wonderful promise: “Thou shalt not be afraid.” If it had said, “Thou shalt have no cause for fear,” it would have been a very comforting word; but this is even more cheering, Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night.”

[Psalms 91:5](#). *Nor for the arrow that flieth by day;*

Both night and day thou shalt be safe. Thy God will not leave thee in the glare of the sun, nor will he forsake thee when the damps of night-dews would put thee in peril. We, dear friends, may have secret enemies, who shoot at us, but we shall not be afraid of the arrow. There may be unseen influences that would ruin us, or cause us dishonour, or distress; but when we dwell with God, we shall not be afraid of them.

[Psalms 91:6-7](#). *Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee.*

When God takes his people to dwell in nearness to himself, and they have faith in this promise, I make no doubt that, literally, in the time of actual pestilence, they will be preserved. It is not every professing Christian, nor every believer who attains this height of experience; but only such as believe the promise, and fulfill the heavenly condition of dwelling in the secret place of the most High. How could cholera or fever get into the secret place of the most High? How could any arrows, how could any pestilence, ever be able to reach that secure abode of God? If you dwell there, you are invincible, invulnerable, infinitely secure.

[Psalms 91:8-10](#). *Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked. Because thou hast made the LORD, which is my*

refuge, even the most High, thy habitation; there shall no evil befall thee,

“There shall no evil befall thee.” It may have the appearance of evil; but it shall turn out to thy good. There shall be but the appearance of evil, not the reality of it: “There shall no evil befall thee.”

[Psalms 91:10-11](#). *Neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.*

You remember how the devil misapplied this text to Christ. He was quite right in the application; but he was quite wrong in the quotation, for he left out the words “in all thy ways.” God will help us in our ways if we keep in his ways. When we meet with trouble and accident, we ought to inquire whether we are in God’s way. That famous old Puritan, holy Mr. Dodd, having to cross a river, had to change from one boat into another, and being little used to the water, he fell in, and, when he was pulled out, in his simplicity and wisdom he said, “I hope that I am in my way.” That was the only question that seemed to trouble him. If I am in my way, then God will keep me. We ought to ask ourselves, “Now, am I in God’s way? Am I really moving today and acting today as divine providence leads me, and as duty calls me?” He who travels on the king’s business, by daylight, along the king’s highway, may be sure of the king’s protection. “He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.” Come here, Gabriel, Michael, and all the rest of you,” says the great King of kings to the angels around his throne; and when they come at his call, he says, “Take care of my child. Watch over him today. He will be in peril; suffer no evil to come near him.”

[Psalms 91:12](#). *They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.*

What royal protection we have, a guard of angels, who count it their delight and their honour to wait upon the seed-royal of the universe, for such are all the saints of God!

[Psalms 91:13](#). *Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet.*

Strength and mastery may be united. The young lion and the dragon, but the child of God shall overcome them. Talk of St. George and the dragon! We ought to think more of the saint and the dragon. It is he that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High, who, by God’s help, treads upon the lion and adder, and of whom it is written, “The young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet.”

[Psalms 91:14](#). *Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him:*

Does God take notice of our poor love? Oh, yes, he values the love of his people, for he knows where it came from; it is a part of his own love; the creation of his grace!

[Psalms 91:14](#). *I will set him on high, because he hath known my name.*

Does God value such feeble and imperfect knowledge of his name as we possess? Yes; and he rewards that knowledge: “I will set him on high.”

[Psalms 91:15](#). *He shall call upon me, and I will answer him:*

Notice, that it is, “He shall,” and I will.” The mighty grace of God “shall” make us pray, and the Almighty God of grace “will” answer our prayer: “He shall call upon me, and I will answer him.” How I love these glorious shalls and wills!

[Psalms 91:15](#). *I will be with him in trouble;*

“Whatever that trouble is, I will be with him in it. If he be dishonoured, if he be in poverty, if he be in sickness, if that sickness should drive his best friend away from his bed, still, ‘I will be with him in trouble.’”

[Psalms 91:15](#). *I will deliver him, and honour him.*

God puts honour upon us, poor dishonourable worms that we are. One old divine calls a man “a worm six feet long”; and it is rather a flattering description of him. But God says, “I will deliver him, and honour him.”

[Psalms 91:16](#). *With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation.*

He will live as long as he wants to live. Even if he should have but few years, yet he shall have a long life; for life is to be measured by the life that is in it, not by the length along which it drags. Still, God’s children do live to a far longer age than any other people in the world; they are on the whole a long-lived race. They who fear God are delivered from the vices which would deprive them of the vigor of life; and the joy and contentment they have in God help them to live longer than others. I have often noticed how long God’s people live. Some of them are speedily taken home; still this text is, as a rule, literally fulfilled, “With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation.” He shall see God’s salvation even here; and when he dies, and wakes up in the likeness of his Lord, he will see it to the full. May that be the portion of each of us! Amen.

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PSALM 92

Verses 1-15

[Psalms 92:1](#). *It is a good thing to give thanks unto the LORD, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High:*

It is good in itself; it is good for those who hear it; but it is especially good for our own hearts to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto the name of the Most High. Sometimes, when we are very heavy in spirit, if we would take care not to defraud the Lord of the revenue of praise that is due unto him, we should find that the readiest way to bring comfort to ourselves is to sing praises unto his holy name. Brother and sisters in Christ, it is not very notable work to praise God when all things go well with us; it is far grander work to praise him when everything seems to be against us. It is because the nightingale doth sing by night that he hath such excellence among the birds, and if you and I can praise God in the dark, then we shall find that it is a good thing for ourselves to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto the name of the Most High.

[Psalms 92:2](#). *To shew forth thy lovingkindness in the morning, and thy faithful every night,*

Begin the day by setting forth the Lord's lovingkindness. It was his lovingkindness that watched over you when you lay unconscious and defenseless, and could not therefore protect yourself; it was his lovingkindness that drew wide the curtain of the night, that touched your eyelids, and awoke you out of that sleep which was the image of death, and bade you look out upon the rising sun. Therefore take the key of the morning to open the day, and let it be the golden key of praise; show forth the Lord's lovingkindness in the morning.

And when night comes again, let us then sing of God's faithfulness. We have experienced it through another day, let us praise him for it. Now we see how he has borne with us, pardoned us, preserved us, supplied our needs, and continued to educate us throughout another day; let us therefore praise and bless his holy name, and so close the day, and commit ourselves to sleep again under his divine protection.

[Psalms 92:3](#). *Upon an instrument of ten strings, and upon the psaltery; upon the harp with a solemn sound.*

Under the old dispensation, instrumental music seemed more congruous than it does now with the spiritual worship into which we have been introduced. If we must ever have instrumental music in our worship, let it be the same the very same as David had; and then I for one, though I should still think it be going back to the old dispensation long since superseded, would put up with it. I could never get much further than that, I think, for what instrument is there that is equal to the human voice, what music can be compared with it? All other sound is but the poor attempt of man to rival the creation of his God; but the human voice is full of charming melodies and harmonies, and if it be controlled by a true heart, there is nothing like it even to our ears, while it seems to me that it must be far more acceptable to God than the product of mere mechanism.

[Psalms 92:4](#). *For thou, LORD, hast made me glad through thy work: I will triumph in the works of thy hands.*

There is a blessed verse to come from the heart and mind of a happy man who is praising God, and who looks on all the works of the Lord, in creation, providence, and redemption, and makes them all the subject of his joyous doing.

[Psalms 92:5](#). *O LORD, how great are thy works! and thy thoughts are very deep.*

There is little that we know of the thoughts of God except as we gather them from his works or learn them from his Word, “for what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.” It is by divine revelation that we must know the thoughts of God, and the more we know of them, the more shall we realize that they are very deep.

[Psalms 92:6](#). *A brutish man knoweth not; neither doth a fool understand this.*

He looks at nature, and as he sees its varied operations, he observes certain eternal law as he calls them, but he does not see the power at the back of those laws which makes the laws potent for the government of the world. Nay, he lives and walks where God has displayed his power to the full, yet he fails to see him. It would be a strange proceeding for anyone to go into an artist’s house, and look at his picture and his sculpture, and yet never to think of him, but this is what the brutish man does with regard to the works of God, and with regard to God himself.

[Psalms 92:7](#). *When the wicked spring as the grass, —*

Numerous, fresh, vigorous, —

[Psalms 92:7](#). *And when all the workers of iniquity do flourish; it is that they shall be destroyed for ever:*

That is the end to which they will surely come, no matter how much they boast, nor how they grow and flourish till they seem, like the grass in the meadow, to cover everything, that you can go nowhere without seeing them. Yet “they shall be destroyed for ever.”

[Psalms 92:8](#). *But thou, LORD, art most high for evermore.*

The psalmist began by calling the Lord most high, and now he says that he is “most high for evermore.” Yes, this is our joy that God never passes away; he abides for ever. Myriads of the ungodly have come and gone, empires of wickedness have risen to great power, and in due time have passed away like dreams, but we can still say, with the psalmist “Thou, Lord, art most high for evermore.”

[Psalms 92:9-10](#). *For, lo, thine enemies, O LORD, for, lo, thine enemies shall perish all the workers of iniquity shall be scattered. But my horn halt thou exalt like the horn of an unicorn: I shall be anointed with fresh oil.*

The believer, though he is very weak in his own consciousness, and utterly insignificant in his own esteem, shall receive fresh power from God; and when the wicked melt away, he shall grow stronger and stronger.

[Psalms 92:11](#). *Mine eye also shall see my desire on mine enemies, and mine ear shall hear my desire of the wicked that rise by against me.*

The translators put in the words *my desire* in both cases they are printed in italics to show that they are not in the original. No doubt the psalmist means that his eye should see the end of his enemies, and his ears should hear of their total overthrow.

[Psalms 92:12](#). *The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.*

The palm tree flourishes amidst the desert sunshine, growing straight upright towards heaven without a branch that deviates to the right or the left, and bearing its great masses of fruit as near heaven as ever it can. It is a fine type of Christian life and growth and fruitfulness A Christian should also be “like a cedar in Lebanon,” firmly rooted in his appointed place, and defying the winter’s snows which threaten to bury him out of sight.

[Psalms 92:13](#). *Those that be planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our Lord.*

Like trees planted in the courtyard, screened and protected, such are true believers; God is their defense, and they are screened within the court of the Lord's house.

[Psalms 92:14](#). *They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing;*

When worldings decay, they shall still be fruitful. They shall not feel, as so many others do, that their age is a curse; it shall be to them a blessing, ripening them for eternity, and it shall be a blessing to all by whom they are surrounded.

[Psalms 92:15](#). *To shew that the LORD is upright: he is my rock,*

Can each one of you say that concerning the Lord, "He is my rock, my foundation, my refuge, my shelter"?

[Psalms 92:15](#). *And there is no unrighteousness in him.*

Say that when you have lost the dearest one you ever knew. Say that when your property has melted like the hoar frost in the morning. Say that when every bone in your body is aching, and some fell disease is hastening you to an early grave. . . There is no unrighteousness in him." How long have you known him? If it be seventy years or more than that, he has never been unfaithful to you, nor suffered a single promise of his to fail. Write this down as the testimony of the experience of all God's people, "There is no unrighteousness in him."

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Psalm Chapter 93

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

PSALM 94

Verses 1-23

This is the prayer of a man of God in great trouble, standing out for God in an evil day, when the Lord's people were greatly oppressed, and the honour of God was being trampled in the mire. The prayer wells up from an oppressed heart struggling against great difficulty.

[Psalms 94:1](#). *LORD God, —*

“ O Jehovah, El.” Men of God in trouble delight to call upon the name of the Lord. His very name is a stronghold to them; the infinite Jehovah, the strong God, EL: “O Lord God,”-

Psalms 94:1. *To whom vengeance belongeth; O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, shew thyself.*

Vengeance does not belong to us; it is not right for any private individual to attempt to avenge himself; but vengeance belongeth to the just Judge, who will mete out to all the due reward of evil or of good. Hence, my appeal is to the Court of King’s Bench, or higher still, to the King himself: “O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, shew thyself.” When false doctrine abounds, only God can put it down. All the efforts of the faithful will be futile apart from him.

Psalms 94:2-4. *Lift up thyself, thou judge of the earth: render a reward to the proud. LORD, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph? How long shall they utter and Speak hard things? and all the workers of iniquity boast themselves?*

That expression, “ How long?” repeated three times, is very sorrowful; it seems to get into a kind of howling or wailing; but a child of God, when he sees things going wrong with his Lord’s kingdom must grow somewhat impatient, and he vies out to his God, “How long ? How long ? How long wilt thou bear it ?” The very triumphs of the wicked, and the hard things they say, with which they seem to bubble over like fountains, (for that is the forge of the term “utter and speak” used here,) stir the heart of the man of God to its very depths. He gets by himself alone, and grieves before God of, and out of a full heart he thus cries to him, How long shall they utter and speak hard things ? and all the workers of iniquity boast themselves ?”

Psalms 94:5. *They break in pieces thy people, O LORD, —*

There is a strong plea. Hear that declaration, for the Lord of hosts says to his people, “He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of mine eye.” In days of persecution the saints earnestly pray in this fashion, “They break in pieces thy people, Jehovah,”

Psalms 94:5-6. *And afflict thine heritage. They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless.*

This made the appeal still stronger, for God’s is “a Father of the fatherless, and a Judge of the widows.”

Psalms 94:7. *Yet they say, The LORD shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it.*

Yet this very God of Jacob came to the troubled patriarch at Jabbok, and blessed him there, and he said to heathen kings, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm," so can it be true that he does not see and regard what the wicked I do to his people? They dare to say so, and render themselves the more brazen in their sin because of this their infidelity.

Psalms 94:8. *Understand, ye brutish among the people:*

Here the pleader turn into a prophet, and, after having spoken to God, he now speaks to men. Understand, ye boors," for so the word may be rendered, "ye swine among the people:"

Psalms 94:9. *And ye fools, when will ye be wise? He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shalt he not see?*

You say that God does not see, that he does not regard; but how can that be? You are mad to talk so. He that gave men the sense of hearing, cannot he himself hear? He that gave them sight, cannot he see

"Shall he who, with transcendent skill,
Fashion'd the eye, and form'd the ear;
Who modell'd nature to his will,
Shall he not see ? Shall he not hear ?

"Vain hope! His eye at once surveys
Whatever fills creation's space;
He sees our thoughts, and marks our ways,
He knows no bounds of time and place."

Psalms 94:10. *He that chastiseth the heathen, shall not he correct?*

He judges are nations, read the Book of Providence, and see how he deals out justice to nation after nation, so shall he not also correct the individual man :

Psalms 94:10. *He that teacheth man knowledge,*

If you look at your Bibles, you will see that the translators have put in here the words "shall not he know " They are printed in italics because they are not in the original. The original is very abrupt, it is as if the psalmist had said, "There, I am tired of arguing with you. You can draw your own inference; I will leave you to do that for yourselves. Fools as you are, I need not draw the inference for you." "He that teacheth man knowledge." Does man really know anything unless God teaches him ? Adam was taught of God at the first, and every particle of true science that man knows has been imparted by God. I do not say that God is the author of the science of today; much of that evidently comes from man; but all true knowledge is imparted

to us by God. “He that teacheth man knowledge,” do you think, do you dream that he does not himself know everything?

Psalms 94:10-11. *Shall not he know? The LORD knoweth the thought of man, that they are vanity.*

He knows that men are vanity, that they are, according to one translation, a vapor. The men themselves are but a vapor; but as for their thoughts, their intellect, their power to think, that of which many men are most proud, what does God think of this? What a wonderful thing “modern thought” seems to be ! But listen to this, “The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are nothing.” Vanity is a negation, it is a bubble, a thing poked up, that has no substance in it: “The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity.”

Psalms 94:12. *Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O LORD, and teach him out of thy law;*

These are two things that go well together, — a rod and a book; no man ever learns much without both rod and book. “Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest.” The book is never properly understood without some touches of the rod, but the book must be there also: “and teaches” him out of thy law, “for, if it were all rod and no book, there would be plenty of sores, but there would be no learning. Have you got the two together, my dear friend ? Have you been of late very much with the book in a nook, and very much with the rod upon your bed ? Well then you are a blessed man, for the psalmist says, “Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teaches” him out of thy law.”

Psalms 94:13. *That thou mayest give him a rest from the days of adversity, until the pit be digged for the wicked.*

In these days, the quiet virtues are not prized as much as they ought to be. Men are always busy, they must be ever on the trot; but blessed is the man who is so taught by the book and by the rod that he comes to a holy quietism, and learns to rest. The best rester is the best worker. He who knows how to sit at Jesus’ feet knows how to work for Jesus better than if he were continually running about, and getting cumbered with much service. We never learn the secret of this rest by the book alone, or by the rod alone; but the rod and the book together teach us to rest from the days of adversity; they teach us not to lay the present too much to heart, not to fret because of things as they are today, but to think of what is to be in that day when the righteous shall be rewarded, and when the mighty Hunter

shall have trapped his adversary and ours, when the pit shall be digged for the wicked, and Satan's power shall be for ever destroyed

Psalms 94:14. *For the LORD will not cast off his people,*

He may cast them down, but he will never cast them off.

Psalms 94:14. *Neither will he forsake his inheritance.*

Even men will not give up their inheritance. This is especially the case among the Jews; you remember how Naboth would not sell his inheritance, he would sooner die. And the Lord will not forsake his inheritance, there is a sacred entail upon his people that never can be broken; and he will never give them up.

Psalms 94:15. *But judgment shall return unto righteousness: and all the upright in heart shall follow it.*

The wicked may be the upper spokes of the wheel just now, but they will be the lower spokes before long. Truth may be in the mire today, but she shall be upon them tomorrow. The revolutions of the wheels of providence produce strange changes. Wait; work; watch; for the Lord will set things right in his own good time.

Psalms 94:16. *Who will rise up for me against the evildoers or who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity?*

The psalmist appeals for helpers, but he gets no response from man; and sometimes the man of God will have to stand alone, and that is an education for him. Blessed is he who has learned to hang on the bare arm of God; he is better off without his earthly friends than he was with them.

Here is the answer to the psalmist's question: —

Psalms 94:17. *Unless the LORD had been my help, my soul had almost dwelt in silence.*

You may be one of the best of God's servants, and yet that may be your experience. Here is another piece of testimony in which many of us can join: —

Psalms 94:18. *When I said, My foot slippeth; thy mercy, O Lord, held me up.*

“My foot had slipped from under me, I was down; and then, even then, thou didst put underneath me thine everlasting arms. ‘Thy mercy, O Lord, held me up.’”

Psalms 94:19. *In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul.*

“My thoughts” — so some read this verse, — “seem intertwined and interlaced like the many boughs of a tree. I cannot make them out myself, they are in such a tangle.” But the bird has learned to sit among the boughs, and sing: “Thy comforts delight my soul.” There are thoughts of grief, thoughts of fear, thoughts of disappointment, thoughts of desertion, thoughts of a broken heart, all sorts of thoughts, but God’s comforts come in, and delight the soul. You know what it is — do you not? — to be cast down, but not destroyed, to be troubled, and yet to be happy. “As sorrowful,” says Paul, “yet always rejoicing;” whereupon an old divine remarks that it is “as sorrowful” — quasi sorrowful; but it is not “as always rejoicing.” There is no “quasi” to that, but there is a real joy in the midst of a seeming sorrow. “In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul.”

Psalms 94:20. Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law?

Lord, art thou on their side? Oh, no, and as thou art not on their side, I care not who is. So long as thou wilt not aid iniquity or help wrong-doing, I will fight the battle through.

Psalms 94:21-22. They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous, and condemn the innocent blood. But the LORD is my defense; and my God is the rock of my refuge.

He gets away unto his God as he had been accustomed to hide in the cave of Adullam out of reach of his foes; and then he sits down in peace to sing.

Psalms 94:23. And he shall bring upon them their own iniquity, and shall cut them off in their own wickedness; yea, the LORD our God shall cut them off.

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PSALM 95

Verses 1-11

[Psalms 95:1-2](#). *O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms.*

There must be, there should be, joy in our worship, it is the very juice, the wine that floweth from the trodden grape. It is the cream of the soul when the heart takes delight in God and joys in him. To worship as if it were mere duty would be but the reverence of slaves before one who is dreaded, but to worship with delight, this is the adoration of children who come to whom they love. God grant us that joy while we adore the Lord. Let us, however, mingle great reverence with joy.

[Psalms 95:3](#). *For the LORD is a great God, and a great king above all gods.*

“For the Lord is a great God.” Jehovah is a great God, “and a great King above all gods,” above all that are ever called gods, whether they be kings or magistrates, or whatever they may be.

[Psalms 95:4](#). *In his hand are the deep place of the earth: the strength of the hills is his also.*

Low and high, mysterious, sublime, the dominion of God encompasseth all nature.

[Psalms 95:5](#). *The sea is his, and he made it: and his hands formed the dry land.*

Creation is the best ground for possession: what he made is his own, the great freeholder, the sovereign lord of all.

[Psalms 95:6-7](#). *O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker. For he is our God;*

“For he is our God.” Oh, that is the sweetest of it all, — “he is our God.” Let lords and lands have what masters they will, let us obey and worship our own God still.

[Psalms 95:7](#). *And we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.*

He is the shepherd, leading, feeding, protecting, guarding us every day.

[Psalms 95:7-10](#). *To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness: when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my work. Forty years long was I grieved with this generation.*

Was not that enough? Is there any need to grieve him again. Think with sympathy of what God endured from one generation, and let not another generation follow in their evil footsteps.

[Psalms 95:10](#). *And said, It is a people that do err in their heart,*

Not merely through ignorance, but “in their heart.” They were not alone with their feet and their tongue, but in their hearts.

[Psalms 95:10](#). *And they have not known my ways:*

They have seen them but not understood them. He says, “They saw my work,” but you may see and yet not know, for what is merely seen with the eye but not understood by the heart is not known; they were a willful, erring people, and an ignorant people.

[Psalms 95:11](#). *Unto whom I swear in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest.*

Ah me!

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Psalm Chapter 96

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

Psalm Chapter 97

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

Psalm Chapter 98

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

Psalm Chapter 99

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

PSALM 100

Verses 1-5

May the Spirit of God, by whose inspiration David penned these Psalms, bless them to us as we read them! This is entitled “a Psalm of Praise.” Note here that this is the only Psalm which bears that title; there are others which have titles very much like it, but this one is singled out from all the rest to be, in a very special sense, “a Psalm of Praise.” Martin Luther was very fond of it, and it has even been said that he composed the tune which are have just sung, and which is commonly called “the Old Hundredth”; though others attribute it to a German named Franc.

[Psalms 100:1](#). *Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands.*

Do you notice the missionary spirit here? The Jews looked upon God as the God of Israel, and they had but very faint desires for the conversion of other nations; but the Holy Ghost speaks more by David than David himself may have known: Make a joyful noise unto Jehovah, all ye lands.” We ought to express the praise of God, not merely to feel it, and to express it by what is here called “a joyful noise”; and all our songs to God should have in them a measure of joyfulness. The gods of the heathen were worshipped with dolorous noises, with sorrowful sounds, and cries of misery, but the God of heaven is to be worshipped with a joyful noise: “Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands.” Oh, that the day were come when China, and India, and all Asia, Africa, America, and Europe, would take up the gladsome note of praise to Jehovah!

[Psalms 100:2](#). *Serve the LORD with gladness:*

What a text that is!” Serve the Lord, “obey him, yield to him your homage; but serve him “with gladness.” He wants not slaves to grace his throne, he loves willing worship, happy worship, for he is “the happy God.” “Serve the Lord with gladness.”

[Psalms 100:2](#). *Come before his presence with singing.*

Singing is delightful, but singing in God’s presence is heavenly. Do not the spirits that are made pure and holy come before his presence, and come before it with singing? I wish that whenever we sing, we would sing as in the presence of God. I am afraid that we sometimes go through the tune mechanically, and the words languish on our lips: “Come before his presence with singing.”

[Psalms 100:3](#). *Know ye that the LORD he is God:*

One says, “Man, know thyself,” and another says, “The proper study of mankind is man.” Not so; man, know thy God; the proper study of mankind is God. He who knows God knows himself; that is, he knows himself to be

nothing. “Know ye that Jehovah, he is God.” There is but one God, it is the same God in the Old Testament as in the New, Jehovah, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

[Psalms 100:3](#). *It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves;*

Note the negative, as if to deny that we had any hand in our own making, and this is also worthy of notice spiritually. It is the Lord who hath made us Christians, and not we ourselves; he has created us in Christ Jesus. There are some who lay such stress upon the human will, and I know not what besides in man, that it is necessary to put in the negative as well as the positive: “It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves.”

[Psalms 100:3](#). *We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.*

Praise him, then. Praise him because he is your Maker; praise him more sweetly because he is your Shepherd. If we are his people, here is his electing love, here is his effectual calling, here is the grace of his Spirit that made us so. “We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.” He leads us, he feeds us, he protects us, he has bought us with his precious blood. Truly, this is good reason why we should make a joyful noise unto God, and serve him with gladness: “We are his people and the sheep of his pasture.” Are you his people? O my dear hearer, ask thyself, art thou one of the sheep of his pasture?

[Psalms 100:4](#). *Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name.*

Gratitude is that oil which makes the wheels of life revolve easily; and if anybody ought to be grateful, surely we are the men and women, for whom the Lord has done so much: “Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise.”

[Psalms 100:5](#). *For the LORD is good;*
Should we not praise so good a God?

[Psalms 100:5](#). *His mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.*

“His truth”, — that is to say, his truthfulness, his faithfulness to his people. This is a blessed Psalm, and it seems to me to reach the highest point of praise when it tells us that “The Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.”

This exposition consisted of readings from PSALM 100. and 101.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 101

Verses 1-8

Psalms 101. The last Psalm was a Hymn of Thanksgiving, this one is a Psalm of Thanksgiving. I suppose it to have been written by David just when he assumed the throne, when he was about to become king over all Israel and Judah. Its title is, “A Psalm of David.” This is what he said to himself, —

[Psalms 101:1](#). *I will sing* —

That is right, David. In the one hundredth Psalm, he had exhorted other people to sing, now, in the hundred and first, he declares what he will himself do: “I will sing” —

[Psalms 101:1](#). *Of mercy and judgment:*

It is a mingled theme; there are the treble and the bass notes: “mercy and judgment.” There are some dear friends who, if they sing at all will have to sing this way, for they have a heavy sorrow on their heart, and yet great mercy is mixed with it. Oh, you who are troubled, and bow your head in grief, say, “I will sing of mercy and judgment.” Mix the two together.

[Psalms 101:1](#). *Unto thee, O LORD, will I sing.*

A second time the psalmist says, “I will sing.” It is well to make this firm resolve: “Unto thee, O Lord, will I sing.” Winter or summer, “I will sing;” poverty or riches, “I will sing;” sickness or health, “I will sing;” life or death, “I will sing.” “I will love thee in life, I will love thee in death And praise thee as long as thou lendest me breath.” “I will sing of mercy and judgment: unto thee, O Lord, will I sing.”

[Psalms 101:2](#). *I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way.*

This was a good resolve; but David did not carry it out to the full. There were evil times when he was not wise, and there were sad times when he was not perfect. Still, it is well to make such a resolve as this declaration of David when he came to the throne, especially when you are newly married, or just opening a business. Oh, that every young man and young woman would commence life with such a holy resolution as this, “I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way” “I but notice the prayer that follows the resolve, —

[Psalms 101:2](#). *O when wilt thou come unto me?*

For I shall be neither wise nor holy without thee. “O when wilt thou come unto me?”

[Psalms 101:2](#). *I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.*

There is a great deal in the way in which a man walks in his house. It will not do to be a saint Abroad and a devil at home; there are some of that kind. They are wonderfully sweet at a prayer-meeting, but they are dreadfully sour to their wives and children. This will never do. Every genuine believer should say, and mean it, “I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.” It is in the home that we get the truest proof of godliness.

“What sort of a man is he?” said one to George Whitefield, and Whitefield answered, “I cannot say, for I never lived with him.” That is the way to test a man, to live with him.

[Psalms 101:3](#). *I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes:*

“I will not look at it, for if I do, I may long for it.” It is the tendency of things that are gazed at to get through the eyes into the mind and the heart, therefore is it wise to say with the psalmist, “I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes.”

[Psalms 101:3](#). *I hate the work of them that turn aside;*

He means all those who practice dodges, the “policy” people, those who never go straight. Kings usually like such people as these. Do not men say that an ambassador is a gentleman who is paid to live abroad, and to lie for the benefit of his country? I suppose that is what diplomatists in David’s day generally did, but David resolved that he would have none of that sort of folk about him: “I hate the work of them that turn aside.”

[Psalms 101:3](#). *It shall not cleave to me.*

“If I touch it, I will not let it stick to me. Pitch defiles, so I will keep clear of it, and if any man tries to practice a trick for my advantage, I will have nothing to do with him.”

[Psalms 101:4](#). *A froward heart shall depart from me: I will not know a wicked person.*

“For, if I come to know him, one of these days I may be known myself to be a wicked person.” “Evil communications corrupt good manners.” No man can afford to be the friend of a man who is not a friend of God. If he does not love God, quit his company, for he will do you no good. Say with David, “I will not know a wicked person.”

[Psalms 101:5](#). *Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off:*

David was a king, and he meant to study the peace of his people by putting down slander. Oh, what mischief is wrought by backbiting tittle tattle! If we could have a race of men, — and for the matter of that, of women, too, — with no tongues, it might be of advantage, for there are some who use their tongues for very sorry purposes. David says, “Whosoever privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off.”

[Psalms 101:5](#). *Him that hath an high look and a proud heart will not I suffer.*

High looks and proud hearts are generally the characteristics of cruel, tyrannical, domineering persons; and King David would not have any such near him.

[Psalms 101:6](#). *Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me:*

Oh, that masters had more of an eye to the piety of their servants than they often have! They want “clever fellows.” Whether they are honest or not, is generally a secondary question. So long as they are profitable to their masters, they will not mind what they are to their customers; but David would not have servants of that sort.

[Psalms 101:6-7](#). *He that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me. He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight.*

He was a king, and he could choose his company, and he meant to select the truthful and upright. Now mark this. If David would not let a man who lies tarry in his sight, you must not expect that God will let such tarry in his sight. “All liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone,” saith the Scripture. God grant us to have clean, truthful tongues!

[Psalms 101:8](#). *I will early destroy all the wicked of the land; that I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the LORD.*

What a practical Psalm this is! I have heard of a prince of Saxe Gotha, years ago, who, whenever he thought that one of his ministers or judges was not what he ought to be, used always to send him the hundred and first Psalm to read. It was commonly said of such a man, “He will get the hundred and first Psalm before long;” and, after reading it, if he did not mend his manners, the prince sent him his dismissal, and he had to go about his business. Oh, that all who profess and call themselves Christians

would act according to the tenor of this straight Psalm, which is like a line drawn by the hand of God, without a crook or a turn in it!

This exposition consisted of readings from PSALM 100. and 101.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 102

Verses 1-28

[Psalms 102:1-2](#). *Hear my prayer, O LORD, and let my cry come unto thee. Hide not thy face from me in the day when I am in trouble; incline thine ear unto me: in the day when I call answer me speedily.*

Sincere suppliants are not content with praying for praying's sake, they desire really to reach the ear and heart of Jehovah: "Hear my prayer, O Lord, and let my cry come unto thee." When prayer is intensified into a cry, then the heart is even more urgent to have audience of the Lord.

[Psalms 102:3-7](#). *For my days are consumed like smoke, and my bones are burned as an hearth. My heart is smitten, and withered like grass; so that I forget to eat my bread. By reason of the voice of my groaning my bones cleave to my skin. I am like a pelican of the wilderness: I am like an owl of the desert. I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house top.*

The psalmist gives us here a very graphic description of his sorrowful condition at that time. He was moved to grief by a view of the national calamities of the chosen people, and these so wrought upon his patriotic soul that he was wasted with anxiety, his spirits were dried up, and his very life was ready to expire.

[Psalms 102:8](#). *Mine enemies reproach me all the day; and they that are mad against me are sworn against me.*

Their rage was unrelenting and unceasing, and vented itself in taunts and insults. With his inward sorrows and outward persecutions, the psalmist was in as ill a plight as may well be conceived.

[Psalms 102:9-11](#). *For I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping, because of thine indignation and thy wrath: for thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down. My days are like a shadow that declineth; and I am withered like grass.*

This is a telling description of all-saturating, all-embittering sadness; and that was the portion of one of the best of men, and that for no fault of

his own, but because of his love to the Lord's people.

[Psalms 102:12](#). *But thou, O LORD, shalt endure for ever; and thy remembrance unto all generations.*

All things else are vanishing like smoke, and withering like grass; but, over all, the one eternal, immutable light shines on, and will shine on when all these shallows have declined into nothingness.

[Psalms 102:13-14](#). *Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come. For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof.*

They delight in her so greatly that even her rubbish is dear to them. It was a good omen for Jerusalem when the captives began to feel a homesickness, and began to sigh after her.

[Psalms 102:15-17](#). *So the heathen shall fear the name of the LORD, and all the kings of the earth thy glory. When the LORD shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory. He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer.*

He will not treat their pleas with contempt; he will incline his ear to hear, his heart to consider, and his hand to help.

[Psalms 102:18](#). *This shall be written for the generation to come: and the people which shall be created shall praise the LORD.*

A note shall be made of it, for there will be destitute ones in future generations, — “the poor shall never cease out of the land,” — and it will make glad their eyes to read the story of the Lord's mercy to the needy in former times.

[Psalms 102:19-23](#). *For he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary; from heaven did the LORD behold the earth; to hear the groaning of the prisoner; to loose those that are appointed to death; to declare the name of the LORD in Zion, and his praise in Jerusalem; when the people are gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve the LORD. He weakened my strength in the way; he shortened my days.*

Here the psalmist comes down again to the mournful string, and pours forth his personal complaint.

[Psalms 102:24-27](#). *I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days: thy years are throughout all generations. Of old hast thou laid the foundations of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a*

garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end.

God ever lives on; no decay can happen to him, nor destruction overtake him. O my soul, rejoice thou in the Lord always, since he is always the same!

[Psalms 102:28](#). *The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee.*

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PSALM 103

Verses 1-22

One's heart naturally turns to this passage when one desires to magnify the Lord. It is specially suitable for a New Year's meditation.

[Psalms 103:1](#). *Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name.*

Come, my soul, wake up! Bestir thyself! Thou hast great work to do, such work as angels do for ever and ever before the throne. Let no power or faculty exempt itself from this divine service. Come, my memory, my will, my judgment, my intellect, my heart, all that in me is, be stirred up his holy name to magnify and bless. "Bless the Lord, O my soul," — for the music must begin deep down in the center of my being; it must be myself, my very self, that praises God.

[Psalms 103:2](#). *Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits:*

This shall be the first note: "We love him because he first loved us." We have not to go abroad for materials for praise, they lie at home. Forget not all his benefits to thee, my soul, his overwhelming, his innumerable benefits, which have to be summed up in the gross as "all his benefits" — forget them not.

[Psalms 103:3](#). *Who forgiveth all thine iniquities;*

Come, come, my soul, canst thou not praise God for sin forgiven? That is the first note, and it is the sweetest note, in our song of praise. "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities," — not some of them but the whole mass the blessed Scapegoat has carried into the "No man's land of oblivion."

[Psalms 103:3](#). *Who healeth all thy diseases;*

He is the Physician for thee, my soul: thy diseases are the worst of all diseases, for they would drag thee down to hell if they were not cured. But Jehovah Rophi healeth all thy diseases.

[Psalms 103:4](#). *who redeemeth thy life from destruction;*

Oh, my soul, praise God for redemption! If thou canst not sing about anything else, sing of free grace and dying love. Keep on ringing those charming bells.

[Psalms 103:4](#). *Who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies;*

What! can you wear a crown, and not praise him who placed it on your head? Can you wear such a crown as this, made up of lovingkindness and tender mercies, and not bless the Lord? Oh, let it not be so, let us each break forth in spirit in one song tonight, and say, "My soul doth magnify the Lord."

[Psalms 103:5](#). *Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.*

Heavenly feasting on heavenly bread; divine satisfaction from the finished work of Christ. Oh, my soul, pray to God to give thee new life tonight, so that thy youth may be renewed, so that thy wing feathers may grow again, and that thou mayest mount as eagles do! Surely, dear friends, this little list of mercies, so small for number, contains an immensity of mercy. Let us bless the Lord for every one of them.

[Psalms 103:6](#). *The LORD executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.*

Let the poor and the down-trodden sing unto the Lord. He will take care of you, he is the Executor of the needy and the Executioner of the proud. "The Lord executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed."

[Psalms 103:7](#). *He made known his ways unto Moses his acts unto the children of Israel.*

Therefore, let us bless him, the God of revelation, who does not hide himself from his creatures; but who makes known his ways and his acts unto his people. An unknown God is an unpraised God; but when he shows himself to his people, they cannot refrain from blessing his name.

[Psalms 103:8](#). *The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.*

Praise him for this. Bless his name at every single mention of his divine attributes; let your hearts beat to the music of praise tonight.

[Psalms 103:9](#). *He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever.*

Let the afflicted praise him; let the downcast and the despondent sinner praise him; if he cannot sing about anything else, let him bless the name of the Lord that he will not keep his anger for ever.

[Psalms 103:10](#). *He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.*

Let us thank God we are not in hell; we are yet on praying ground, and on pleading terms with him. Some of us will never go into perdition, for he hath saved us with an everlasting salvation. Truly, if we did not bless him, every timber in this house, and every iron column beneath this roof, might burst out in rebukes for our ingratitude; we must bless his name.

[Psalms 103:11](#). *For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.*

Look up into the blue sky, up, up beyond the stars, and say to yourself. "So great is his mercy." Let us therefore praise him accordingly.

"Loud as his thunders shout his praise,
And sound it lofty at his throne."

[Psalms 103:12](#). *As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.*

There is neither latitude nor longitude for praise. God's grace is boundless; let us therefore unstintedly praise him.

[Psalms 103:13](#). *Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.*

He has a tender heart: he never strikes without regret, but his love always flows freely. No father or mother is half so mild and loving as is the Lord of hosts.

[Psalms 103:14](#). *For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.*

Our bodies are but animated dust, and even our souls might be compared to dust in his sight. Not iron or granite, but mere dust are we. It is a wonder that men live so long when there are such mighty forces, even in nature, arrayed against them. Who can control earthquakes and volcanoes? And when men cross the sea in times of storm, it is a wonder that they come to land again.

[Psalms 103:15](#). *As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth.*

You are like the primrose by the river's brim, or the buttercup and the daisy in the field that is visited with the scythe. That is all we are, not cedars, not oaks, not rocks, but flowers of the field.

[Psalms 103:16](#). *For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more.*

Some of the hot winds of the East come over a meadow, and it is burned up immediately. I have seen the fairest and loveliest flowers look, in a short time, as if they had been burned with a hot iron when the Sirocco had blown across from Africa: and such are we. We speak of the breath of the pestilence; it is but a puff of wind, and we are gone.

[Psalms 103:17-18](#). *But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.*

“But”, — and this is a blessed “but.” “But the mercy of the Lord” — that is not a fading flower, that is not a withering wind, — “But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting.” Here are ten thousand blessings in one. You have everlasting mercy, covenant mercy. Oh, if we do not praise God when we think of the covenant, what has happened to us? We must be possessed with a dumb devil if we do not praise the name of him whose mercy is from everlasting to everlasting.

[Psalms 103:19](#). *The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all.*

Now, children of a King, will you go mourning all your days? You that dwell in the light of his throne, will not you be glad? Rejoice, O Zion, for thy King liveth and reigneth for ever! “The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice.”

[Psalms 103:20](#). *Bless the LORD, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word.*

“Bless the Lord, ye his angels.” We cannot do it well enough yet; help us, then, ye angels that excel in strength; put out all your strength when ye praise him, “ye that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his Word.” Your actions are your praises, O ye angels! Would God that we had learned to do his commandments as ye do them! We are praying for this, even as our Lord taught his disciples to say, “Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.”

[Psalms 103:21](#). *Bless ye the LORD, all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure.*

All living things, and all the forces and powers of nature, are calling upon men to praise the Lord; and all the hosts of God, the organs of Omnipotence, ring out the grand chorus, "Bless ye the Lord."

[Psalms 103:22](#). *Bless the LORD, all his works, in all places of his dominion: bless the LORD, O my soul.*

I must not go grumbling up to heaven, nor stumbling among the works of God, I must gratefully come to him, and myself praise him, so with the psalmist I cry, "Bless the Lord, O my soul."

[PSALMS CONTENTS](#)

PSALM 104

Verses 1-35

I trust that we have already felt something of holy enjoyment while our hearts and voices have been praising the Lord our God. Perhaps this Psalm may help to keep us in a praising state of mind. First of all, David sang of the majesty of God in his works; then it seems as if the spirit of praise within him became like a strong-winged angel, and, mounting into the sky, he began to soar aloft over the varied landscapes of the world until the sun went down; and even then, he continued scudding along through the darkness till the sun arose again, and found him still praising his God. We will note, as we read the Psalm, this strange, mysterious flight of the spirit of praise.

[Psalms 104:1](#). *Bless the LORD, O my soul.*

There is the key-note. Strike it, my brethren, each one of you!

[Psalms 104:1-3](#). *O LORD my God, thou art very great; thou art clothed with honour and majesty. Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment: who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain: who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters:*

Or, as we may read it from the Hebrew, "who maketh his halls in the waters;" those mysterious waters above the firmament are here pictured as being the cool, retired dwelling-place of the awful Deity.

[Psalms 104:3](#). *Who maketh the clouds his chariot: who walketh upon the wings of the wind:*

A masterly picture, as if the Lord stood erect upon the two wings of the wind, and as if the wind, like a mighty spirit, went flying round the world, with the great Jehovah standing upon its wings, and so riding along.

[Psalms 104:4-5](#). *Who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire: who laid the foundations of the earth, that it should not be removed for ever.*

Now comes a very graphic description of Noah's flood.

[Psalms 104:6](#). *Thou coveredst it with the deep as with a garment: the waters stood above the mountains.*

What a splendid act of divine energy, when the waters which, before, like tamed lions, slept in their dens, came hungry and fierce, and swallowed up the whole earth!

[Psalms 104:7-8](#). *At thy rebuke they fled; at the voice of thy thunder they hasted away. They go up by the mountains; they go down by the valleys unto the place which thou hast founded for them.*

At the sound of God's voice, those mighty deeps went back in a great hurricane. Anyone who has seen water when it is traveling at a great rate, lashed with tempests, will have seen it tossed as into mountains, and then having huge holes like vast valleys in it; so, the waters rose up like mountains, and fell down like valleys, till they found the channels of the deep which God had founded for them.

[Psalms 104:9](#). *Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over; that they turn not again to cover the earth.*

Jehovah puts the bit of sand into the mouth of the sea, and it comes no farther than its appointed bounds. Now you must suppose the psalmist is leaving the crowded streets, and the dingy, dusty, smoky haunts of men, and flying, on the wings of his gratitude and praise, away into the quiet of the fertile country.

[Psalms 104:10-12](#). *He sendeth the springs into the valleys, which run among the hills. They give drink to every beast of the field: the wild asses quench their thirst. By them shall the fowls of the heaven have their habitation, which sing among the branches.*

I know of no place that seems to bring out one's joy and praise better than when standing by the side of some rippling brook that tumbles down the fissure among the rocks, and seeing the animals come to drink, and hearing the birds blithely sing among the branches, or hang over and dip into the very stream. Even the reading of this Psalm may be like a cool and

refreshing breeze to you at this time, and your soul may in imagination fly away with David, as you also praise and bless your God.

[Psalms 104:13](#). *He watereth the hills from his chambers:*

From those watery halls above the firmament he pours down the showers.

[Psalms 104:13-15](#). *The earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works. He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth; and wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart.*

The spirit of praise is flying over the fields ploughed and tilled by man, over the fruitful vineyards red with clusters of grapes, and over the olive gardens and other places where man's handiwork has made the earth fertile. Now the psalmist mounts still higher, and gets into the woods.

[Psalms 104:16-17](#). *The trees of the LORD are full of sap; the cedars of Lebanon, which he hath planted; where the birds make their nests: as for the stork, the fir trees are her house.*

Flying along over the tops of the trees, he looks down among them, and he notices the beasts as well as the birds

[Psalms 104:18](#). *The high hills are a refuge for the wild goats; and the rocks for the conies.*

So that there is not any part of the earth which is not full of God's goodness; even the rocks, which yield nothing to the plough, furnish a refuge for the conies, and the high hills are a home for the wild goats, while the fertile earth beneath makes man's heart glad. As the spirit of praise flies over the tops of the mountains, the sun goes down. The psalmist witnesses that grand sight, an Eastern sunset.

[Psalms 104:19-20](#). *He appointed the moon for seasons: the sun knoweth his going down. Thou makest darkness, and it is night:*

Will he cease from his song now? No, for God does not cease to work.

[Psalms 104:20-21](#). *Wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth. The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God.*

So that even night has its mysterious music, and the roaring of the young lions is a tribute to the providence of the good God who cares even for the beasts that perish.

[Psalms 104:22](#). *The sun ariseth, they gather themselves together, and lay them down in their dens.*

You see, the psalmist does not cease his praise, but finds a theme for music even in the rest of the beasts.

[Psalms 104:23-24](#). *Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labour until the evening. O LORD, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches.*

The psalmist has made a long journey, flying along just where he could see everything upon the face of the earth, but he bethinks himself that he has not seen the half of God's works yet, for yonder is the Mediterranean, glistening in the morning sunbeams, so he takes another flight.

[Psalms 104:25-26](#). *So is this great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts. There go the ships:*

That is, above the water; while in it-

[Psalms 104:26](#). *There is that leviathan, whom thou hast made to play therein.*

Some mighty fish leaps out of the sea; the psalmist's eye catches a glimpse of it, and he puts even that monster into his hymn of praise.

[Psalms 104:27](#). *These wait all upon thee; that thou mayest give them their meat in due season.*

My brethren, what an idea we have here of God thus supplying all the creatures of the earth and the sea! They are all waiting upon him; they can go to no other storehouse but his, no other granary can supply their needs. Surely, we need not be afraid that he will fail us. If he feeds leviathan with his great wants, and the many birds with their little wants, he will not forget his children; he will never withhold any real good from them that walk uprightly.

[Psalms 104:28](#). *That thou givest them they gather: thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good.*

That is all he has to do, you see, just to open his hand. If that hand were once fast closed, they would all die; but, in order to supply the wants of all the creatures he has made, he has only just to open his hand.

[Psalms 104:29](#). *Thou hidest thy face,*

As if he did but put his hand before the brightness of his countenance,-

[Psalms 104:29-30](#). *They are troubled: thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust. Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth.*

When God takes away the genial light of the summer's sun, what multitudes of creatures die; and then, when the soft breath of spring blows

upon the earth, how soon the multitudes of insects come teeming forth! Christian, here is comfort for you! Has God withheld his Spirit from you for a little while, and have many of your joys and comforts fallen dead? He has only to speak, and he can in a moment renew all your comforts.

[Psalms 104:31-35](#). *The glory of the LORD shall endure for ever: the LORD shall rejoice in his works. He looketh on the earth, and it trembleth: he toucheth the hills, and they smoke. I will sing unto the LORD as long as I live: I will sing praise to my God while I have my being. My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the LORD. Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more.*

It seems as if the spirit of praise had bred in the psalmist a spirit of indignation against sin, he could have no patience any longer with those who would not adore so great and so good a God, and therefore he utters this imprecation upon their heads, which is rather a prophecy of what will be their doom: “Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more.”

[Psalms 104:35](#). *Bless thou the LORD, O my soul. Praise ye the LORD.*
Thus the psalmist, like a good musician, ends with th

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PSALM 105

Verses 26-38

[Psalms 105:26-28](#). *He sent Moses his servant; and Aaron whom he had chosen. They shewed his signs among them, and wonders in the land of Ham. He sent darkness, and made it dark; and they rebelled not against his word.*

So cowed were they by that awful darkness, that for a time they seemed to repent of their rebellion against the Lord.

[Psalms 105:29-30](#). *He turned their waters into blood, and slew their fish. Their land brought forth frogs in abundance, in the chambers of their kings.*

Though the fish could not live, the frogs could. When good was taken away, evil came. What a strange succession of miracles was this, — the fish slain, but the frogs multiplied!

[Psalms 105:31-34](#). *He spake, and there came divers sorts of flies, and lice in all their coasts. He gave them hail for rain, and flaming fire in their land. He smote their vines also and their fig trees; and brake the trees of their coasts. He spake, and the locusts came, and caterpillars, and that without number,*

There is great sublimity in this expression. God had only to speak, and whole battalions of devouring locusts and caterpillars seemed to leap out of the earth, or to drop from the clouds: “He spake, and the locusts came, and caterpillars, and that without number.”

[Psalms 105:35-37](#). *And did eat up all the herbs in their land, and devoured the fruit of their ground. He smote also all the firstborn in their land, the chief of all their strength. He brought them forth also with silver and gold: and there was not one feeble person among their tribes.*

It was a notable miracle that, after all the oppression they had endured, they should be in such a state of health that “there was not one feeble person among their tribes.” When God makes his people march, he puts them into marching trim.

[Psalms 105:38](#). *Egypt was glad when they departed: for the fear of them fell upon them.*

Yet this was the mighty nation whose proud king had defied the Lord. At last, they had had enough of the combat; they were glad that the people of God should retire out of their land, and they themselves bowed low before him. May we be taught humility of heart, so that we can sing the hymn I have chosen! “Sovereign Ruler, Lord of all, Prostrate at thy feet I fall; Hear, oh, hear my earnest cry; Frown not, lest I faint and die!”

This exposition consisted of readings from [Exodus 10:1-20](#); and [Psalms 105:26-38](#).

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PSALM 106

Verses 1-48

[Psalms 106:1](#). *Praise ye the LORD. O give thanks unto the LORD for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.*

In this Psalm we have the history of God’s people turned to practical account. I have heard of some very unwise persons, who have said, “I do

not care about the histories of Scripture. I do not profit by them.” Tell me, dear friends, what other Bible had David but the history — the first five books? And what more wonderful teaching can there be than is contained in this Psalm, which is the essence of the history, “Praise ye the Lord” — or Hallelujah to Jah? Hallelujah is praise to God.

[Psalms 106:2-5](#). *Who can utter the mighty acts of the LORD? who can show forth all his praise? Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doeth righteousness at all times. Remember me, O LORD, with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people: O visit me with thy salvation; That I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance.*

If I may fare as God’s people fared, I will be well content, and if God himself will come and bring me salvation, I shall have all that I want. Is that your thought now, dear hearer? Then utter the prayer, and may the Lord answer it while you are yet in your seat.

[Psalms 106:6](#). *We have sinned with our fathers, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly.*

Three time is the confession of sin here made. It is a good beginning when we can begin with confessing sin. I wish that some people had begun there, when they took up with religion; but they too often jump into it, and I am afraid that they will jump out of it again. That harvest which does not come of ploughing is one which will never fill a barn, and that salvation which does not come from a sense of sin will never come to much.

[Psalms 106:7](#). *Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt;*

They saw them; they were surprised by them; but they could not make them out, could not tell what God was at when he smote the Egyptians. A want of understanding of divine truth is a very fatal want.

[Psalms 106:7](#). *They remembered not the multitude of thy mercies;*

What we do not understand we soon forget.

[Psalms 106:7](#). *But provoked him at the sea, even at the Red sea.*

They had not been long out of Egypt; they had scarcely eaten the bread that they brought out of their ovens, but they began to doubt God. They provoked him at the sea, even at the Red Sea.

[Psalms 106:8](#). *Nevertheless he saved them for his name’s sake, that he might make his mighty power to be known.*

He could not save them for their own sake, but he saved them for his own name’s sake.

[Psalms 106:9](#). *He rebuked the Red sea also, and it was dried up: so he led them through depths, as through the wilderness.*

The bottom of the sea was made as dry and as easy for their feet as the plains of the wilderness, and God led them through.

[Psalms 106:10-12](#). *And he saved them from the hand of him that hated them, and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy. And the waters covered their enemies: there was not one of them left. Then believed they his words; they sang his praise.*

It is almost a sarcasm. They believed when they saw. When the promise was fulfilled, then they believed it. Ah! my dear hearers, are there not some of you of whom the same might be said — I mean some people of God? You believe as far as you can see; and that is not believing at all. Let us trust God, whether or no. Red Sea or no Red Sea, let us believe the promise of God, and make sure that it will be true. Then believed they his words; they sung his praise.

[Psalms 106:13](#). *They soon forgot his works:*

They were in a hurry to forget.

[Psalms 106:13-15](#). *They waited not for his counsel: But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert. And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul.*

They had quails to eat. They had the food that they begged for, but their hearts were starved; their souls were famished. Ah! me, what people they were!

[Psalms 106:16](#). *They envied Moses also in the camp, and Aaron the saint of the LORD.*

They began to pick holes in their character. Good men that lived for them, and were ready to die for them — they began to spit upon them.

[Psalms 106:17-20](#). *The earth opened and swallowed up Dathan, and covered the company of Abiram. And a fire was kindled in their company; the flame burnt up the wicked. They made a calf in Horeb, and worshipped the molten image. Thus they changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass.*

See! they had been in Egypt. They had seen the Egyptians worship the god Apis in the form of a bull, so that they must needs have a bull too. I daresay that they said, “The bull is an emblem of strength. We do not worship the image; the image is only used to help us to think of the power of God.” But God forbids us to worship him under any image of any sort.

“Thou shalt not make unto thyself any graven image, nor the likeness of anything that is in the heaven above, nor in the earth beneath. Thou shalt not bow down to them, nor worship them.” All images, pictures, crucifixes — the whole (rut) of them are abhorrent and abominable to God. We must have nothing to do with them as helps to worship, for they are not helps. They are destroyers of the worship of God. But, you say to me, “You tell us that it was a bull.” Yes, and, in contempt, the man of God here calls it a calf. You cannot be too disrespectful to objects of idolatrous worship. They may be esteemed by others, but do not show any kind of respect to them yourself; but if there be a name that you can give them that is full of sarcasm, let them have it.

[Psalms 106:21-23](#). *They forgot God their saviour, which had done great things in Egypt; Wondrous works in the land of Ham, and terrible things by the Red sea. Therefore he said that he would destroy them, had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach, to turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy them.*

They had found fault with Moses, yet Moses stood forward as intercessor, and through his pleading their lives were preserved. You see, again, what a sinful people they were. Ah! indeed they were! Look in this looking-glass and see yourself.

[Psalms 106:24-25](#). *Yea, they despised the pleasant land, they believed not his word: But murmured in their tents, and harkened not unto the voice of the LORD.*

This murmuring in your tents is a very obnoxious thing to God. Always grumbling and complaining. “It is an Englishman’s privilege,” says one. Mind it does not turn out to be an Englishman’s ruin, for God cannot endure that we should be always murmuring at his providence.

[Psalms 106:26-28](#). *Therefore he lifted up his hand against them, to overthrow them in the wilderness: To overthrow their seed also among the nations, and to scatter them in the lands. They joined themselves also unto Baalpeor, and ate the sacrifice of the dead.*

They tried to practice necromancy — to have communion with spirits; they tried to learn the dark science and the black art; and this also God abhors.

[Psalms 106:29-30](#). *Thus they provoked him to anger with their inventions: and the plague brake in upon them. Then stood up Phinehas, and executed judgment: and so the plague was stayed.*

In his hot zeal he ran the spear through two who were rebelling against God. He did it with all his might, and sometimes it is a kindness to a people to deal severely with them. Sin is not to be treated with white kid gloves. It has to be dealt with sometimes with a heavy hand. Phineas did this.

[Psalms 106:31-32](#). *And that was counted unto him for righteousness unto all generations for evermore. They angered him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes:*

Poor Moses who loved them, and lived with them, yet lost his temper.

[Psalms 106:33](#). *Because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips*

What a people to have to do with! Who would wish to be Moses, and who would wish to be a minister?

[Psalms 106:34-35](#). *They did not destroy the nations, concerning whom the LORD commanded them: But were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works.*

They did not keep themselves separate. They would go and join this lot and that lot. They mingled among the heathen, and learned their works.

[Psalms 106:36-39](#). *And they served their idols: which were a snare unto them. Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils, And shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan: and the land was polluted with blood. Thus were they defiled with their own works, and went a whoring with their own inventions.*

“What a dreadful people,” say you. These were God’s chosen people, Israel; the best people in the world at that time; and yet how could they be much worse? Oh! what a God of mercy God is to deal with such people at all!

[Psalms 106:40-43](#). *Therefore was the wrath of the LORD kindled against his people, insomuch that he abhorred his own inheritance. And he gave them into the hand of the heathen: and they that hated them ruled over them. Their enemies also oppressed them, and they were brought into subjection under their hand. Many times did he deliver them; but they provoked him with their counsel, and were brought low for their iniquity.*

Listen to this.

[Psalms 106:44-45](#). *Nevertheless he regarded their affliction, when he heard their cry: And he remembered for them his covenant, and repented according to the multitude of his mercies.*

You would have thought that he would have been provoked beyond endurance, but, after all he had smitten, he still had a tender heart towards them.

[Psalms 106:46-48](#). *He made them also to be pitied of all those that carried them captives. Save us, O LORD our God, and gather us from among the heathen, to give thanks unto thy holy name, and to triumph in thy praise. Blessed be the LORD God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting; and let all the people say, Amen. Praise ye the LORD.*

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PSALM 107

Verses 1-22

[Psalms 107:1](#). *O give thanks unto the LORD, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.*

In the heading of this Psalm we are reminded that the psalmist here exhorts the redeemed, in praising God, to observe his manifold providence over travelers, prisoners, sick men, seamen, “and in divers varieties of life;” but, inasmuch as the exhortation is specially addressed to the redeemed of the Lord, I shall endeavor to cast the red ray of redemption over it, and to explain these various circumstances as relating to the spiritual experience of God’s people, and to their deliverance out of divers perils to which their souls are exposed. “O give thanks unto the Lord.” This seems to imply that we are so slow to praise God that we have to be stirred up to this sacred duty. This exhortation looks as if we needed to be entreated to give thanks unto the Lord. Yet this ought not to be an uncongenial or disagreeable task. It ought to be our pleasure to praise the Lord; we should be eager to do it; and yet it is to be feared that we are often silent when we ought to be giving thanks unto his holy name. He deserves them, “for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.”

[Psalms 107:2-3](#). *Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy; and gathered them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south.*

Whenever God’s people are redeemed from the hand of the enemy, and gathered unto himself, it is always by his grace and power. They are not

only gathered to him, but they are gathered by him; and therefore let them all praise his holy name.

[Psalms 107:4](#). *They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in.*

This is the experience of all God's redeemed and gathered ones; they were, at one time, all lost, and wandering to and fro in the wilderness, as God's ancient people did.

[Psalms 107:5-6](#). *Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses.*

This is the point to which a true spiritual experience sooner or later brings all God's elect ones; they cry unto the Lord in their trouble. The end, the design of their trouble is that they may cry unto him; and when they do so, it is absolutely certain that they shall be delivered out of their distresses.

[Psalms 107:7-11](#). *And he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation. Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness. Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron; because they rebelled against the words of God, and contemned the counsel of the most High:*

All God's people, all his redeemed have been made to feel, in a greater or lesser degree the agony of their spiritual bondage. They have been like captives sitting in darkness, dreading death, realizing that they are utterly unable to deliver themselves. They have been rebellious against the words of God, and have despised his counsel, so that it is absolutely needful that they should be brought to their right position, and be made to kneel before the Lord in true humility of heart.

[Psalms 107:12-16](#). *Therefore he brought down their heart with labour; they fell down, and there was none to help. Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, and he saved them out of their distresses. He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and brake their bands in sunder. Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! For he hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder.*

Is any child of God thus shut up in the dark? Those of you who have ever been lost in a London fog know what a depression of spirit it brings

upon you while you are in the impenetrable darkness, out of which you cannot see any way of escape. All that you can do is to stand still and cry out for help. Well, try what crying to God will do for you in your spiritual depression. Your spirit is cast down into the very deeps; then, out of the depths cry unto the Lord, as Jonah did; rest in him, trust in him, and see whether he will not bring you up into the light of his countenance.

[Psalms 107:17-18](#). *Fools because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted. Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat; and they draw near unto the gates of death.*

All God's redeemed people have suffered from soul-sickness, and some of them have suffered from it so acutely that they have lost all appetite for spiritual comfort. "Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat;" they cannot bear the sight or the thought of it. A man in this condition says, "Do not bring me any food; I loathe it." The very nourishment that might have restored him he rejects because of the nausea which soul-sickness brings.

[Psalms 107:19-20](#). *Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he saveth them out of their distresses. He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions.*

He healed them with his Word; and there is a specific, in God's Word, for every form of spiritual malady. What we need to know is where the particular remedy for our special form of soul-sickness is to be found; and this the Holy Spirit will teach us if we will but ask him.

[Psalms 107:21-22](#). *Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing.*

Verses 1-32

The psalmist exhorteth the redeemed, in praising God, to observe the different forms of his mercy. He views the chosen people as travelers, captives, sick men, and seamen, and in each of these classes he exhorts them to praise the Lord.

[Psalms 107:1](#). *O give thanks unto the LORD, for he is good:*

He is essentially good. His name God is only a shorter form of good. Yet, if we were to lengthen it, there could be no more goodness found in it than is found in the three letters, "God."

[Psalms 107:1](#). *For his mercy endureth for ever.*

That is the form which his goodness takes in relation to us, his sinful creatures; as we deserve nothing, everything that he gives us is a gift of mercy, and what a range his mercy takes! “His mercy endureth for ever.”

[Psalms 107:2](#). *Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy;*

If nobody else will say that God is good, let his redeemed ones say it. If others are silent, let them speak to his praise, if others are doubtful, let them declare positively that the Lord is good, and that his mercy endureth for ever.

[Psalms 107:3](#). *And gathered them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south.*

We were scattered in various directions by our own folly and sin;—“ Each wandering in a different way, but all the downward road;—and he gathered us unto that blessed Shiloh of whom Jacob said, “Unto him shall the gathering of the people be.”

[Psalms 107:4](#). *They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way;*

Ah, the way of a sinner, convinced of sin, is indeed a solitary way; he has a sorrow which he cannot tell to anybody else, a stranger intermeddled not with his grief

[Psalms 107:4](#). *They found no city to dwell in.*

There are no cities in the wilderness for people to dwell in. We look for a city that is out of sight at present, “ a city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God.” Here, in this fleeting world, we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come.

[Psalms 107:5-6](#). *Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses.*

They were a long while before they prayed to the Lord, but it was not a long while before he answered their prayer. When they were brought to that then, that is to say, when they were so hungry, and so thirsty, and so faint that they could do nothing else but cry, then, the moment that they cried unto the Lord, “ he delivered them out of their distresses.”

[Psalms 107:7](#). *And he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation.*

“He led them . . . that they might go.” The leadings of divine grace do not destroy the activities of the human will. God does not treat us as if we were blocks of wood or stone, but he treats us as reasonable beings.

[Psalms 107:8-9](#). *Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.*

We hardly looked for that verse to follow the preceding one. We might have thought that the psalmist would have written, “for he brings them to a city of rest.” God always exceeds our expectations. He not only brings his wandering people home, but he feeds them bountifully when they are there. He holds high festival within Zion’s gates, and the citizens of the new Jerusalem are fed with the finest of the wheat. Surely souls so blessed must praise Jehovah for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men. Now comes another picture, the picture of the captives:-

[Psalms 107:10-11](#). *Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron; because they rebelled against the words of God, and condemned the counsel of the most High:*

They “sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,” for they have lost all energy. They sit down in dumb despair, for at last their sins have found them out. They rejected God, and he has left them to suffer the consequences of their sin: “ being bound in affliction and iron “

[Psalms 107:12-13](#). *Therefore he brought down their heart with labour; they fell down, and there was none to help. Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble,-*

This seems to be always the last thing that people in trouble do; until they hunger, and thirst, and their soul faints, as in the former case, or until they fall down utterly helpless, as in this case, they will not pray. But “then they cry unto Jehovah in their trouble,”-

[Psalms 107:13-16](#). *And he saved them out of their distresses. He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and brake their bands in sunder. Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! For he hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder.*

All glory be to the great Liberator’s name! Now comes the picture of sick men, which is also the portrait of ourselves:-

[Psalms 107:17](#). *Fools because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted.*

Perhaps affliction comes to their bodies, but more especially it attacks their hearts,-they have heart disease, a mortal tremor within, or a terrible fever of fear.

[Psalms 107:18](#). *Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat;*

You cannot comfort them, they cannot or will not receive the truth that would sustain them, they have lost all appetite for spiritual food.

[Psalms 107:18](#). *And they draw near unto the gates of death.*

They seem to come close to those great iron gates that shut out all hope for ever, they can hear them grind upon their massive hinges; they begin to realize what the wrath of God means.

[Psalms 107:19](#). *Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble,*

Fools though they are, they have sense enough to do this.

[Psalms 107:19](#). *And he saveth them out of their distresses.*

So that a true prayer from one who is near unto the gates of death is a prevailing prayer. We earnestly urge all to repent long before they come to a dying bed, but if they are on a dying bed, if they are literally near unto the gates of death, here is evidence that, if they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, he will not close his ears or his heart to their prayer.

[Psalms 107:20](#). *He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions.*

The Word of God has a sort of omnipotent power in it. By the Word of the Lord were the heavens made, and by the Word of the Lord are sick souls healed. That Word can do anything that God purposes. "Where the word of a king is, there is power;" but where the Word of God is, there is omnipotence.

[Psalms 107:21-22](#). *Oh that man would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing.*

Now we come to the seafaring men:-

[Psalms 107:23-24](#). *They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; these see the works of the LORD, and his wonders in the deep.*

These words apply not only to seamen literally, but also to others who are called to endure great storms while sailing across the sea of this mortal life,

[Psalms 107:25-26](#). *For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof. They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths: their soul is melted because of trouble.*

For even he who has his “ sea legs “ on finds them of little use to him when such a storm as this is tossing everything in a dreadful hurly burly. “They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths,” and this experience is repeated, perhaps, hundreds of times, day and night, sometimes for weeks together.

[Psalms 107:27](#). *They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end.*

But, oh! when souls are caught in a storm of conviction of sin, this is a true description of their spiritual distress,-they are at their wits end, and do not know what to do. Everything about them is shaking, and they themselves are reeling to and fro, sometimes this way and sometimes that;-staggering, scarcely able to believe anything, seeing some things double, and everything out of place.

[Psalms 107:28](#). *Then they cry-*

Yes, then, when they are reeling and staggering; that is a queer condition-is it not?-in which to be praying, reeling to and fro, and staggering like a drunken man: “Then they cry.”-

[Psalms 107:28](#). *Unto the LORD in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses.*

Then God will hear the prayer of a staggering man, and the prayer that has not any sense in it because the man who prays is at his wit's end. By “sense” I mean not following the consecutiveness of an orderly petition; the prayer itself seeming to reel to and fro. The suppliant is so overpowered by sorrow that he might be thought to be drunken, as she was to whom Eli so harshly spoke bidding her put away her wine from her, whereas she was overcome by sorrow. God hears us when we cannot hear ourselves pray, and when we cannot put the words of our supplication in proper order, God knows what we mean to say, and gives us what we really need.

[Psalms 107:29](#). *He maketh the storm a calm,-*

What a change! And what a blessing it is to get into one of God's calms, for they are far beyond the ordinary calm of nature; then do we enjoy “ the peace of God, which passeth all understanding.”

[Psalms 107:29-32](#). *So that the wave thereof are still. Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven. Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! Let them exalt him also in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders.*

Verses 23-32

[Psalms 107:23-24](#). *They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters ; these see the works of the LORD, and his wonders in the deep.*

The Jews were never given to navigation. To “go down to the sea in ships,” seemed a very extraordinary thing to them; they looked upon it as a going down, as it were, into a dreadful abyss. We, who are more accustomed to going to sea than they were, talk of “the high seas;” but they spoke of going “down to the sea.” They never went to sea except on business. King Solomon had no pleasure yacht. There was never one of that ancient race who cared to trust himself upon the sea except as a matter of sheer necessity, and those who did so were looked upon with wonder by their land-loving friends. “They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; these see the works of the Lord;”—that is, his greatest works, both in the sea and on it. They know what storms are, and they see what omnipotence can do, and they come back to tell of the wonders of God upon the mighty deep. This verse may be read spiritually as well as literally. God calls some of his servants, as it were, to go down to the sea in ships. They are tried with poverty, with personal sickness, with temptation, with inward conflicts, with fierce persecutions; and God never calls them to these trials out of mere caprice, there is always a reason for it. They go down to the sea in ships to “do business in great waters.” There is something to be gained from their trials, and something to be learned from them. They “do business in great waters;” and “these see the works of the Lord.” Others hear about them, and believe what they are told concerning them; but these see them. They see what God has done in their case,—how he sustains, how he delivers, how he sanctifies trial, and overrules it for his own glory, and his people’s good: “These see the works of the Lord.” And they also see the wonders of the economy of grace. They are made to experience the heights and depths, the lengths and breadths, of that love which; passeth knowledge; they see “his wonders in the deep.” You and I need not desire to have trouble, as though we put out to sea for our own pleasure; but, if God calls us to sail upon a sea of troubles, if he sends us there upon his business, we may depend upon it that he means that business to end to our profit and his own glory.

[Psalms 107:25-27.](#)—*For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof. They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths: their soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end.*

Here we learn something of what sailors see, and of what tried Christians experience. These great storms arise by God's commandment;—not as many say, nowadays, “by the laws of nature.” The wind, which had been quiet, heard God's voice, and raiseth itself up, like a wild beast from its lair: “He commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind;” and no sooner does the great wind begin to blow than the white crests of the waves are seen, and the white horses fly before the blast which lifteth up the waves on high. Then the ship, however staunch it be, seems to have no greater power of resistance than a frail sea bird; and it is tossed up and down, up and down, from the trough of the sea to the billows' crown: “They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths;” and their very soul begins to melt. Brave men as they are, it only needs a sufficient amount of storm to make their hearts turn to water and their spirits dissolve into the turbulent element that is all round them: “their soul is melted because of trouble.” Then they cannot keep their standing: “they reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man.” What is worse, they cannot control their brains; they “are at their wit's end.” What can they do in such a case as that? There is an end to all human wit and wisdom when the great storms are out upon the sea. You who have ever had deep spiritual trials know the analogy of all this. There may come times—there have come times to some of us—when, at the command of God, or by divine permission, there has been a fierce blast of temptation or a fiery trial, and then all that was peaceful round about us before suddenly turns into a whirlpool of tempestuous billows, and we are tossed to and fro at the mercy of the winds and the waves. Sometimes we ascend in presumption, and then we go down into the very depths of despair. At one moment, we are joyous with hope; and, a moment later, we seem ready to give all hope up, our courage fails us, and our soul dissolves within us, If you never have known this experience, I pray that you never may know it; but some of us have had stormy times when we have seemed to have no foothold, when we have reeled to and fro like drunken men,—when the best faith we have had has been little better than staggering. Still, it is better to stagger on the promise than to stagger at it; and we did still stand though we staggered, and we were at our wit's end. We could not see

what to do, and we could not tell what to do, and we could not have done it if we had known what to do; we were brought to such an extremity that we seemed to have neither wit nor wisdom left.

[Psalms 107:28](#). *Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses.*

This shows that, although they were at their wit's end, they had wit enough or wisdom enough to pray. Their souls were melted, so they let them run out in prayer. It is a good thing to get the soul melted, for then it will flow out like water before the Lord. Note that these sailors cried to God when there was no one else to whom they could cry: "Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble." Learn from this sentence that, when your soul is melted because of trouble, you can still pray. When you reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, you can still pray and when you are at your wit's end, you can still pray. Prayer is never out of season; it is a fruit of grace that is acceptable to God in autumn and in winter, in spring and in summer. Long as you live, and even when the worst comes to the worst, cry mightily unto God, for he will surely hear you. Was it not so with us when we were in spiritual trouble, and could do nothing else but cry unto the Lord? It was a poor prayer that we offered, but it was a real prayer that we presented when we cried unto God. Mark how quick God is to hear such prayer as this: "Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses." He brought them into them, and therefore he brought them out of them. It was God who took Jacob into Egypt; and, therefore, though it took four hundred years to bring Israel out of Egypt, God brought them out at last. He kills, and he makes alive; he wounds, and he heals. Rest you in this truth as a matter of absolute certainty.

[Psalms 107:29](#). *He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still.*

At the first, God made everything out of nothing, so he can easily make a calm out of a storm; and he can make the storm a calm for you whenever he pleases to do so. Your troubled feelings, your tossings to and fro, may soon subside into "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding," which "shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

[Psalms 107:30](#). *Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven.*

And there is no music that is sweeter to the mariner's ears than the rattle of the chain as the anchor grips the bottom of the harbor, and the ship rests

from all her tossings. The Lord will give you grace, my brother, my sister, to let down your anchor;—or, rather, to throw it up “into that within the vail,” for that is the way that your anchor goes; and then you shall be glad because you will be quiet. I believe that there is often, a greater, fuller, deeper joy in being quiet than there is in making a noise. There are times when it is good to praise the Lord with the high-sounding cymbals and with the harp of a solemn sound; but, in the deepest joy of all, we are still before God, and praise is silent before God in Zion.

[Psalms 107:31](#). *Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!*

Should they not do so? Those who have survived the storms at sea, or the still greater storms within their own souls, should surely take care to praise the Lord. If we know how to pray, we ought also to know how to praise. Prayer and praise ought to form the two covers of the book of our life, and our life is not well bound unless these are the two covers to it, with a good stiff back of faith to bind the two covers firmly together, and to hold every leaf in its proper place.

[Psalms 107:32](#). *Let them exalt him also in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders.*

Let them not only praise the Lord in private, but let them also sound out their song of gratitude to God where the graybeards are gathered together, and let the men of experience, the officers of the church, the leaders of the Lord’s people, help them in the expression of their gratitude.

Verses 33-43

[Psalms 107:33-34](#). *He turneth rivers into a wilderness, and the watersprings into dry ground; a fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein.*

Hearken unto this, ye who are men of understanding. God can soon take away from any people the privileges which they cease to prize. He sent barrenness upon the earth in the days of our first father, Adam; and he has long cursed with barrenness the very land in which this Psalm was written. He can give us what he pleases, and he can take it all away when he pleases. And, spiritually, God can easily turn a fruitful land into barrenness. The means of grace, the ministry of his Word which was once very rich and fertile to you, may suddenly lose all its savour and all its fruitfulness. Ay, even his own Word, which may be compared to water-springs, may suddenly seem to you to be but as dry ground; and your secret devotions,

your reading of godly books, your conversation with gracious men and women, all of which were like wells of water, may seem to be dried up. If you walk contrary to God, he will walk contrary to you. “He turneth a fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein.” When the people of God fall from their steadfastness, when they wander from the paths of holiness, it is easy for God to let them know that the best means are only means, and that the best earthly supplies are barrenness itself apart from him. God grant that it may never be so with any of us! But now see what happens when the Lord turns his hand the other way:—

[Psalms 107:35](#). *He turneth the wilderness into a standing water, and dry ground into watersprings.*

He can make the sandy desert into a lake of water, he can make that which was barren as the desert of Sahara to become as fruitful as the garden of the Lord. And if you are just now mourning your barrenness, believe in the omnipotence of his grace which can work such wonderful transformations as these for you. “All my fresh springs are in thee,” said the psalmist; and so they are with us; therefore, why should not those fresh springs now flow into our nature so as to make the dry ground into water springs?

[Psalms 107:36-37](#). *And there he maketh the hungry to dwell, that they may prepare a city for habitation; and sow the fields, and plant vineyards, which may yield fruits of increase.*

See, brothers and sisters, when God blesses us, then we begin to work for him. When he works, we work. He blesses the barren land with fruitfulness, and then we sow the fields, and plant vineyards. We do not sit still because God is at work; nay, rather, we obey the apostolic injunction, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”

[Psalms 107:38-39](#). *He blesseth them also, so that they are multiplied greatly; and suffereth not their cattle to decrease. Again, they are minished and brought low through oppression, affliction, and sorrow.*

God has a great many rods, and we get a great many smarts because of our many sins. If we were but saved from our sins, we should not need all these rods, “oppression affliction, and sorrow,” — tribulation, and anguish, and pain, and distress. I will not tell you the names of all of them, but they are very many, and their strokes are very painful. May God grant that we may be quit of sin, for only so shall we be quit of many of these sorrows.

[Psalms 107:40](#). *He poureth contempt upon princes, and causeth them to wander in the wilderness, where there is no way.*

God makes very little of earth's biggest men: "He poureth contempt upon princes." He has wonderful ways of making very poor those who are very rich in themselves. He makes those who were lords of all the fields to be exiles and wanderers in the wilderness, where there is no way. Do not get proud, brethren, or else that may be your lot. He who is so near perfection that he need not pray, "God be merciful to me a sinner," may before long be so near desperation that he will not have to pray even the publican's prayer. Let none of us become too great, lest we soon be made very little.

[Psalms 107:41](#). *Yet setteth he the poor on high from affliction, and maketh him families like a flock.*

God always has an eye of pity for the poor, and especially for the spiritually poor. While "he poureth contempt upon princes" with one hand, he is lifting the poor from the dunghill with the other.

[Psalms 107:42](#). *The righteous shall see it, and rejoice:*

When God's providence and grace are at work with men, the righteous shall see it, and understand it, and be glad.

[Psalms 107:42](#). *And all iniquity shall stop her mouth.*

She is generally very noisy and boastful; but, sometimes, when God's judgments are abroad, she is obliged to hold her tongue. "All iniquity shall stop her mouth." O Lord, stop it speedily, for she is making a great noise just now!

[Psalms 107:43](#). *Whose is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the LORD.*

Those who watch providence will never be without a providence to watch?

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PSALM 108

Verses 1-13

[Psalms 108:1-5](#). *O God, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise, even with my glory. Awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early. I will praise thee, O LORD, among the people: and I will sing praises unto*

thee among the nations. For thy mercy is great above the heavens: and thy truth reacheth unto the clouds. Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: and thy glory above all the earth;

Here, we begin with praise, — the very praise with which we finished the other Psalm, — praise in a very joyous, confident spirit, for the praise which precedes prayer has more of the “Jubilate” note in it than ordinary praise has. The prayer in [Psalms 57:1](#), which preceded the praise, was earnest, and fervent, and confident, yet it did not reach so high a note as this: —

[Psalms 108:6-9](#). *That thy beloved may be delivered: save with thy right hand, and answer me. God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth. Gilead is mine; Manasseh is mine; Ephraim also is the strength of mine head; Judah is my law-giver; Moab is my washpot; over Edom will I cast out my shoe; over Philistia will I triumph.*

David is claiming the kingdom which God promised to him by the mouth of Samuel the prophet; — looking first upon the kingdom itself, and then upon the surrounding territories, and laying hold upon them all as his own because God had given them to him.

[Psalms 108:10](#). *Who will bring me into the strong city? who will lead me into Edom?*

In the spirit of a truly courageous leader, he means to fight with that ancient foe of Israel; and wisely appeals to God to lead his army: —

[Psalms 108:11-13](#). *Wilt not thou, O God, who hast cast us off? and wilt not thou, O God, go forth with our hosts? Give us help from trouble: for vain is the help of man. Through God we shall do valiantly: for he it is that shall tread down our enemies.*

This exposition consisted of readings from [Psalms 57:7-11](#); Psalms 108,

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Psalm Chapter 109

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

PSALM 110

Verses 1-7

[Psalms 110:1](#). *The LORD said unto my Lord.*

Or Jehovah said unto my Adonai.

[Psalms 110:1-2](#). *Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.*

This is the Messiah, this is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews, the King of Kings, and the Lord of Lords. Where are his subjects?

[Psalms 110:3](#). *Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth.*

A willing people shall make up the forces of this great King, and upon them the freshness of the morning shall rest.

[Psalms 110:4](#). *The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.*

King and priest. None other of the house of David save our Lord Jesus Christ could claim the union of these two offices. In Christ we have a King and a priest, as also with Melchisedec of old, a great type of Jesus.

[Psalms 110:5-7](#). *The Lord at thy right hand, shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath. He shall judge among the heathen, he shall fill the places with the dead bodies; he shall wound the heads over many countries. He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall he lift up the head.*

This conqueror shall be refreshed in his journey; therefore, shall he lift up the head.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Psalms 110:1-7](#); [Hebrews 7:1-14](#).

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PSALM 111

Verses 1-10

[Psalms 111:1](#). *Praise ye the LORD.*

Or, "Hallelujah," "Praise be unto Jehovah." "Praise ye the Lord." I invite all Christians to give good heed to this injunction; whether others praise him, or not, "Praise ye the Lord." Do it now: do it always, do it

heartily, do it instead of what you sometimes do, namely, doubt him, murmur at him, rebel against him: “Praise ye the Lord.” Ye who are beginning the Christian life, praise him for your regeneration. Ye who have long continued in it, praise him for sustaining you. Ye who are the most ripe for heaven, begin now the praises that will never, never end.

[Psalms 111:1](#). *I will praise the LORD with my whole heart, in the assembly of the upright, and in the congregation.*

It is always well when a preacher practises what he preaches. David does that here: “Praise ye the Lord. I will praise the Lord.” One of the best ways of enforcing an exhortation is to practically obey it: “Praise ye the Lord. I will praise the Lord.” But when a man becomes an example to others, he should be very careful to set a good example. Hence, the psalmist not only says that he will praise the Lord, but that he will do it heartily, yea, with his whole heart. Such a God as Jehovah is, is worthy of all the praise we can give him. We ought to praise him with all our thought, with all our skill, with all our love, with all our zeal, with all our heart, with our whole heart. David tells us that he would render this praise both amongst the choice and select company of God’s people, “in the assembly of the upright,” and also in the larger congregation, where a more mixed multitude would be found. Brethren, praise, is never out of place, and never out of season. If you are with a little company of two or three choice Christian friends, praise the Lord in their midst. Tell them your experience, and bless the name of the Lord for his grace and mercy; but if you should be in a larger assembly, where the characters of some may be doubtful, be not abashed, but still continue to praise the Lord.

[Psalms 111:2](#). *The work of the LORD are great, —*

They are great in number, in size, in purpose, and in effect. Even when God makes a little thing, it is great because of the wisdom displayed in making it. The microscope has taught us the greatness of God in creating tiny creatures of wondrous beauty, yet so small as not to be perceptible to the naked eye: “The works of the Lord are great,”

[Psalms 111:2](#). *Sought out of all them that have pleasure therein.*

If we take pleasure in a man, we also take pleasure in his works, we like to see what he has made; and, in like manner, the saints of God take pleasure in his works. They revel in the beauties of creation; they delight to study his wisdom in providence, but, best of all, they are most charmed with the wonders of divine grace. These works are so marvellous that a

mere surface glance at them is not sufficient; you need to search them out, to dig deep in the mines of God's wisdom as seen in his works, to try to find out the secret motive of his everlasting purposes; and, the more you study them, the more they will grow. Some things impress you at first with greater significance than they do afterwards, but the works of God are so great that, if you look at them throughout your whole lifetime, they will continue to grow greater still.

[Psalms 111:3](#). *His work* —

I suppose the psalmist means God's chief work, his grand work of grace: "His work" —

[Psalms 111:3](#). *Is honourable and glorious: and his righteousness endureth for ever.*

The work of God is full of grace, and it is full of honour and glory to his blessed name; and every single portion of the work of grace is full of that which resounds to the honour and glory of the Triune Jehovah. I hope, dear friends, that you delight to study the whole plan of saving mercy, from its initiation in the eternal purpose to its culmination in the gathering together of all the people of God. If you do, you will see that all through it "is honourable and glorious: and his righteousness endureth for ever." As it endured Calvary, it may well endure for ever. Though the Lord Jesus Christ purposed so to save his people, he would not do it by sacrificing his righteousness. He fulfilled righteousness to the utmost, by his perfect life, and by his suffering even unto death, and, now, we are quite sure that no further strain will ever be put upon that divine attribute. "His righteousness endureth for ever."

[Psalms 111:4](#). *He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered:*

Do not be forgetful of God's wonderful works. They are made on purpose to be remembered; so, treasure them up, for they are worthy of being held in everlasting remembrance.

[Psalms 111:4](#). *The LORD is gracious and full of compassion.*

This is what his people always find to be true whenever they read the history of his works. The thought that strikes them is, "The Lord is gracious and full of compassion." If any of you long to be at peace with God, however far you may have wandered from him, he is ready to receive you if you will but return to him, for he "is gracious and full of compassion" — not merely tender-hearted, but full of graciousness. He abounds with thoughts of love towards his people; come, and try him for yourselves.

[Psalms 111:5](#). *He hath given meat unto them that fear him: he will ever be mindful of his covenant.*

The needs of all his people are always supplied by him. He finds food both for body and soul, and you may rest assured that every promise of his covenant will be faithfully kept. You may forget it, but he will not: “he will ever be mindful of his covenant,” and mindful of you because of that covenant, mindful of your heavy cares, mindful of your bitter griefs, mindful of your weakness and infirmity, because you are in his covenant, and he is mindful of it.

[Psalms 111:6](#). *He hath shewed his people the power of his works,*

He showed the Israelites what he could do, what force he could throw into what he did, and he has shown to us, Christians, the same thing in another way, by the power of his gracious Spirit, blessing the preaching of his Word to the conversion of sinners, and maintaining the great fight against the dread powers of darkness: “He hath shewed his people the power of his works.”

[Psalms 111:6](#). *That he may give them the heritage of the heathen.*

He gave to Israel the land of Canaan, where the heathen dwelt; and he will give to Christ, when he asks for them, the heathen for his inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. Let us pray God to prove the power of his works in the subduing of the nations unto Christ.

[Psalms 111:7](#). *The works of his hands are verity and judgment;*

He never acts contrary to truth and righteousness. Even when he puts on his most terrible look, and smites his enemies in his wrath, still, “the works of his hands are verity and judgment;”

[Psalms 111:7-8](#). *All his commandments are sure. They stand fast for ever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness.*

Whatever God commands, determines, purposes, you may rest assured that it will be accomplished; but his purposes are always accomplished, not by caprice, but by “truth and uprightness.” God is a Sovereign, doing as he wills; but he never wills to do anything that is inconsistent with justice, truth, and uprightness.

[Psalms 111:9](#). *He sent redemption unto his people:*

He brought them up out of Egypt with a high hand and a stretched out arm, and he has sent redemption to us, first, by price, when he redeemed us from our guilt upon the tree; and then by power, when the Holy Spirit came and broke our bands asunder, and set us free from the dominion of our sins.

[Psalms 111:9.](#) *He hath commanded his covenant for ever: holy and reverend is his name.*

His whole character commands our reverence because it is superlatively holy, and his name is to us a word of awe never to be mentioned flippantly, and never to be quoted without earnest thought and prostration of heart before him. I fear that there are some professors who use the name of God far too freely. They do not recollect that “holy and reverend is his name.” I can hardly think that any man can be “reverend.” There are some who choose to be called by that title; I suppose they mean something less than the word means here: “Holy and reverend is his name,” not mine, certainly.

[Psalms 111:10.](#) *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom:*

It is the A B C of true wisdom. He who has learned to fear God has learned the first part of wisdom. According to some, the word “beginning” here means the chief, the head, the front, just as, often, in Scripture, “beginning” signifies that. “The fear of the Lord” is the chief part of “wisdom,” the essence of it.

[Psalms 111:10.](#) *A good understanding have all they that do his commandments:*

Practical goodness is the proof of a good understanding. A man may have an orthodox head, and yet not have a good understanding. A man may be able to talk very glibly about the commandments of God, and even to preach about them with considerable power; but it is the doing of them that is the main point.

[Psalms 111:10.](#) *His praise endureth for ever.*

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Psalm Chapter 112

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

PSALM 113

Verses 1-9

We will read, this evening, two passages in the Word of God; the first will be Psalms 113.

[Psalms 113:1](#). *Praise ye the LORD. Praise, O ye servants of the LORD, praise the name of the LORD.*

Three times are you stirred up to this duty of praise. Adore the Sacred Trinity with threefold praise. There is a trinity in you: let spirit, soul, and body praise the Lord. Let the past, the present, and the future make another threefold chord; and for each of these, “Praise ye the Lord. Praise, O ye servants of the Lord, praise the name of the Lord.”

[Psalms 113:2-3](#). *Blessed be the name of the LORD from this time forth and for evermore. From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same the LORD’S name is to be praised.*

“From the rising of the sun until the going down of the same the Lord’s name is to be praised.” In hours of morning light, when the dew is on the grass, and our soul is full of gladness, and in the hours of the setting sun, when the day is weary, and the night seems coming on, still let the Lord have the praise that is his due, for he is always to be praised. There is never an hour in which it would be unseemly to praise God. For everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven; but the praising of God is never out of season. All time and all eternity may be dedicated to this blessed work.

[Psalms 113:4-5](#). *The LORD is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens. Who is like unto the LORD our God, who dwelleth on high,*

The loftiness, the majesty, the sublimity of God are attributes that are terrible in themselves; yet they minister much joy to those who love the Lord. For, you know, we can never make too much of those whom we love; and if we see them exalted, then is our soul glad. Would you wish to have a little God? Would you wish to have a God who had but little honour, or little power? No; you ascribe to him all conceivable and all inconceivable greatness, and you exult as you think what a high and mighty God he is.

“Who is like unto Jehovah our God,
who dwelleth on high?”

[Psalms 113:6](#). *Who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth!*

It enables us to get some faint idea of the greatness of God when we read that he has to humble himself even to look at the things in heaven, perfect and spotless though they be. Dr. Watts truly sings, —

“The lowest step around thy seat

Rises too high for Gabriel's feet;
In vain the tall archangel tries
To reach thine height with wond'ring eyes."

All the faculties of all the angels cannot comprehend the Infinite. When the Lord looks down to us, how much he must humble himself! If he humbleth himself to see the things in heaven which are clear and pure, what humility is required that he may look upon the things on the earth!

[Psalms 113:7-8](#). *He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill; that he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people.*

Have you never noticed that, in all these joyous songs to God, there is almost always one of these notes, that God abases the proud, and exalts the humble? This was the basis of Hannah's song; and it was the pith and marrow of Mary's Magnificat: "He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree." This wonderful turning of things upside down; this withering of the green tree, and making the dry tree to flourish; this killing that which liveth, and quickening that which is dead; this emptying of the full, and filling of the empty; this casting down the mighty from their thrones, and lifting the poor out of the dust; this is always one of the highest reasons for exulting joy. What a truth there is for you and for me tonight, if we feel ourselves to be spiritually so poor that the dunghill is no offense to us, because we feel ourselves to be even more offensive than the filthy things that are cast away by men! What a mercy it is that the Lord "lifteth the needy out of the dunghill; that he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people"!

[Psalms 113:9](#). *He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children. Praise ye the LORD.*

Does your soul feel barren? May the Lord grant unto it an abundant fruitfulness! Looking back upon the past year, perhaps you have had many barren times, or times that you have thought to be barren. If you are a minister of the gospel, I should not wonder if those have been your most fruitful seasons. When you have been most empty, God has been pleased to feed the people through you. O dear brothers and sisters, those very times of spiritual experience which are most humiliating and most painful are often the most soul-enriching to us, and they also bring the greatest glory to God!

Now we will read a New Testament story, in order that we may see how some men did not praise the Lord as they should have done. You will find

the narrative in the seventeenth chapter of the Gospel according to Luke, at the eleventh verse.

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 113, and [Luke 17:11-19](#).

[PSALMS CONTENTS](#)

PSALM 114

Verses 1-8

[Psalms 114:1-8](#). *When Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language; Judah was his sanctuary, and Israel his dominion. The sea saw it, and fled: Jordan was driven back. The mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs. What ailed thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest? thou Jordan, that thou wast driven back? Ye mountains, that ye skipped like rams; and ye little hills, like lambs. Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob; which turned the rock into a standing water, the flint into a fountain of waters.*

I did not interrupt the reading of the Psalm by any exposition. It is a perfect whole, and could not well be divided without spoiling it. We may admire the poetry as well as the inspiration of this Psalm. It begins with rugged abruptness: "When Israel went out of Egypt." It only gives just a hint of the discomfort of the Israelites while in Egypt, arising from the fact that they did not understand the Egyptians "strange language." No doubt they were often beaten by their taskmasters, for not obeying orders, when they really did not understand what must have seemed to them the barbarous speech of their Egyptian oppressors. But God led them up out of the house of bondage, the tribe of Judah leading the van, and all the people following in due order.

How beautifully the psalmist describes the dividing of the Red Sea! He represents the waters as perceiving the presence of God, and fleeing away, not because Israel came to the bank, but because God was in the midst of his people: "The sea saw it, and fled,"-as if abashed at the presence of its Maker, alarmed at the terror of Jehovah's might. So was it with the Jordan; that swiftly-flowing river was "driven back" by a very special miracle. The dividing of the Red Sea was a marvelous act of God's power, but the

driving back of that rushing river has some extraordinary points about it peculiar to itself. And all this happened because God was there. The sea flees before him, the river is driven back by him. In like manner, my brethren, if God be in the midst of our church, nothing can withstand its onward march. If the Lord be in any man, that man need not even think or talk of difficulties; for, with God, nothing is impossible.

So mighty was the influence of God's presence that the mountains themselves began to move, and even to skip like rams, and to leap like lambs. There was some fear there, for they trembled in their solid sockets, "at the presence of the God of Jacob." There was joy, too. We speak of "the everlasting hills," yet the psalmist depicts them as moving as easily as the lambs frisk in the meadows in the springtime: "The mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs." How grand is the poetic utterance!

"What ailed thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest? thou Jordan, that thou wast driven back?" "Thou couldst no longer rush in thine accustomed channel, but must needs return to the source whence thou didst come.

What ailed you, O ye mountains, that ye trembled as if a palsy had seized upon you? 'What ailed you, O ye little hills?'

Now comes the answer, which yet is not given in the form of an answer.

The inspired poet, in order to heighten the grandeur of his language, kept the name of God out of the Psalm until he came to the end, when he thus answered his own riddle: "Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob; which turned the rock into a standing water, the flint into a fountain of waters;"-another miracle, for God multiplied his marvels. Having brought his people out of Egypt, and led them through the wilderness, and made the hills to move at his majestic presence, now he performs a converting work, changing the rock into a mere, or lake, so plenteous was the effusion of water, and making the flint to gush into a veritable river, which followed the children of Israel through the wilderness, for, as Paul says, "they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, (the margin is, "that went with them,") and that Rock was Christ."

This exposition consisted of readings from PSALMS 114. and 48.

[PSALMS CONTENTS](#)

PSALM 115

Verses 1-18

This is one of the Psalms, which were sung by the Jews at the feast of the Passover. It is highly probable that they were sung by our Lord on that memorable night when he instituted the sacred feast which is to be the perpetual memorial of his death, “until he come.” They have, however, a message for us who are now gathered together here.

[Psalms 115:1-2](#). *Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake. Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is now their God?*

They talk about what he did when he brought his people up out of Egypt; but they tauntingly ask, “Where is now their God?” Thou art not dead, O God! Nor art thou even waxing weak; wilt thou not let the heathen know that they are resisting thee in vain?

[Psalms 115:3](#). *But our God is in the heavens:*

Where they cannot see him. But that is just where he should be—in his own royal pavilion, seated upon his own throne,—out of gunshot of all his enemies,—where he can survey the whole world, where he is dependent upon none, but absolutely supreme over all: “Our God is in the heavens.

[Psalms 115:3](#). *He hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.*

What a grand sentence that is. After all, his eternal purposes are continually being fulfilled. His decrees can never fail to be accomplished. He is not a thwarted and defeated God,—not one who has to wait upon his creatures to know their pleasure; but “he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.” How absolute and unlimited those words are! “Whatsoever he hath pleased.” He hath willed it, and he hath done it. As for the heathen who say, “Where is now their God?” we may ask, in holy derision, “Where are their gods, and what sort of gods are they?” The psalmist gives the answer.

[Psalms 115:4](#). *Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands.*

Mere metal,—called precious metal, yet, if made into idols, no better than any other metal. This shows the amount that a man will spend upon making to himself a god that is no god; but what a fool he is to do so! How can a man call that a “god”, which did not make him, but which he himself made?

“Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands.”

[Psalms 115:5](#). *They have mouths, but they speak not:*

I want you to notice how the psalmist seems to have an image before him, and he points first to its head, and mocks at its different parts; and then he points to its hands, and its feet, and he utters scathing sarcasm's about the whole person of the idol god.

[Psalms 115:5-7](#). *Eyes have they, but they see not: they have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: they have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat.*

“They have mouths.” To carry out their idea of God, the makers of idols have given them mouths; but they cannot speak through them, they are dumb. Shall a man believe a dumb thing to be a god? The idols cannot communicate anything to him; it is not possible for them to speak any word of encouragement, or threatening, or promise: “They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they.” Some idols had precious gems placed in their heads, to appear like eyes; but they cannot see through them, for they are blind. Is it not a solecism,-a contradiction, to speak of a blind god?

What a blind man must he be who worships a blind god! “Eyes have they, but they see not: they have ears.” Some Indian idols certainly have ears, for they have elephants' ears, monstrous lobes; and I think, perhaps, the psalmist was referring to such ears as those. “They have ears,” he says, “but they hear not.” Then what is the use of their ears? You cannot communicate anything to them; so, why do you utter prayers to a thing that cannot hear what you say? Why do you present praises to images that know not what you are saying? “They have ears, but they hear not.” “Noses have they.” I note the grim sarcasm of this remark of the psalmist; it reminds me of Elijah's taunting words to the prophets of Baal, “Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked.” The ancient Hebrews were not accustomed to treat idolatry with any kind of respect; they poured all sorts of ridicule upon it. Nowadays, we are expected to speak very respectfully concerning all false religions, and some philosophers and divines tell us that there is something good in them all; and they say that modern Papistry, with its gods many, and its rotten rags and cast clouts, which they call relics, is to be treated very delicately. Perhaps someone asks, “Is it not a religion?” Yes, a religion for fools; but not for those who think. “Noses have they, but they smell not.” Their devotees fill the room with the smoke of incense; they burn sweet spices before the idols, but their

nostrils are not thereby gratified. "They have hands," says the psalmist; their makers give them hands, "but they handle not." They cannot even receive the offerings presented to them. They cannot stretch out their hands to help their votaries. They are without feeling,-so the original tells us; yet they have hands, but they are useless. "Feet have they, but they walk not." They could not even mount to their shrines by themselves, they must be lifted there, and fastened with nails into their sockets. One of the saddest sights to my mind,-too sad to be ludicrous,-is to see a Popish chapel, as I have often seen it, when the verger is up on the top of the altar, taking down the various images, and dusting the dolls. He, of course, pays them no sort of reverence, but dusts them as your servant does the things in your bedchamber or your drawing room. Yet these are the things that will be worshipped when the bell rings in an hour's time,-these very things that have been dusted, and treated in this fashion, just like ordinary household ornaments. "Feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat." Their priests pretend that, by a kind of sacred ventriloquism, they make an articulate muttering; but the psalmist very properly says, "Neither speak they through their throat." They cannot whisper, they cannot even mutter; they cannot make even as much noise as a beast or a bird can; for they are lifeless and useless.

[Psalms 115:8](#). *They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them.*

That is to say, they are as stupid and doltish as the idols they make. If they can bow down and worship such things as these, surely the worshippers are fitted for the gods, and the gods for the worshippers. Now, brethren, recollect that there is a spiritual idolatry that is very much in vogue nowadays. Certain "thinkers"-as they delight to call themselves, whose religion is known as "modern thought",-do not accept the one living and true God as he reveals himself in the Old and the New Testaments; but they make a god out of what they are pleased to call their own consciousness. Truly, their idols are reason and thought-the work of men's brains. Their god does not hear prayer, because it would be absurd, they say, to suppose that prayer can have any effect on Deity. Their god has little or no regard for justice; according to them, you may live as you like, but all will come right at last. They hold out a "larger hope" that the wicked will all be restored to God's favor; if that should be the case, there would be no

justice left upon the face of the earth or in heaven either. All this is false. A god that a man can comprehend is not really a god at all.

A god that I could excogitate from my own brain must, of necessity, be no god. There can only be the one God who is made known to us by divine revelation. God must be infinitely greater than the human mind; he must be beyond our utmost conception, - of whom we can know but little compared with what he really is, and that little he must himself reveal to us. Beware, I pray you, of a god that you make for yourself. Take God as you find him in this Book, and worship him; otherwise, you will find that there may be mental idols as well as idols of silver, and gold, and wood, and stone. "The God of Abraham praise." "The God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob," the God of the whole earth shall he be called; "the God that led his people out of Egypt, the God of Sinai is the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ;" and "this God is our God for ever and ever." Ours is no new religion; it is the religion of Jehovah worship, and to this we will cling, whoever may oppose.

[Psalms 115:9-11](#). *O Israel, trust thou in the LORD: he is their help and their shield. O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD: he is their help and their shield. Ye that fear the LORD, trust in the LORD: he is their help and their shield.*

The first of this set of sentences seems to me to be addressed by way of exhortation, but the second is a sort of soliloquy in which the psalmist, having exhorted others to trust, says, "Well they may trust, for God is both their active and their passive Helper: their help and their shield." O you who know him, and love him, you who are of the house of Israel, however other men may turn aside to idols, keep yourselves steadfast to Jehovah, and trust in him even when he is mocked and ridiculed! O ye who are his ministers, the house of Aaron, specially devoted to his service, you know him best, and you should trust him most! O all of you, proselytes of the gate, who are not of the seed of Israel, still fear Jehovah, and trust in him, for he is your help and your shield!

[Psalms 115:12](#). *The LORD hath been mindful of us: he will bless us; he will bless the house of Israel; he will bless the house of Aaron.*

He had been mindful of Israel, and this guaranteed that he would still bless his people. "The times are dark and cloudy," the psalmist seems to say, "but by his ancient mercies, our faith is established, and our hope encouraged."

[Psalms 115:13](#). *He will bless them that fear the LORD, both small and great.*

Now little ones, look out for the blessing that is meant for you: “He will bless them that fear the Lord, both small and great.” Those who have but little faith, little joy, little grace, little growth, yet still he will bless.

[Psalms 115:14-16](#). *The LORD shall increase you more and more, you and your children. Ye are blessed of the LORD which made heaven and earth. The heaven, even the heavens, are the LORD’S: but the earth hath he given to the children of men.*

This may in part account for the fact that he is not known, and not honoured among men. He is himself in heaven; and, for a while, he has left men to follow their own devices. Hence it is that they have set up false gods. But, whatever others may do, or not do, let us praise the name of the Lord.

[Psalms 115:17](#). *The dead praise not the LORD,*

No song comes up from that dark charnel house, no praise ascends to God from those that are asleep in the grave. The living among them praise him in heaven, but “the dead praise not the Lord.”

[Psalms 115:17-18](#). *Neither any that go down into silence. But we will bless the LORD from this time forth and for evermore. Praise the LORD.*

“Praise the Lord,” that is “Hallelujah.” The Psalm could not end with a better note than that; so may all our lives end, for our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

[PSALMS CONTENTS](#)

PSALM 116

Verses 1-6

[Psalms 116:1](#). *I love the LORD, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications.*

You cannot help loving God if he has heard your prayers. Have you tried him? If you have, you can join with David and thousands of others in confessing that he is a prayer-hearing God, and therefore you love him. I find the verse might be read, “I love the Lord, because he hears.” He is always hearing. I am always speaking to him, and he is always hearing me, and therefore I love him. Can you imagine a better reason for love?

[Psalms 116:2](#). *Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live.*

“He hath inclined his ear” — stooped down, as it were, as you do to a sick person to catch his faintest word. “He hath inclined his ear.” He has heard my prayer, when I could hardly hear it myself. When it was such a broken prayer, such a feeble prayer, that I was afraid I had not prayed, yet he heard me. He inclined his ear, and “therefore will I call upon him as long as I live.” That is, I will never leave off praying, and I will never leave off praising. This is the best gratitude we can show to God. Now, if a beggar were to say to us, “If you will help me today, I will beg of you as long as ever I live,” we should not be very thankful to him; but when we say this to God, he is glad, for he wants us to be thus continually calling upon him.

[Psalms 116:3-4](#). *The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the LORD O LORD, I beseech thee, deliver my soul.*

He felt as if he had been hunted. As in hunting, they sometimes surround the stag with dogs as with a cordon, so he says, “the sorrows of death compassed me. There was no getting away. I was in a circle of sorrow.” Worse than that, his pains of conscience and heart were so great that he says, “The pains of hell gat hold upon me” — got the grip of him, as though he were arrested by them — as though those dogs had come so close as to seize and grasp him. “Then,” says he, “I called.” At the worst extremity he prayed. There is no time too bad to pray in. When it is all over with you, still pray. Often the end of yourself is the beginning of your God. He means to get you away from every other confidence, that you may fling yourself upon him. “Then called I upon the name of the Lord.” And what was the prayer? A very short one: “O Lord, I beseech thee deliver my soul.” God does not measure prayers by the yard. It is not by the length but by the weight. If there is life, earnestness, heart in your prayer, it is all the better for being short. Read the Bible through, and you will scarcely find a long prayer. Prayers that come from the soul are often like arrows shot from the bow — quick, short, sharp; and God hears such prayers as these — “O Lord, I beseech thee deliver my soul.”

[Psalms 116:5](#). *Gracious is the LORD, and righteous;*

Wonderful combination — gracious and yet righteous. And if you want to know how this can be, look at Calvary, where Jesus dies that we may live. “Oh! the sweet wonders of that cross, where God the Saviour loved

and died” — where there was the justice of God to the full, and the mercy of God without bound. “Gracious is the Lord and righteous.”

[Psalms 116:5-6](#). *Yea, our God is merciful. The LORD preserveth the simple:*

Those that have such a deal of wit may take care of themselves, but “the Lord preserveth the simple,” the straightforward, the plain-minded — those who believe his word without raising questions. “The Lord preserveth the simple.”

[Psalms 116:6](#). *I was brought low and he helped me.*

Oh! many of you can say this, I trust, and if you cannot I hope you will before long — “I was brought low, and he helped me.”

Verses 1-11

It begins well.

[Psalms 116:1](#). *I love the Lord,*

Can you say that? “Yea, Lord, thou knowest all things. Thou knowest that I love thee.” “I love the Lord.” Love is said to be blind, but not love to God. Love to God can see, and it can give a reason for its own existence, and a good substantial reason too. “I love the Lord.”

[Psalms 116:1](#). *Because he hath heard my voice and my supplications. A good reason for love will be found in the closet where prayer is answered. If you have ever been in trouble, and that Divine friend has listened to your feeble cries, you do love him, and you cannot help loving.*

You wonder why others do not love him too.

[Psalms 116:2](#). *Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live.*

“Because.” He harps on that string. It is so sweet a note that he touches it again: “Because he hath inclined his ear unto me”: stooped out of heaven. He has laid his ear down to my lips. He has caught my wandering utterances. He hath inclined his ear. My sin had pushed his ear away, but he has brought his head back again, and inclined his ear unto me. “Therefore.” You see this was given as a reason, but the Psalmist is so full that what was a reason for love now becomes a reason for something else. The flowers in the garden of believers bloom double. Here is a second flower on this stalk. I love him because he hath inclined his ear unto me.

“Therefore will I call upon him as long as I live.” I speed so well in prayer that I will keep on in that blessed business. God heard me once. He shall hear me again.

“Long as we live should Christians pray,
For only while we pray we live.”

And as long as we live we shall find out the best way of living — to live from hand to mouth — from God’s hand to our mouth — by continual prayer. Now the Psalmist tells about this wonderful instance in which God heard his cry.

[Psalms 116:3](#). *The sorrows of death compassed me,*

They were all round me. They made a circle. I could not find a break. They compassed me. Sorrows, deadly sorrows, the very sorrows of death.

[Psalms 116:3](#). *And the pains of hell gat hold upon me:*

They came inside the circle and they gripped me. I was like one that did lie under the lion. He seemed to bite and tear me. “The pains of hell gat hold upon me.” Did you ever know that? I did. Oh! I can never forget, for the scars are in my mind to this day when the pains of hell gat hold upon me. They say that there is no hell. He will never say that who has ever felt the pains of a guilty conscience — the pangs of unforgiven sin to a soul that is made alive by the Spirit of God. “The pains of hell gat hold upon me.”

[Psalms 116:3](#). *I found trouble and sorrow.*

An unexpected find. They were hidden away — these double enemies — hidden away beneath my pleasures, beneath my sins, beneath my self-righteousness. “I found trouble and sorrow.”

[Psalms 116:4](#). *Then called I upon the name of the LORD*

The most canonical hour for prayer is the time of our greatest distress. When you can do nothing else but pray, then is the very best time to pray. When you seem shut up to prayer, what a blessed shutting up it is! “Then called I upon the name of the Lord.” And what was his prayer? Very short: very full: a sort of soldier’s prayer.

[Psalms 116:4](#). *O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul.*

There, dear hearer, if you want to begin to pray to God, there is a good beginning for you. “Oh! Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul.”

[Psalms 116:5](#). *Gracious is the LORD, and righteous;*

A curious mixture. You will never understand it until you stand at the foot of the cross.

[Psalms 116:5](#). *Yea, our God is merciful.*

That is the practical outcome of the holy conjunction of grace and righteousness in the atoning sacrifice of Christ. “Our God is merciful.” Sometimes when people cannot read well, they spell the words, and one, I

remember, spelt God in this way — “Yea, our God is merciful.” That will do — full of mercy — merciful.

[Psalms 116:6](#). *The LORD preserveth the simple:*

You clever men take heed of this. “The Lord preserveth the simple” — the plain, hearty, honest, sincere, sometimes ridiculed for their want of cunning. God takes care of them.

[Psalms 116:6](#). *I was brought low, and he helped me.*

What a sweet thing it is when you have studied a general doctrine to be able to give yourself as a particular instance of it. “The Lord preserveth the simple.” That is a grand truth. “But I was brought low, and he helped me.” That is an emphatic proof. That is the enjoyable illustration of the grand truth. Can you say that, dear friends? Can you put that in your diary? “I was brought low, and he helped me.”

[Psalms 116:7](#). *Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee.*

Come back. He is a good God. Why wander? Return unto thy first husband, for it was better with thee than now. He has been bountiful. My soul lives on his bounty again.

[Psalms 116:8](#). *For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling.*

As I read these words, they seem as if they were written for me. Do they seem, dear hearer, as if they were written for you? Have you undergone this trinity of salvation — your soul from death, your eyes from tears, your feet from falling? If so, then make this resolve tonight.

[Psalms 116:9](#). *I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living.*

That is to say, as he has dealt so well with me, I will always deal well with him. I will not care to look to men — to their hope, to their help, to their judgment, to their censure, but I will set the Lord always before me. He shall be everything to me. Beloved, it is one of the best days work a man ever does, when he turns clean away from everything but God. Oh! when you have given up all reliance upon the creature, and throw yourself upon the bare arm of the Creator, now you have got at it, man; now you have come to real life. All the rest is mere play-acting, but this is reality, for God alone is, And all else is but a dream.

[Psalms 116:10-11](#). *I believed, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted: I said in my haste, All men are liars.*

And uncommonly near the truth he came, even though he was in a hurry in saying it, for if you trust in any men, they must be liars to you. They will fail you either from want of faithfulness, or else from want of power. There are pinches where the kindest hand cannot succor. There are times of sorrow when she who is the partner of your bosom cannot find you alleviation. Then you will have to come to God, and God alone, and you will never find him fail you. The brooks of the earth are dry in summer, and frozen in winter. All my fresh springs are in thee, my God, and there neither frost nor drought can come. Happy man who has got right away from everything to his God.

Verses 1-19

We have read this Psalm many times, let us read it now, not regarding it so much as the language of the psalmist uttered thousands of years ago, as our own language at this moment.

[Psalms 116:1](#). *I love the LORD,*

Let us go as far as that if we can; let us each one say, "I love the Lord."

[Psalms 116:1](#). *Because —*

There is a reason for this love. People say that love is blind, but love to God uses her eyes, and can justify herself: "I love the Lord, because" —

[Psalms 116:1](#). *He hath heard my voice and my supplications.*

Can you go as far as that? Do you recollect answers to prayer, when you cried to God with your voice, or when your voice failed you, but supplication rose to God from your heart? Surely there is not a man, whose prayers have been answered, who does not love God. He must love the Lord when he recollects what poor prayers his were, what great blessings came in answer to them, and how speedily and how often God has heard his prayers, and granted his requests.

[Psalms 116:2](#). *Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live.*

That is a vow which we may well make, and hope for grace to keep it. It means that, as we have succeeded so well in begging at God's door, we will keep on begging of him as long as we live. I suppose the psalmist meant that, because Jehovah had heard him, therefore he would never call upon any false god; but, as long as he lived, he would resort to the one living and true God. I hope that you and I can say the same. We have tried the fountain of living waters, why should we go to broken cisterns that can hold no water? Prayer to God has always succeeded, why should we not continue it?

All you who have plied the trade of mendicants at the mercy-seat must have been so enriched by it in your souls that you are determined to stand there as long as you live.” Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live.” This is sound reasoning, for even the emotions of believers, when they are most fervent, are based upon solid reasons. We can defend ourselves even when we grow warmest in love to God and most earnest in prayer. Now the psalmist tells one of his many experiences in prayer: —

[Psalms 116:3-4](#). *The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell got hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the LORD*

Dark days are good days for praying; when your eyes cannot see, you pray all the better; when there is no earthly prop to lean upon you are all the more ready to lean upon God alone. The psalmist was like a poor worm in a ring of fire: “the sorrows of death compassed me.” The sheriff’s officer seemed to hold him in his grip: “the pains of hell got hold upon me.” As for his inner experience, he found nothing there but “trouble and sorrow.” When the town of Mansoul was besieged, every way of escape was closed except the way upwards, and it was so with the psalmist, and therefore he made use of that way. “Then called I upon the name of the Lord.” His prayer was short, earnest, and full of meaning: —

[Psalms 116:4](#). *O LORD, I beseech thee, deliver my soul.*

He did not have to search for a form of prayer, his words were such as came naturally to his mind; and that is the best sort of prayer which arises out of the heart’s sincere desire.

[Psalms 116:5](#). *Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful.*

The psalmist was delivered by an act of grace, yet it was an act of righteousness, for God is not unrighteous to break his own promise, and he has promised to help his people. Grace and righteousness both guarantee answers to believing prayers, and mercy comes in to make assurance doubly sure: “Yea, our God is merciful.”

[Psalms 116:6](#). *The LORD preserveth the simple:*

Straightforward men, those who cannot play a double part, those simpletons whom others take in and laugh at because they are honest, true, genuine, — the Lord preserveth such people.

[Psalms 116:6](#). *I was brought low, and he helped me.*

Oh, these blessed personal pronouns, are you laying hold of them as I read them? Are you speaking them out of your own soul?

[Psalms 116:7](#). *Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee.*

Come home to him, for you have no other friend like him in earth or heaven; come back to him, my soul, and rest where you have often rested before.

[Psalms 116:8](#). *For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling.*

An eternity of mercies from the Eternal himself.

[Psalms 116:9](#). *I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living.*

The best style of living is walking before God, so living in his sight as to be indifferent to the opinions and judgments of our fellow men and only caring to know that God is looking upon us with approval. This is the way to live; and if we have tried it, we have found it to be so pleasant that we are resolved to continue in it.

[Psalms 116:10-11](#). *I believed, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted: I said in my haste, All men are liars.*

They have all failed me; some of them could but would not help me, so they were as liars to me; others would but could not, and as I have trusted them, they were as liars to me; but thou, my God, art no liar, thou art the truth itself! I ask those of you who have had a very long and varied experience to look back, and tell me whether you can recollect even once when your God has broken his promise. You have sometimes been afraid that he would forget it, but has he ever done so? If you speak as you have found him, you must praise and adore the faithful, immutable, all-sufficient Jehovah, who has made your strength to be as your days even to this very hour.

[Psalms 116:12](#). *What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me?*

That question contains the essence of true religion. This should be the one object of our lives if we have been redeemed by Christ, and are his servants. Whatever we have done for God, we should endeavor to do much more, and to do it much better.

[Psalms 116:13](#). *I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD.*

This is a curious way of rendering anything, yet you know that John Newton's hymn says, —

“The best return for one like me
So wretched and so poor,
Is from his gifts to draw a plea,
And ask him still for more.”

[Psalms 116:14-16](#). *I will say my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people. Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints. O LORD, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds.*

It is a great blessing if we are able to say, as David did, that we are born into God's house. Some of us had gracious mothers who brought us to the Lord in earnest prayer long ere we knew anything. I can say to the Lord, “I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid;” and I have no greater wish than that all my descendants may be the Lord's.

[Psalms 116:17-18](#). *I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD, I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people,*

Do it, beloved, let your hearts now pour themselves out in silence, and afterwards in grateful song before the Lord. Praise him, magnify him, bless his name, “in the presence of all his people.” It is inspiring to be with your brethren and sisters in Christ. Perhaps the devotion which burns low when there is only one brand on the hearth will burn all the better and brighter when we add many blazing brands to it.

[Psalms 116:19](#). *In the courts of the LORD'S house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem. Praise ye the LORD.*

Verses 10-19

The whole Psalm is one of joyous thanksgiving because of God's mercy to the singer. He had been in deep waters of trial and affliction, but had not been suffered to sink. He had known fierce assaults of sin that threatened tearful eyes and falling, stumbling stops, but God had upheld and strengthened. As he recalls all this, he longs to make some return by way of praise, and witness to others. Hence he now inquires.

[Psalms 116:10-11](#). *I believed, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted: I said in my haste, All men are liars.*

And uncommonly near the truth he came, even though he was in a hurry in saying it, for if you trust in any men they must be liars to you. They will fail you, either from want of faithfulness, or else from want of power. There are pinches where the kindest hand cannot succor. There are times of sorrow when she who is the partner of your bosom cannot find you alleviation. Then you will have to come to God, and God alone, and you will never find him fail you. The brooks of the earth are dry in summer, and frozen in winter. All my fresh springs are in thee, my God, and there neither frost nor drought can come. Happy man who has got right away from everything to his God.

[Psalms 116:12](#). *What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits towards me?*

Here we see gratitude is springing up in this man's breast. He lives upon God, and he loves God, and now the question comes, "What shall I do for God?" Service is not first. We make a mistake when we begin with that. No: we begin as he did, with "I love the Lord." Tell what the Lord has done for you, and then go on to, "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits toward me?"

[Psalms 116:13-15](#). *I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD. I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people. Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.*

We do well to notice those deaths, for God notices them. They are among his precious things. And if God thinks so much of dying saints, depend upon it he will not forget the living ones. He will help us. He will help us to the end.

[Psalms 116:16](#). *O LORD, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid; thou hast loosed my bonds.*

What a sweet thing to be the servant of God. Well does David say it twice over. Well does he delight to look upon himself as a slave that was born in his Master's house. "My mother," says he, "was one of thy servants. I am the son of thy handmaid." Oh! It is a blessed thing to be able to be God's every way — to feel in looking back, "I am not only his by redemption and by the new birth, but I seem as if I was bound to be his by a long ancestry of men and women, whom his sovereign grace called to himself." Grace does not run in the blood, but it is a great mercy when it runs side by side with it; and when the handmaiden of the Lord is mother of

a man who is a child of God as well as her child. “Thou hast loosed my bonds.” You are never quite free, you have never got your bonds all loosed — till you can doubly feel the bonds of God. Read that: “I am thy servant. I am thy servant.” That is two blows. “Thou hast loosed my bonds.” There is no freedom except in perfect subjection to the will of God. When every thought is brought into captivity to the mind of God, then every thought is free. You have heard much of the freedom of the will. There is no freedom of the will till grace has bound the will in fetters of divine affection. Then is it free, and not till then. “I am thy servant — thy servant; thou hast loosed my bonds.”

[Psalms 116:17](#). *I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD.*

He has been doing it. What a man has done he will do. Oh! it is a blessed thing that the children of God at last catch a habit of devotion. Just as the sinner continues in his sin, so may I venture to say, “Shall the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?” If so, then he that has once heartily learnt to praise his God may begin to forget to do so. Use is second nature, and the holy use to which God has put us by his grace shall be our nature for ever.

[Psalms 116:18-19](#). *I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people, In the courts of the LORD’S house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem. Praise ye the LORD.*

I see that David liked company. He would have been happy here, though we meet under conditions not wholly pleasant. He would have been glad to be in the midst of a smiling company of grateful saints, who could all say, “That is true, David. What you have written of yourself, you might have written of each one of us, and we can each one say, ‘I love the Lord because he hath heard my voice and my supplications.’”

This exposition consisted of readings from [Psalms 116:10-19](#); [Song of Solomon 2:1-7](#).

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Psalm Chapter 117

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

PSALM 118

Verses 1-29

[Psalms 118:1](#). *O give thanks unto the LORD for he is good: because his mercy endureth for ever.*

Here is a standing reason for thanksgiving. Although we may not always be healthy, nor always prosperous yet God is always good, and, therefore, there is always a sufficient argument for giving thanks unto Jehovah. That he is a good God essentially, that he cannot be otherwise than good, should be a fountain out of which the richest praises should perpetually flow.

[Psalms 118:2-3](#). *Let Israel now say, that his mercy endureth for ever. Let the house of Aaron now say, that his mercy endureth for ever.*

These were specially set apart for God's service, and, therefore, where much is given, much is expected. The house of Aaron, therefore, must have a special note of thanksgiving, and though we who preach the gospel claim no sort of priesthood, yet if any ought to lead the strain of thankfulness, it should be those who minister for God continually.

[Psalms 118:4](#). *Let them now that fear the LORD say, that his mercy endureth for ever.*

Let them all say it: let them all say it now: let every one of us say it for himself, "His mercy endureth for every."

[Psalms 118:5](#). *I called upon the LORD in distress: the LORD answered me, and set me in a large place.*

I think many of us could make just such a record as that and not once but many times in our lives, we could say, "I called upon the Lord in distress." We have had many trials, but we have a mercy-seat always to fly to, and a God always ready to hear the cries of his distressed ones.

[Psalms 118:6](#). *The LORD is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?*

The past always gives us assurance for the future, for we are dealing with the same unchangeable God, and, therefore, we may expect to have the same dealings from him.

[Psalms 118:7-8](#). *The LORD taketh my part with them that help me: therefore shall I see my desire upon them that hate me. It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man.*

There is one text which I have never seen put up anywhere. You have illuminated texts in your houses and schoolrooms, and so on, but I think I have never seen this, “Cursed is he that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm” or this other one, “Cease, ye, from man whose breath is in his nostrils, for wherein is he to be accounted of?” and I am sure there is no teaching of Scripture more necessary than that, whether it refers to great men or to little men, whether it refers to men of eminence, or to those of your own family circle. “It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence, in man.”

[Psalms 118:9](#). *It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes.*

It is nobler, it is more agreeable to sound reason, it will lead to better results. God better deserves our confidence than the princes of the earth do — even the best of them.

[Psalms 118:10](#). *All nations compassed me about: but in the name of the LORD will I destroy them.*

This may apply to David, but it applied better to Christ, around whom Jews and Gentiles came, but he won the victory over them.

[Psalms 118:11-12](#). *They compassed me about; yea, they compassed me about: but in the name of the LORD I will destroy them. They compassed me about like bees, they are quenched as the fire of thorns: for in the name of the LORD I will destroy them.*

The thorn makes a good blaze and crackle, and sputter, but it is soon out altogether. “For in the name of the Lord will I destroy them.” In this way we may meet our spiritual foes, temptations, trials, the world, sin, death, hell, the name of Jehovah shall be our strength. “In hoc signo vincit,” said one of old — “By this sign thou conquerest,” and so by this sign we also overcome through the blood of the Lamb.

[Psalms 118:13](#). *Thou hast thrust sore at me that I might fall: but the Lord helped me.*

This will rebut all the attacks of our fiercest foes — “But the Lord helped me.”

[Psalms 118:14-15](#). *The LORD is my strength and song, and is become my salvation. The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous: the right hand of the LORD doeth valiantly.*

Where God’s people dwell, there is the voice of joy. Their family prayer sanctifies the house with its joyous notes. Even then there is trouble and

sorrow in the house, yet resignation makes joy and rejoicing there still; and if rejoicing for a moment should go, yet salvation never does. “This day is salvation come to thine house.” If thou be now a converted man, it will never go away again. It is an abiding being: it is in the tabernacles of the righteous.

[Psalms 118:16-17](#). *The right hand of the LORD is exalted: the right hand of the LORD doeth valiantly. I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the LORD.*

Some have thought this psalm was composed by Hezekiah after his sickness, and after the destruction of Senacherib’s host. It may be so. It has been used by many besides Hezekiah, who have not forgotten that these are the words of Wickliffe, used when monks came round his dying bed with prayers, Paternosters, and crucifixes, and urged him to repent, and he said, “I shall not die, but live and declare the works of the Lord.” And so, indeed, he did.

[Psalms 118:18](#). *The LORD hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over unto death.*

Many of his best children can say this, for “whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth.” “The Lord hath chastened me sore, but he hath not given me over unto death.” You that have recovered from sickness, here is a song for you. You who above all were not given over to your sins and to the just punishment of them, here is music for you, “He hath not given me over to the second death, which he might have done.”

[Psalms 118:19-20](#). *Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will go into them, and I will praise the LORD: This gate of the LORD, into which the righteous shall enter.*

I suppose he who uttered these words has passed through the beautiful gates of the temple.

[Psalms 118:21](#). *I will praise thee: for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation.*

Future, past, present — all full of blessing.

[Psalms 118:22-24](#). *The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the LORD’S doing; it is marvellous in our eyes. This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.*

Though this is applicable to the Sabbath, yet it is also applicable to any day, and to every day which God especially makes glorious by delivering

many.

[Psalms 118:25-27](#). *Save now, I beseech thee, O LORD: O LORD, I beseech thee, send now prosperity. Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the LORD: we have blessed you out of the house of the LORD. God is the LORD, which hath shewed us light: bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar.*

It is the king returning from victory and recovered from sickness. He brings his sacrifice with thanksgiving, as every child of God should, and there it is ready bound to the altar horns.

[Psalms 118:28-29](#). *Thou art my God, and I will praise thee: thou art my God, I will exalt thee. O give thanks unto the LORD for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.*

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PSALM 119

Verses 1-16

The first eight verses of this Psalm, in the Hebrew, begin with the letter A, and the second eight begin with the letter B. The whole Psalm is the good man's alphabet; the Holy Spirit condescended to use these expedients to help the memory of the readers of Holy Scripture. We should be thankful for this. I have sometimes heard preachers blamed for dividing their discourses in such a way as to help the memory of their hearers. The preacher may well bear that blame without any regret, since the Spirit of God here condescends to alliteration, and to alphabetical arrangement, in order to help the memories of readers. Thus the Psalm begins

[Psalms 119:1](#). *Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD.*

If there are any people in the world who are blessed, surely it must be those who are in God's way, and who take care to keep their garments unspotted from the world. Oh, if one can feel, at the end of every day, "I am undefiled in God's way, and I have walked in his law," how sweet it is in such a case to fall asleep, not self-righteous and boastful, but yet thankful to have been kept from the iniquity that abounds in the world! Truly, "blessed are the undefiled in the way." Perhaps some of you cannot claim this particular blessing; then, remember that there is another Psalm (the thirty-

second) which begins, “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered,” and that blessing is of the same force and of the same sweetness as this one.

[Psalms 119:2-3](#). *Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart. They also do no iniquity: they walk in his ways.*

And if we walk in God’s ways, he will never require us to do anything which is inequitable or unrighteous. No, that life which is made up of walking in God’s ways, will be full of equity, and free from iniquity.

[Psalms 119:4](#). *Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently.*

We are to be as industrious in holiness as grasping men are in business. “Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently,” watchfully, carefully, industriously, with all our might.

[Psalms 119:5](#). *O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!*

The psalmist is driven to prayer. His admiration of the godly man makes him aspire to be like him, and then he feels that he cannot attain to that height without divine help; so he cries, “O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!”

[Psalms 119:6](#). *Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments.*

That is a wide expression, “respect unto all thy commandments.” There are many men who are willing to keep a part of God’s commandments; but they must pick and choose for themselves which these shall be. Such are arrant traitors; there lurks in their heart a distinct rebellion against the Lord, for they do really presume to be the judge of God, by taking exception to this or that command in his law. In their great condescension, they are willing to be obedient in certain points, but not in all. Such men have need to be ashamed; but the psalmist could say, “Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments.”

[Psalms 119:7](#). *I will praise thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments.*

“I will not praise myself; if I am enabled to be holy, that holiness is thy work, and I will praise thee for it.”

[Psalms 119:8](#). *I will keep thy statutes: O forsake me not utterly.*

Whenever you make a resolve, accompany it with a prayer. Let this be your declaration, “I will keep thy statutes:” but pray, “O forsake me not utterly,” for, otherwise, your resolution will come to nought. Now begins the second octave of the Psalm

[Psalms 119:9](#). *Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?*

The psalmist has spoken about the holy way; now he would speak about young men running in it. One of the most intense desires of every godly man is that there may be a succession of godly men. Oh, that our young men might be good men, so that, when the old men pass away, the generation following them may be as good as their fathers, nay more, that they may be far better! “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?” Within him are strong passions, around him are fierce temptations; wherewithal shall he cleanse his way? There are plenty who would defile him; the youth is compassed about with the temptations of gaiety and the allurements of folly:

“Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?” Here is the answer

[Psalms 119:9](#). *By taking heed thereto according to thy word.*

There is no keeping a clean way if you walk with your eyes shut; you must pick your path in such a foul road as this: “By taking heed thereto according to thy word.” Yes, the greatest heed we can take will not keep us out of the mire unless God’s Word is a continual lamp unto our feet and a constant light unto our path. Oh, that every young man here might cleanse his way by taking heed thereto according to God’s Word!

[Psalms 119:10](#). *With my whole heart have I sought thee:*

Can you each one say that, “With my whole heart have I sought thee”?

[Psalms 119:10](#). *O let me not wander from thy commandments.*

“For, though I have sought thee with my whole heart, yet my heart may in the future go astray. Do not permit it, Lord; do not permit it.” It is a very sorrowful thought to me, that there are many, who once sat in these seats, and resolved to maintain a holy life, who, nevertheless, are, at this moment, in the seat of the scornful, some perhaps in prison, and many of them where they ought not to be. They determined to be right; but, destitute of divine grace, they have gone astray; therefore, let each of us pray, “O let me not wander from thy commandments.” You know what John Bradford used to say when he saw a man taken out to be hanged, “There goes John Bradford, but for the grace of God.” And when you see others wander, you may say the same about yourself, and then breathe the prayer, “O let me not wander from thy commandments.”

[Psalms 119:11](#). *Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.*

An old preacher, in a sermon on this text, divided it thus: “The best thing: ‘thy word.’ In the best place: ‘have I hid in my heart.’ For the best of purposes: ‘that I might not sin against thee.’” He thus gave in a few words the very gist of the text.

[Psalms 119:12](#). *Blessed art thou, O LORD: teach me thy statutes.*

There is a mixture, you see, of prayer and praise. That is the best devotion, which contains a happy combination of these two things, prayer and praise.

[Psalms 119:13](#). *With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth.*

I must take leave to claim a special property in this text, and there are some among us here, following that same holy craft of preaching the divine Word, who can, each one, lay his hand upon his heart, and say to God, “With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth.” This is a happy occupation. If you cannot spend all your lives in it, because of other duties, yet, at least in your own family, and as often as you have opportunities, use your lips in God’s service.

[Psalms 119:14](#). *I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches.*

Not only as much as in riches, but as in all riches. David had gathered together a vast sum of money for the building of the house of the Lord; but whatever joy he had in those accumulations (and I daresay he had great gladness when he thought of the purpose to which all would be put) yet, nevertheless, he says, “I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches.”

[Psalms 119:15](#). *I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways.*

Blessed meditation! The lack of meditation is one of the faults of the days in which we live, we are so very busy that we have not time to study God’s Word; but the psalmist said, “I will meditate in thy precepts:” that is the secret strength; “and have respect unto thy ways:” that is the public result.

If we meditated more, we should live better. God help us so to do!

[Psalms 119:16](#). *I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word.*

So may each one of us resolve. Amen.

Verses 1-20

It is not easy to see the special subjects that are spoken of by David in each of the short portions of eight verses, yet I do not doubt that if each portion were very carefully examined, we should see that there is some thread running through. We have not here simply a number of pious sentences about the excellency of God's Word, but we have choice gems set, each of them in a golden ring of spiritual intent and purpose. I think the first eight verses, all of which begin with that letter Aleph, or A, set forth the excellence of abiding in holiness, and walking continually in the way of the Lord. Not so much the restoring and comforting power of the word, as the blessedness of that word in leading us to conduct ourselves in consistency of character at all times.

[Psalms 119:1](#). *Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD.*

There is another blessing which comes before this. "Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered." And we can never know the blessing of this 119th Psalm unless we have felt in our own souls that first blessing — the blessedness of forgiven sin. But when, through the forgiveness of sin, we are put upon gospel ground, and are saved, then, not according to the law, but according to the gospel does this blessing come upon us. "Blessed are the undefiled in the way." The men who have kept their garments unspotted from the world — who from the time of their conversion even until now have been under the influence, of the divine Spirit, and so have been enabled to walk in holiness without once defiling their garments with any great and public sin — who walk in the law of the Lord, not occasionally, but always — whose daily walk is in conformity with the divine mind — these are blessed.

[Psalms 119:2](#). *Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart.*

For he that has most of God, yet needs to seek more. We keep the testimonies — those we know, for we are taught of the Lord according to the promise, "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord." Yet do we still seek more. With our whole heart are we pressing on still to something higher and better. Even the undefiled in the way are so, comparatively: they are not absolutely undefiled, so as to be absolutely perfect in the sight of God. Hence they feel their imperfection, and they press after something better. They seek him with the whole heart.

[Psalms 119:3-4](#). *They also do no iniquity: they walk in his ways. Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently.*

So that if we do so, we are unprofitable servants. We have done no more than was our duty to do. When his divine grace has renewed us, and has enabled us to walk in all sobriety, and truthfulness, and holiness, even then we have nothing to boast of. “Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently.”

[Psalms 119:5](#). *O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!*

“Oh! that I may never defile my garments!” And he who has not defiled his garments still prays the same prayer that he may be kept still and directed still. “Oh! that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!”

[Psalms 119:6](#). *Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments.*

It gives a man boldness. Integrity of heart before God breeds sacred courage. He has nothing to be ashamed of, and he is not ashamed when he has respect unto all God’s commandments.

[Psalms 119:7](#). *I will praise thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments.*

Not “I will praise myself.” Not “I will take credit to myself for my clean walking;” but “When thou hast taught me, and I learn thy ways, then all the praise shall be rendered unto thee.” This is the fruit of evangelical obedience. Legal obedience, even could it be rendered, would be sure to claim the servant’s wage, and take to itself the praise; but the obedience of a child of God leads to the laying of honour at Jehovah’s feet.

[Psalms 119:8](#). *I will keep thy statutes: O forsake me not utterly.*

Strong resolution, but a deep consciousness of weakness and unworthiness. “I will,” but oh’.. how can I do it?

“Oh! for this no strength have I
My strength is at thy feet to lie.
Oh! forsake me not utterly.”

Now, in the next eight verses it seems to me that the subject is some what different. We have seen the excellence of an undefiled way. Now we have before us one who wants to prove the power of the Word to keep him in that undefiled way; and so he begins with this question.

[Psalms 119:9](#). *Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?*

His passions are strong: his experience little. His tempers are many: his friends cannot always be at his side. “Wherewithal shall he cleanse his

way?” It is very apt to become miry. The answer is: — -

[Psalms 119:9](#). *By taking heed thereto according to thy word.*

The word will keep him in the cleanly path — will warn him of all the mire into which he would have fallen; and if he take heed to his steps, he shall not trip.

[Psalms 119:10](#). *With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments.*

There is the young man’s fear; and it may be the old man’s fear, too. “I have sought thee sincerely and earnestly, but do not permit my weaker passions to get the mastery over me — do not suffer me in some unguarded hour to be carried captive by my lusts. Oh! let me not wander from thy commandments. It were better to die than to wander from thy way.” The true convert dreads sin. He loathes the very thought of the most pleasurable folly. “Oh! let me not wander from thy commandments.”

[Psalms 119:11](#). *Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.*

There is the dread, you see — the dread of sinning — the dread of defiling his way; so he says that he has adopted this divine remedy. A good division of this text, if anyone would preach from it, is the best thing, “Thy word;” in the best place — “have I hid in my heart”; for the best of purposes — “that I might not sin against thee.”

[Psalms 119:12](#). *Blessed art thou, O LORD: teach me thy statutes.*

As if he said, “Teach me thy statutes that I may be blessed, too. Thou art a happy God. Teach me thy way that I may be happy, too. Blessed are the undefiled. Teach me to be so, that as thou art blessed, so I may be.”

[Psalms 119:13-14](#). *With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth. I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches.*

A man’s walking will be right when his delight is of this kind, for where the heart goes, the life will go. To some people religion is a task. It will never have much power over them. But when it becomes a delight, then will their walk be affected by it. A well-known and renowned infidel of the last generation, traveling in Wales, said to a little girl whom he saw reading her Bible, “Well, my dear,” he said, “I see you are getting through your task.” “Task sir?” she said, “What do you mean? I am reading the Bible.” He said, “I thought your mother had set you a chapter to read.” “Oh! no, sir. If my mother wanted to punish me, she would not make me read the Bible. It is

the most delightful book in all the world, and it is a great joy to me when I can get a little time alone to read my Bible.” It touched his heart. As he confessed afterwards, he was delighted to find something like genuine religion. And where you find delight in religion, there it is genuine. True, genuine religion is like some of the German waters. They come up all fresh and sparkling. I like to see the sparkling in it — a little sparkling religion — a little flash of joy and of delight. But very much that we get now-a-days is flat, stale, dull, unprofitable. They keep it corked, but badly corked usually, and when we see it there is nothing in it that we should desire it. It is a poor article. God give us delight in himself, for that is tame religion. “I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies as much as in all riches.”

[Psalms 119:15](#). *I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways.*

An excellent way of keeping the life clean is to keep the thoughts clean. Our boys are brought to prison by reading the abominable trash that is poured forth for juveniles; and many and many a crime has been the result of the fiction of the present day. It is often not only light reading, but filthy reading, too. If we would read God’s Word more, and meditate in it better, our hearts would be kept sweet and so would our lives be.

[Psalms 119:16](#). *I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word.*

God grant that we never may.

[Psalms 119:17](#). *Deal bountifully with thy servant, that I may live, and keep thy word.*

Does it want much grace, then, to keep a child of God alive — even to keep him alive? Yes, it does. Little grace will be of no use to us. We must have great grace, for our needs are great. Sometimes our troubles are great; at other times our temptations are great. We are always in great necessity; and thou, Lord, must have a large exchequer, and thou must give it liberally to us, or else we, poor, penniless beggars, must utterly die of want. Merely to live, then, needs the bounty of God. “Deal bountifully with thy servant, that I may live and keep thy Word” — for there is no living in truth, except as we keep the Word of God. Those who live in the neglect of God’s Word are not living at all, but they are dead while they live. God deliver us from such life.

[Psalms 119:18](#). *Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.*

They are there, but I cannot see them unless thou open my eyes. It is not that thy Word is dark, but that my eyes are dim. Yea, by nature they are blinded altogether. Oh! thou, who art the great Physician of the blind, open thou my eyes.

[Psalms 119:19](#). *I am a stranger in the earth: hide not thy commandments from me.*

Do you see the drift of that? He says, "I am a stranger here. Then, Lord, if thou do not become, and continue to be, my acquaintance, I am altogether alone." It is true of the Christian that he cannot find anything here that can satisfy his soul. He must, therefore, have the Lord, or else he is in a very sorry case. Oh! beloved, the more you find yourselves strangers in this world, the more are you becoming like your God. The Psalmist says elsewhere, "For I am a stranger with thee," not "to thee," but "with thee, like thee," for God is a stranger in this world. Men do not recognize him or delight themselves in him. "So, since, Lord, I have no other friend, and can find no other satisfying portion, hide not thy commandments from me. On the contrary, let me see the more of thee, because I have nothing else."

[Psalms 119:20](#). *My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times.*

We cannot always say that, for we sometimes wish that our hearts would break. Sometimes we sing: —

"My heart rejoice or ache: Resolve this doubt for me;
And if it be not broken, break And heal it if it be."

Verses 9-32

[Psalms 119:9](#). *Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word.*

"Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?" A vital and solemn question. His way is full of temptations, and he himself has strong passions. How shall he make his way clean, and keep it so? "By taking heed thereto according to thy word." Without heed he will soon be in the mire, but carefully walking with God's word as his rule, by the blessing of God's grace it will keep him out of sin.

[Psalms 119:10](#). *With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandment.*

There might be thought in this confession to be some commendation of himself, and therefore he salts it with this prayer: "I have sought thee, Lord, sincerely, but still, notwithstanding that, I am very apt to stray away, and I

shall sadly wander unless thou keep me. O let me not wander from thy commandments.”

[Psalms 119:11](#). *Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.*

The best thing put into the best place for the best of all purposes. There is no antidote against sin like the possession of the Word of God in the soul.

[Psalms 119:12](#). *Blessed art thou, O LORD: teach me thy statutes.*

Thou art blessed, make me blessed. Thou art the happy God, instruct me in the way of happiness.

[Psalms 119:13](#). *With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth.*

I am a learner, but I have tried to be a teacher too. I have not kept the Word of God to myself as though it were only a personal treasure for me, but what I have heard in the secret-chamber of fellowship, that have I spoken on the housetops. Have you published abroad what you know? Then you are the person to learn more. When men drop their money into a money box, they have to break it to get it out again, and if they have not need of it they will not do so. God doth not care to drop his treasure into a heart that never useth it and imparteth it. Let your lips speak what your heart learns.

[Psalms 119:14](#). *I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches.*

If all sorts of riches were put together, I have found them all, and more than them all, in thy testimonies. I am rich in all respects when I have thee.

[Psalms 119:15](#). *I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy way.*

Meditation treads the wine press and gets the juice out of the grapes. A man may read too much if he reads without meditation. “I will meditate.” It is the harvesting by reaping of what we have sown by reading.

[Psalms 119:16](#). *I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word.*

I will take a deep pleasure in them, and I will find an intense joy in every pondering of them. “I will not forget thy word.” I will never let it go out of the precincts of my memory: I will recall again and again. I will always have a text of thy precious Book ready to my tongue.

[Psalms 119:17](#). *Deal bountifully with thy servant, that I may live, and keep thy word.*

Give me much of thy comfort, royally of thyself: deal bountifully with me: I have great necessities, am a mass of wants, therefore, “ Deal bountifully with me that I may live.” And I have great tendencies to wander. Great risks and perils. Give me abundance of grace that I may keep thy word.

[Psalms 119:18](#). *Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.*

The wonders are there: cause me to behold them. A man may have a fair landscape before him, rich in all beauties of form and colour, but if his eyes be closed, what is he better for it?

[Psalms 119:19](#). *I am a stranger in the earth: hide not thy commandments from me.*

“I am a stranger in the earth.” I do not belong now to it: I am born and bound for heaven: I am a pilgrim here: men do not understand me, neither have I any settled business here. “I am a stranger in the earth: hide not thy commandments from me.” Oh, remember that I am thy alien,thy banished one: send me love-messages from the old home and loved country.

[Psalms 119:20](#). *My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times.*

Broken souls are many: but not on this account! Oh, how few are in danger of breaking, through such a longing as this ! Would God there were many more that did sigh and cry after the Word of God; for longings such as these are sure to lead to an earnest search, and the earnest search will increase knowledge and increase grace.

[Psalms 119:21](#). *Thou hast rebuked the proud that are cursed, which do err from thy commandments.*

A proud man is surely a sinful man. He may think himself a righteous man, but he cannot be so. He has gone far astray from the very essence of God’s law, which is that he should walk humbly with his God.

[Psalms 119:22](#). *Remove from me reproach and contempt; for I have kept thy testimonies.*

A man that does that is pretty sure to be reproached and to be contemned by man; for they think that one who follows God faithfully “is very old-fashioned, he has not much spirit, he has not drunk in the philosophy of the age, he is a fossilized Christian,” and so on. Well, we can bear all such reproach: still are we truly glad when we escape it.

[Psalms 119:23](#). *Princes also did sit and speak against me: but thy servant did meditate in thy statutes.*

And a great man's word goes a long way with some people. They think a prince a great authority. "But thy servant did meditate in thy statutes." He did not burst out in angry reply, he did not give fierce railing for railing, but he sat himself down as quietly as he could, the more abundantly to meditate in God's statutes. What calmness there is here, and what wisdom! for if princes should speak against us, and the great ones of the earth should rail, what matters it? If they drive us away from our faith, it would matter, but if they drive us to our Bibles, it is a benefit.

[Psalms 119:24-25](#). *Thy testimonies also are my delight and my counselors. My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken thou me according to thy word.*

Here he prays for quickening. He felt the spiritual death that was so natural to him, the heaviness of his heart, the tendency to sink, the attractions of the world.

[Psalms 119:26](#). *I have declared my ways, and thou heardest me: teach me thy statutes.*

Open confession is good for the soul, and I have made this confession: thou hast heard me: now "teach me thy statutes."

[Psalms 119:27](#). *Make me to understand the way of thy precepts: so shall I talk of thy wondrous works.*

Lord ground me and found me in thy knowledge: give me to know fully, firmly, what I do know. I would not be as a man that eats, but thinks not, whence the bread came, but I would wish to understand the way of thy precepts: "so shall I talk of thy wondrous works."

[Psalms 119:28](#). *My soul melteth for heaviness: strengthen thou me according unto thy word.*

Will not this prayer suit some that are in this house this morning who are very dull and depressed? Oh, if your soul sinks, still pray and say: "Strengthen thou me." You want strength, dear friends. If you had more strength, your trouble would not crush you; your soul would not melt if you had more strength and confidence.

[Psalms 119:29-30](#). *Remove from me the way of lying: and grant me thy law graciously. I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid before me.*

As a captain lays out his chart so as to keep his course correctly and safely, so I try to sail by it. I have chosen thy law, and precept, and command as my course, and I would fain keep to them.

[Psalms 119:31](#). *I have stuck unto thy testimonies: O LORD, put me not to shame.*

I am glued to them: there is no separating me, no tearing me apart, from them. “O Lord, put me not to shame.”

[Psalms 119:32](#). *I will run the way of thy commandment, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.*

I will go quicker and faster, I will have more energy, more flaming zeal, in thy service — “When thou shalt enlarge my heart.” O Lord, it is very narrow and very contracted, I cannot think great thoughts, nor do great things, nor believe great promises, unless thou shalt enlarge my heart. Lord, give me a larger heart, stronger to obey, tenderer to love, for thy name’s sake!

Verses 17-28

[Psalms 119:17](#). *Deal bountifully with thy servant, that I may live, and keep thy word.*

O Lord, I am thy servant; yet, I pray thee, do not pay me wages according to my deserts, but according to the greatness of thy mercy, “deal bountifully with thy servant.” Little mercy will not be enough for such great sins and such great needs as mine. Deal very generously with thy poor servant who is so full of necessities, “that I may live;” for, if thou wilt only let me live, it will be of thy bounty, since I deserve not even that boon. Only to have my life still spared, shall be regarded by me as a great favor from thee. I want not to live to please myself, for that would not be living at all, but “that I may live, and keep thy word.” A holy life is the only true life, the only life that is really worth having; and he that hath it hath been dealt bountifully with by his God. I commend this verse to each servant of the Lord as a prayer that may be continually presented to him.

[Psalms 119:18](#). *Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.*

This is one of the first parts of God’s bountiful dealings with us. There is no mercy that is so great as mercy to one’s own person, to one’s own eyes, for instance, which are such essential parts of ourselves. Lord, when thou art dealing bountifully with me, I do not ask for riches, but I do ask that my eyes may be opened. I do not ask thee to give me more than thou hast given

in thy Word, but I do ask for opened eyes with which I may perceive what thou hast put there, else the beauties of thy Word may be useless to me by reason of my blindness. This blessed Book teems with marvels; it is a world of wonders. It records many miracles, but every page of it is itself a miracle, and a mass of miracles; yet we must have them revealed to us, or we shall not discover them. Revelation itself must be revealed to every man individually by the Spirit of God, or else he will never see it.

[Psalms 119:19](#). *I am a stranger in the earth: hide not thy commandments from me,*

Humane men deal kindly with exiles; God has commanded us to be generous to strangers, and he will certainly be so himself. Lord, because of thy love, I find myself like an exile among the sons of men; but be not thou thyself strange to me. What should I do, in this world, without thee, and without thy Word? “Hide not thy commandments from me.”

[Psalms 119:20-21](#). *My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times. Thou hast rebuked the proud that are cursed, which do err from thy commandments.*

God cannot bear the proud; it is very seldom that they can bear one another; and if proud men loathe pride as they see it in others, you may rest assured that the good and great God will not endure it. How sternly he rebuked it in the angels that kept not their first estate How he rebuked it in Pharaoh! All through history, it may be seen how God has been continually abasing the proud, and giving grace to the humble.

[Psalms 119:22](#). *Remove from me reproach and contempt; for I have kept thy testimonies.*

He had lived honestly and uprightly, and yet men slandered him. Was there ever a man upon earth, who was good and true, who was not slandered? God himself was slandered in paradise by the old serpent, and the Lord Jesus was constantly being slandered by wicked men, so can any of us hope to escape the envenomed tongue of the slanderer? Yet it is very painful, and we may well pray to be delivered from it, especially if we can add, with the psalmist, “for I have kept thy testimonies.”

[Psalms 119:23](#). *Princes also did sit and speak against me: but thy servant did meditate in thy statutes.*

Sometimes, men can bear what the commonalty say; but to have the great ones of the earth speaking against them, is thought by some to be very hard. The psalmist says, “Princes also did sit and speak against me.” What

did he do under such circumstances? Did he rise up in anger, and answer them? Or did he sit down, and consider how he could defend himself against them? Far from it: “Thy servant did meditate in thy statutes.” He seems to say, “I did not think it was worth my while to leave the Scriptures, even for a moment, so as to speak to them; but I went on studying thy Word, and left them to say what they pleased.” We shall be wise if we do likewise.

[Psalms 119:24](#). *Thy testimonies also are my delight and my counsellors.*

While these princes were taking counsel against the psalmist, he also went and took Counsel’s advice against them; but that Counsel’s advice was the advice of the Word of God. He stuck to the Scriptures. Little as he had of them, yet that little he greatly prized. The Pentateuch furnished him with five inspired Counselors to whom he resorted in his time of need. Let us imitate his example, especially as we have the complete Canon of revelation to advise and counsel us.

[Psalms 119:25-28](#). *My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken thou me according to thy word. I have declared my ways, and thou heardest me: teach me thy statutes. Make me to understand the way of thy precepts: so shall I talk of thy wondrous works. My soul melteth for heaviness: strengthen thou me according unto thy word.*

The Word of the Lord is available for quickening, teaching, and strengthening. As Paul wrote to Timothy, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” May that gracious Spirit, who inspired it, ever teach us its inner meaning!

Verses 21-32

[Psalms 119:21](#). *Thou hast rebuked the proud that are cursed, which do err from thy commandments.*

Wherever there is pride in the heart, there is sure to be error in the life. A proud man is wrong, to begin with, and as long as he continues proud, he must be wrong. It is not possible for him to be right. God has rebuked him, and God has cursed him. How wise it would be of him to be humble. Remember we shall have either to be humble or to be humbled; and it is much better to be humble than to have to come under the humbling dispensations of God’s hand.

[Psalms 119:22](#). *Remove from me reproach and contempt; for I have kept thy testimonies.*

O Lord, do not suffer men to believe lies and slanders against me, or if they do let my conscience sustain my courage by the consciousness that I have kept thy testimonies.

[Psalms 119:23](#). *Princes also did sit and speak against me:*

Had they nothing else to do, but talk against God's servants? No; they sat down to do it with deliberation. "Princes also did sit and speak against me."

[Psalms 119:23](#). *But thy servant did.*

"Go to law with them?" No not so here. "But thy servant got in the face and defended himself?" No, no. Look, you will not read those words. But "Thy servant was broken-hearted about it to have the great men of the earth speaking against him?" No, it is not so either. "But thy servant did."

[Psalms 119:23](#). *Meditate in thy statutes,*

Is not that a very blessed and admirable way of enduring slander — simply to take your Bible and read a little more than usual? You will cure it so.

[Psalms 119:24](#). *Thy testimonies also are my delight and my counsellors.*

Because I love them and delight in them. I submit my life to their guidance.

I go to thy Book to ask what I shall do. I consult it as the oracle of God. I take my doubts, and difficulties, and dilemmas there, and I find that they are all met. "Thy testimonies are my delight and my counsellors."

[Psalms 119:25](#). *My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken thou me according to thy word.*

Ah! there is a note of sadness here. The Psalmist complains of himself. He found himself very sorrowful, and he could not get out of the sorrow; or he found himself very full of business cares, and he could not get rid of them. "My soul cleaveth to the dust" — as though it was stuck to the dust, and the dust to it, and could not rise. Then how sweet the prayer, "Quicken thou me." "Didst thou not first make me of dust, and wilt thou not at the last quicken my mortal body out of the dust? Then, now, my Lord quicken thou me according to thy Word." See, here is an evil complained of. He finds himself cleaving to the dust. Here is a remedy sought, "Quicken thou me." And here is an argument pleaded with God — "according to thy Word." There is a promise for it. Lord, fulfill thy word.

[Psalms 119:26](#). *I have declared my ways, and thou heardest me: teach me thy statutes.*

A confession had been made: “I have declared my ways.” That confession had been accepted: “Thou heardest me.” Then a petition is offered: “Teach me thy statutes.” “Thou seest that I confess how wrong I was. Now give me grace that I may not go wrong again.” May that be our spirit always.

[Psalms 119:27-28](#). *Make me to understand the way of thy precepts: so shall I talk of thy wondrous works. My soul melteth for heaviness: strengthen thou me according unto thy word.*

“I am poured out like water,” says the Saviour. “My heart is like wax. It is melted in the midst of my bowels.” It is the greatness of pain, the greatness of fear, the greatness of sorrow, till he seems to melt away in the fire like wax. “For heaviness,” says he, “my soul melts. Then strengthen thou me.” Oh! it is so sweet to turn to God when your soul is burdened — to look to him, and say — not “deliver me.” Observe that, the child of God is not so anxious to get rid of trouble, as he is to know how to behave worthily under it. “Strengthen thou me, according to thy Word.” How he harps on that “according to thy Word.” The child of God does not expect God to do otherwise than he has promised to do, and he is quite content if the Lord will act according to his Word, for well does our poet put it: —

“What more can he say than to you he hath said, —

You who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?”

In this book, dear brother, whatever your trouble, there is a promise to meet it. If you lose a key and you send for the whitesmith, as a general rule, somewhere in that bunch of keys he has a key that will fit your lock. And so here is a bunch of keys, and there is a key here that will exactly fit the lock of your trouble whatever it may be, for God foresaw the circumstances of all his people, and prepared a promise for every circumstance.

[Psalms 119:29](#). *Remove from me the way of lying: and grant me thy law graciously.*

“Take away the evil: give me the good.” “The way of lying.” Oh! it is a dreadful thing to get into that. There are some that have a way of doing it — some that do it jocosely, some that do it by implication. Some think it shrewd to deceive. “Remove from me the way of lying.” If truth should be banished from all the world besides, it ought to find a shelter in the breasts of Christians. The Christian man is forbidden to take an oath, because there

should never be any necessity for it. His word — his, “Yea, yea” — his “Nay, nay” should always, be sufficient. Thank God it is, where the grace of God is.

[Psalms 119:30-31](#). *I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid before me.*

I have stuck unto thy testimonies: O LORD, put me not to shame. Here is, first, choice: “I have chosen the way of truth.” Here is his practically carrying it out: “Thy judgments have I laid before me.” Here is his perseverance in it: “I have stuck unto thy testimonies.” And then there is his prayer about it: “O Lord, put me not to shame.” And it is a prayer which is sure to be answered. “Truth may be blamed, but it cannot be shamed.” Truth is God’s daughter, and he will take care of her. If you have chosen the way of truth, it is a way in which, though some may censure and slander, your righteousness shall come forth, in due time, as the noonday.

[Psalms 119:32](#). *I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.*

“When I get liberty of heart, then will I take as my choice, thy ways.” The Christian is never so much at liberty as when he is under law to Christ. He knows the difference between licence and liberty. He has a liberty to do so he wills, because he wills to do as God wills him to do; and herein lies the only freedom which we desire.

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 90 and [Psalms 119:21-32](#).

Verses 25-32

[Psalms 119:25](#). *My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken thou me according to thy word.*

“I feel heavy, unhappy, dull: ‘My soul cleaveth unto the dust.’ Or I feel worldly, lethargic, lifeless: ‘My soul cleaveth unto the dust.’ There is nothing but the power of new life that can separate me from that dust: ‘Quicken thou me according to thy word.’” Divine life is the great cure for most spiritual evils. When a man has vigorous life in his constitution, he throws off many diseases; and when the soul is full of spiritual life, it masters a great number of evils. “My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken thou me according to thy word.” That is good pleading, — “according to thy promise, for thou hast promised to quicken me. It is the nature of thy Word to be quick and quickening; therefore, Lord, ‘quicken thou me according to thy word.’”

[Psalms 119:26](#). *if have declared my ways, and thou heardest me: teach me thy statutes.*

“I have confessed my wrong; now, O Lord, teach me what is right! I have owned my sin; now, O Lord, lead me in the paths of holiness! “Teach me thy statutes.””

[Psalms 119:27](#). *Make me to understand the way of thy precepts: so shall I talk of thy wondrous works.*

He who fully understands the way of God’s precepts must talk of his wondrous works. There is a power about that truth in the heart to unloose the most stammering tongue. We are bound to speak of that which God teaches to us: “Make me to understand the way of thy precepts: so shall I talk of thy wondrous works.”

[Psalms 119:28](#). *My soul melteth for heaviness: strengthen thou me according unto thy word.*

Are any of you, dear friends, in that condition? Do your hearts melt within you? It is a sore trouble, as I know full well. “The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity;” but when his very soul melts for heaviness, what is he to do then? Why, even then he may pray; nay, then he must pray; and this may be the burden of his prayer, “Strengthen thou me according unto thy word.” Notice, beloved, how the psalmist keeps harping upon that string,-“ according unto thy word.” If your prayer is according to God’s Word, you may expect a comfortable answer sooner or later. We know that God will not act contrary to his Word. He who is not a man of his word is despised; and if there could be one who was not a God of his Word, what would be said of him? But, my tried friend, he will make his Word true to you to the very letter; therefore still cry to him, “Strengthen thou me according unto thy word.”

[Psalms 119:29](#). *Remove from me the way of lying: and grant me thy law graciously.*

“Lord, let me not be pestered by liars, and let me never fall into any measure of falsehood myself.” There is a way of thinking better of yourself than you deserve, which is a form of lying. There is a method of supposing that you have experienced what you never have experienced, and that you have attained to what you never have attained to; that also is a way of falsehood. May God remove it from us, and may we have the law of the Lord written on our hearts! “Remove from me the way of lying: and grant me thy law graciously.”

[Psalms 119:30](#). *I have chosen the way of truth:*

“I want to be true, I want to know the truth, I want to feel the truth, I want to practice the truth: ‘I have chosen the way of truth.’”

[Psalms 119:30](#). *Thy judgments have I laid before me.*

“Like a map, so that I might follow the way of truth as I see it drawn out in letters of light in thy Word.” The man who spreads out God’s Word before him, like a map of the road, is not likely to make a mistake in his journeying.

[Psalms 119:31](#). *I have stuck unto thy testimonies : —*

I like that word “stuck.” “I have stuck unto thy testimonies.” “I could not be drawn or dragged away from them. They told me of some fine new ideas and modern grand discoveries; but ‘I have stuck unto thy testimonies.’ They came before me with something very artistic and scientific; but ‘I have stuck unto thy testimonies:’ —

[Psalms 119:31](#). *O LORD, put me not to shame.*

You may rest assured that he never will. If a man clings to God, God will cleave to him. If we are not ashamed of God, he will never put us to shame; but we shall go from strength to strength glorying in his truth and grace.

[Psalms 119:32](#). *I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.*

There is an enlargement of the heart that is very dangerous, but this kind of enlargement of the heart is the most healthy thing that can happen to a man. A great heart, you see, is a running heart. A little heart goes slowly, but an enlarged heart runs in the way of God’s commandments. Oh, for a heart full of love to God; and then to have that heart made larger, so as to hold more of God’s love! Lord, enlarge my heart in that sense! Let me feel at home and at liberty with thee; let the last link of my bondage be snapped. Amen.

Verses 25-40

By the help of God’s Holy Spirit, this psalm may serve for the purposes of self-examination, for we may ask ourselves as we read, “Do I feel in that way? Are my prayers like those of this good man? Is my experience like his: “We may often ask ourselves, “Am I as watchful, and as careful, and as fond of God’s Word as he was?” Such questions will do us good.

[Psalms 119:25](#). *My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken thou me according to thy word.*

He does not like to feel the cleaving of his soul to the dust. There are some that feel it, but they seem content to continue in that condition; but no sooner does David feel it than he cries “Quicken thou me.” A sense of sin is of small value, unless it leads us to desire to escape out of it. “Quicken thou me.” I lie as dead as if it were dust to dust. My soul seems cleaving to it, as if it had come to its end, and meant to rest there; but, Lord, give me life. Thy Word promises me life. Thou hast ways laid down in thy Word for giving life. “Quicken thou me, according to thy Word.”

[Psalms 119:26](#). *I have declared my ways, and thou heardest me: teach me thy statutes.*

I have told thee all about myself. Now tell me about thyself. “Teach me thy statutes.”

[Psalms 119:27](#). *Make me to understand the way of thy precepts: so shall I talk of thy wondrous works.*

It is a bad thing to talk of what we do not understand and he who shall preach what he has never experienced is very likely to do so. Yet beloved, there is no understanding Gods precepts except he shall teach them to us. We are void of understanding. He must enlighten. He must instruct. “Make me to understand the way of thy precepts.” Some are very anxious to understand the doctrines, and some to understand the prophecies. All well and good, but “Make me to understand the way of thy precepts”, give me practical godliness, help me to live to thy praise, “so shall I talk of thy wondrous works.” I will not talk till thou hast taught me. But when thou hast taught me, then my subject shall be thy wondrous works. The wonderous work of making me to understand thee shall be something to speak about, and all the wondrous works of nature, and providence, and grace shall be the subject of my continual conversation.

[Psalms 119:28](#). *My soul melteth for heaviness:*

For the best of men sometimes suffer the sharpest sorrows. Hearts of stone are not likely to be so sensitive as hearts of flesh. “My soul melted for heaviness.”

[Psalms 119:28](#). *Strengthen thou me according unto thy word.*

He wants strength, but he does not want to obtain it in any way, but the way of God’s appointment. “According unto thy Word.” Somewhat like our hymn, which says: —

“He that suffered in my stead,
Shall my physician be

I will not be comforted
Till Jesus comforts me.”

“Strengthen thou me,” but let it be “according to thy Word.”

[Psalms 119:29](#). *Remove from me the way of lying: and grant me thy law graciously.*

Let me not lie. Let me not be tempted to lie. Let me not be pestered with the falsehoods of others. Remove the way of lying far from me, and oh! by thy grace, give me to know the law. That is a remarkable combination of words. “Grant me thy law graciously.” Has law anything to do with grace? Yes, such a law as he speaks of — the law in the heart — the law in the hand of Christ — the law written in the life of the believer — not the law of merit and of salvation by works, but “grant me thy law graciously.”

[Psalms 119:30](#). *I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid before me.*

As a seaman spreads out the chart before him, that he may follow the right channel, and not miss his track — as a traveler spreads out his map that he may keep to the right way, “I have chosen the way of truth. Thy judgments have I laid before me.”

[Psalms 119:31](#). *I have stuck unto thy testimonies:*

As if I were glued to them — sealed to them. They said I was very old-fashioned. They said I did not keep pace with the times. They said I was not a man of thought. I did not care about that. “I have stuck unto thy testimonies.”

[Psalms 119:31](#). *O LORD, put me not to shame.*

And he never will. If we stick to him, we may be quite sure that we shall come forth out of every difficulty and every opposition triumphantly. “Put me not to shame.” And although he thus spoke, yet you perceive the activity of his soul.

[Psalms 119:32](#). *I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.*

Give my heart freedom. Knock off my fetters. Take away my heaviness. Remove from me my ignorance. Give my soul room, and she will run, but it will be in the ways of thy commandments.

[Psalms 119:33](#). *Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end.*

Here is the art of finally persevering. Here is the way of continuing to the end, and the same shall be saved. We must begin with a teachable spirit.

He that is not willing to learn has not begun right. We ought to disciple all nations, but he that will not learn is not yet disciplined. “Teach me.” But the teaching we must have must come from God. “Teach me, O Lord. I am not content to have the Word second-hand. Be thou my schoolmaster. Teach me, O Lord. I shall never learn unless thou teach me. Thou who didst make me, thou who didst give me a new heart, thou must write that law upon my heart, or it will never be written there. Teach me, O Lord. Teach me the way of thy statutes. Teach me practical godliness. So teach it to me that I shall learn it, and put it into practice and if I be taught of thee, then I shall keep it unto the end; not else.”

[Psalms 119:34](#). *Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart.*

A want of understanding is a very great lack. There is little wonder that men turn aside from an outward religion which has never taken possession of their thoughts and minds. If they only subscribe to the creed which they have never studied — if they only carry out a life — the mere shell of a life — the inward principles of which they do not know, they will soon turn aside. “Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law.”

[Psalms 119:35](#). *Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight.*

“Not only teach me the way, but make me to go in it. Take hold of me as a mother does of her little child, and teach me how to walk, and help me in the walking.” Make me to go. It is a feeble word — a most expressive prayer. “Make me to go for therein do I delight.” When a man delights in God’s way, he will be sure to be made to go in it.

[Psalms 119:36](#). *Incline my heart unto thy testimonies,*
Bend it that way — incline it.

[Psalms 119:36](#). *And not to covetousness.*

For, naturally, my heart would go after the world, and cleave to its riches and its treasures, and begin to covet, but, Lord, bend it the other way. If you do not love God’s testimonies, the tendency will be to become a lover of the world. “Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.”

[Psalms 119:37](#). *Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity;*

Or “make mine eyes to pass from beholding vanity.” I am a runner in the race. Do not let me stop to look at anything, but may my eyes pass by vanity. Let me not be like her in the fable who paused to gather the golden

apples in the race, and so lost it and was deceived. If the world's golden apples are thrown in my way, make my eyes to pass from beholding vanity.

[Psalms 119:37](#). *And quicken thou me in thy way.*

More life towards thee will deaden me to the world. The more I follow after God, the less shall I care to follow after the world.

[Psalms 119:38](#). *Stablish thy word unto thy servant, Make it fast, firm, sure.*

[Psalms 119:38](#). *Who is devoted to thy fear.*

I am established in thee. Establish the Word to me. Thou has bound me fast to thy altar. Oh! give me the fast blessings and sure mercies of David.

[Psalms 119:39](#). *Turn away my reproach which I fear: for thy judgments are good.*

I fear lest I bring a reproach upon thee, and then upon myself. Oh! suffer me not to do so. I am not afraid of the reproach of the world. I count the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt. But, oh! let them never have to charge me with sin, and let me not fall into such pecuniary difficulties or other troubles, that men will be able to make a charge against me out of them. Help me to provide things honest in the sight of all men. "Take away my reproach, which I fear, for thy judgments are good."

[Psalms 119:40](#). *Behold, I have longed after thy precepts: quicken me in thy righteousness.*

Verses 33-40

[Psalms 119:33](#). *Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes; —*

The psalmist is constantly talking about "the way." We have that expression in the 27th verse, then in the 29th, the 30th, and the 32nd; and now again we have it here: "Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes;" —

[Psalms 119:33-34](#). *And I shall keep it unto the end. Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart.*

That is not true or right understanding which permits us to go into sin; those who are really wise in heart hate evil and love righteousness.

[Psalms 119:35](#). *Make me to go in the path —*

Or, say —

[Psalms 119:35](#). *Of thy commandment; for therein do I delight.*

“Make me to go.” Not only show me the way, but make me to go, like a nurse does with a child when she puts her hands under its arms, and strengthens its tottering footsteps. This is a very beautiful expression: “Make me to go.” Lord, we are very weak; we are like little children; make us to go in the path of thy commandments, for therein do we delight.

[Psalms 119:36](#). *Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.*

The heart must love something; it will either love that which is good, or that which is evil. “O Lord,” the psalmist seems to pray, “incline my heart in the right direction. Make it lean towards that which is good; cause me to count thy grace better than all the riches of the world.”

[Psalms 119:37](#). *Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity;*

“Do not let me even look at it, for one may look at an ugly thing until the sense of its deformity gradually disappears, and it becomes attractive. Lord, never let me so fix my eyes upon sin that, at last, I come to reckon it a desirable thing.”

[Psalms 119:37](#). *And quicken thou me in thy way.*

A man who travels quickly has not time to stop and look at the things in the road. Lord, let me go so fast to heaven that, when the devil hangs his baubles in his shop-window, I may not have time even to stop and look at them: ‘Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way.’

[Psalms 119:38](#). *Stablish thy word unto thy servant, who is devoted to thy fear.*

That is, “Make thy word to me real and true. Put away my natural skepticism, my proneness to question, my tendency to doubt.” “Stablish thy word.” “Make me to know how firm, how true, how real it is, for I would love it more and more. I do believe it, for I am devoted to thy fear, but I long to be still further established in the faith.”

[Psalms 119:39](#). *Turn away my reproach which I fear:*

Are any of you fearing reproach? If so, you may well fear it, for you deserve it; yet, even then, you may ask the Lord to turn it away from you.

[Psalms 119:39-40](#). *For thy judgments are good. Behold, I have longed after thy precepts:*

Some people, whom I know, long after the promises, and others long after the doctrines. I hope that they will all get an equal longing for the

precepts, for true believers love the precepts as much as they love the promises or the doctrines: “Behold, I have longed after thy precepts.”

[Psalms 119:40](#). *Quicken me in thy righteousness.*

This exposition consisted of readings from Genesis 32. and [Psalms 119:33-40](#).

Verses 64-72

[Psalms 119:64-67](#). *The earth, O LORD, is full of thy mercy: teach me thy statutes. Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O LORD, according unto thy word. Teach me good judgment and knowledge: for I have believed thy commandments. Before I was afflicted I went astray: —*

Prosperity had been to the psalmist like the gap in the hedge through which the sheep wander from the shepherd; but affliction had been to him like the prickly bushes that often stop the sheep from wandering still further, so he says, “Before I was afflicted I went astray:” —

[Psalms 119:67](#). *But now have I kept thy word.*

What a benefit, then, affliction had been to him; and what a blessing it often is to us! So, instead of dreading it, as we usually do, we ought to welcome it, and be on the look-out for the blessing which is to come to us through it. Many a child of God has joined with Dr. Watts in singing, —

“Father, I bless thy gentle hand;
How kind was thy chastising rod;
That forced my conscience to a stand,
And brought my wandering soul to God!
“Foolish and vain, I went astray
Ere I had felt thy scourges, Lord;
I left my guide, and lost my way;
But now I love and keep thy Word.”

[Psalms 119:68](#). *Thou art good, and doest good;*

What a delightful description this is of God and his works! Who is good? Our Lord Jesus supplies the answer, “There is none good but one, that is, God.” And his works are like himself: “Thou art good, and doest good.”

[Psalms 119:68](#). *Teach me thy statutes.*

In the 25th Psalm, David wrote, “Good and upright is the Lord: therefore will he teach sinners in the way;” and here, because the Lord is good, and does good, the psalmist prays, “Teach me thy statutes.” He will teach us that which is good because he is himself good. What a blessing it is for us to

have such a Teacher! How wonderful it is that God should be so condescending as to take us into his school!

[Psalms 119:69](#). *The proud have forged a lie against me:*

They have kept on hammering away until they have finished the falsehood; they have “forged” it, as one forges a deadly weapon in the fire.

[Psalms 119:69](#). *But I will keep thy precepts with my whole heart.*

“It is no use for me to trouble about them. When they have forged one lie, they will probably forge another, and there is practically no end to that black business. It is no use for me to try to answer them; I will turn to a far more profitable occupation: ‘I will keep thy precepts with my whole heart.’”

[Psalms 119:70](#). *Their heart is as fat as grease;*

Insensible, lifeless; — they have no conscience, no feeling; they are so proud of their prosperity that they are afflicted with fatty degeneration of the heart.

[Psalms 119:70](#). *But I delight in thy law.*

What a blessing it is for us to find our fatness there, — to delight in the marrow and fatness of God’s law!

[Psalms 119:71](#). *It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.*

The psalmist, was so impressed with the benefits which he had derived from his afflictions, that he returned to the subject: “It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.” There is much teaching power about God’s rod. He always keeps one in his school, and it is greatly needed for such dull scholars as we are. Many a child of God can repeat the psalmist’s testimony: “It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.” “Thou hast whipped a little knowledge into me, and not much has come in any other way.”

[Psalms 119:72](#). *The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver.*

David had a great deal of gold and silver, far more than any of us have; but yet he thought very little of it in comparison with God’s law. Many people despise gold and silver because they have not got any. The fox said the grapes were sour because they were beyond his reach. But here is a case, in which a man had as much gold and silver as he could ever want; yet he says that the law of God’s mouth was better than all of it, and he was wise in saying so. For gold and silver can be stolen; riches often take to

themselves wings, and fly away; even great wealth may soon be spent and gone; but God's law never leaves those who love it, nor lets them lose it. When all our spending money is gone, then is the commandment of God our treasure still. Happy is everyone who can say, with David, "The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver."

Verses 73-88

In this Psalm we have, as it were, notes from David's pocket book.

[Psalms 119:73](#). *Thy hands have made me and fashioned me: give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments.*

This is a very instructive prayer; the psalmist does as good as say, "Lord, thou hast made me once- make me over again. Thou hast made my body; mould my spirit, form my character, give me understanding." If God should make us, and then leave us without understanding, what imperfect creations we should be! A man devoid of understanding is only a blood and bone creation; and therefore the psalmist does well to pray, "Thy hands have made me and fashioned me: give me understanding." But what sort of an understanding is desired? That I may learn to discuss and dispute? No: "that I may learn thy commandments;" for holiness is the best of wisdom, and the surest proof of a right understanding is obedience to God's commandments.

[Psalms 119:74](#). *They that fear thee will be glad when they see me; because I have hoped in thy word.*

A hopeful godly man is a continual source of joy to other people. When a man can inspire hope in his fellows, and he cannot do that unless he is full of hope himself, he lights a fire of comfort. Bring such a man into a storm, and he helps you to be brave. "They that fear thee will be glad when they see me; because I have hoped in thy word."

[Psalms 119:75](#). *I knew, O LORD, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.*

We are glad to listen to a man who can tell us that, an old man, a tried man, who can say that God has been faithful in afflicting him, a man who, after having borne the brunt of tribulation, can yet bless God for it. Such testimonies as these are full of joy and gladness to the young folk; they can encounter trial with a joyous heart when they hear what their fathers tell of the goodness of God to them in their troubles.

[Psalms 119:76](#). *Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort, according to thy word unto thy servant.*

“Lord,” he seems to say, “I have been a comfort to others; be thou a comfort to me. Thou hast made others glad to see me; make me glad with the recollection of all my experience of thy mercy: ‘Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort.’” If you have lost your own comfort, dear friends, see where you are to look for it, to the merciful kindness of God. Those are two beautiful words, are they not? “Merciful”-take that to pieces, and it is mercy-full. Is not God full of mercy? Take the next word to pieces-“kindness.” That means, “kinned-ness”-that kind of feeling that we have to our own kin when they are very dear to us. “Lord, let thy mercy-full kinned-ness be for my comfort, according to thy word unto thy servant.”

[Psalms 119:77](#). *Let thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live:*

“I am so broken down, my bones are so full of pain, that if thou dost handle me roughly, I shall die: ‘Let thy tender mercies come unto me.’ I am like a poor flower whose stalk is almost broken through, ready to droop and die; let thy tender mercies bind me up, that I may live.”

[Psalms 119:77](#). *For thy law is my delight.*

God will not let a man die who delights in his law. You are the sort of man who shall live. If you love the law of God, the Word of God, the will of God, the way of God, he will not let you die. There are none too many of your sort in the world, so the Lord will keep you alive so long as you can serve him here.

[Psalms 119:78](#). *Let the proud be ashamed; for they dealt perversely with me without a cause: but I will meditate in thy precepts.*

That is a delightful turning of the subject: “They dealt perversely with me, without a cause;” but David does not say, “I will envy the proud,” or, “I will be spiteful to them,” “I will fret myself because of them.” No; he seems to say, “They may do what they will; but I will meditate in thy precepts.” When anyone has treated you contemptuously, or dealt perversely with you without a cause, instead of resenting it, get to your Bible, meditate in God’s precepts. It is the noblest and at the same time the most successful way of fighting against contempt, so to despise the despising of men as to rejoice in your thoughts of God and his truth.

[Psalms 119:79](#). *Let those that fear thee turn unto me, and those that have known thy testimonies.*

“Lord, make me such a man that they who fear thee may seek my acquaintance. Of thy great mercy grant that, if any of them have turned away from me through hearing slanderous reports about me, they may be

inclined now to come back to me, for I love them, and I would not willingly offend them. ‘Let those that fear thee turn unto me.’”

[Psalms 119:80](#). *Let my heart be sound in thy statutes; that I be not ashamed.*

When the heart is right with God, there will be no need to be ashamed. Though you may make some mistakes and blunders, because you are human, yet, if you are sincere, shame shall not overtake you. What a blessing it is to have a sound heart! But when the heart is spiritually unsound, the profession is always in danger. The other day, a friend of ours was taken from us almost in an instant through heart disease; and when Judas sells his Master, or when Demas turns aside to the silver mines of earth, it is the result of heart disease. There are many who go about in the Christian Church with a ruddy face, and apparently with great strength of religion; but on a sudden they prove apostates. Yes, that is the effect of heart disease. Therefore, pray very earnestly with the psalmist, “Let my heart be sound in thy statutes; that I be not ashamed.”

[Psalms 119:81](#). *My soul fainteth for thy salvation: but I hope in thy word.*

What! faint and hoping, too? Yes, a Christian man is a wonder and a contradiction to many, and most of all to himself. He cannot understand himself; he faints, and yet he hopes. Two apparently opposite emotions may be at the same time in the Christian bosom. Every man is two men, if he is a man in Christ Jesus; I sometimes think that there is a triplet of characters in every man of God, so that he has three different experiences at the same time. Certainly he can have two, for here we have them: “My soul fainteth for thy salvation: but I hope in thy word.”

[Psalms 119:82](#). *Mine eyes fail for thy word, saying, When wilt thou comfort me?*

“I look for it till my eyes ache; I strain my eyes to see thy word, watching for it till my vision grows dull in waiting: ‘Mine eyes fail for thy word, saying.’” Oh, then, his eyes could speak! Yes, eyes can say a great many things; and blessed are the eyes that have learned to say this: “When wilt thou comfort me?” It is a good way of praying, sometimes, to say nothing at all, but to sit still and look up. The eyes can say what lips and tongue cannot, so learn well the language of the eyes, and talk to God with them, even as he talks to you with his eyes. “I will guide thee,” says he, “with mine eye.” Be you, therefore, able to speak to God with your eyes, as

David was when he wrote, “Mine eyes fail for thy word, saying, When wilt thou comfort me?”

[Psalms 119:83](#). *For I am become like a bottle in the smoke;*

An old dried-up skin bottle, that is hung in the smoke of the tent over the fire, till it is wrinkled and cracked, and almost good for nothing.

[Psalms 119:83](#). *Yet do I not forget thy statutes.*

“Beauty is gone, strength is gone, comeliness is gone; but not my memory of thy word, O Lord.” What a mercy it is that, when the worst comes to the worst with us, still the best remains: “I am become like a bottle in the smoke; yet do I not forget thy statutes.”

[Psalms 119:84](#). *How many are the days of thy servant? when wilt thou execute judgment on them that persecute me?*

“Lord, I have but a short life; let me not have a long affliction.” Does he mean, “Lord, I have lived too long in this miserable state; I wish my days were shortened”? We must not murmur at the length of our days, but we may plead that persecution may come to an end. We may even go so far as to say with David, “How many are the days of thy servant? When wilt thou execute judgment on them that persecute me?”

[Psalms 119:85](#). *The proud have digged pits for me, which are not after thy law.*

It is not often that proud men take to digging; but here, you see, these children of the pit learn to dig pits for God’s people; and they have not given over the practice yet. Pits were dug in olden times to catch wild beasts; but now, often, the wicked dig pits to try to catch good men, seeking if they can to make a fault where there is none, or to lead us into a line of conduct which they shall be able to represent unfavorably: “The proud have digged pits for me, which are not after thy law.”

[Psalms 119:86](#). *All thy commandments are faithful: they persecute me wrongfully; help thou me.*

What a prayer that is! Store it up for use, dear friend, carry it home with you. That is the kind of prayer to be prayed on the roadside, in a railway carriage, ay, even in an accident: “Help thou me.” “Help thou me,” is a wonderful prayer, it seems to turn on a swivel whichever way you wish; you may use it to ask for anything you need in every time of emergency: “Help thou me.”

[Psalms 119:87](#). *They had almost consumed me upon earth;*

“They had almost eaten me up; they had almost burned my life out. Blessed be God, they could not consume me anywhere except upon earth! My immortal part would escape the burning of their coals of juniper. They had almost consumed me, but almost is not altogether.” When God delivers his people from the lion and the bear, the jaws of the wild beasts may be almost closed, yet they shall be opened wide enough for us to escape: “They had almost consumed me upon earth.”

[Psalms 119:87](#). *But I forsook not thy precepts.*

You cleave to the right, and God will not turn away from you, nor will he let you turn away from his precepts.

[Psalms 119:88](#). *Quicken me after thy lovingkindness;*

That is a blessed prayer for us to offer. If any of you feel dull and drowsy, if any of you are heavy and slow in your movements, cry, to the Lord, “Quicken me after thy lovingkindness.”

[Psalms 119:88](#). *So shall I keep the testimony of thy month.*

Spiritual life is the root of holiness: “Quicken me after thy lovingkindness; so shall I keep the testimony of thy mouth.” May God bless this reading to our instruction! Amen.

Verses 81-88

[Psalms 119:81](#). *My soul fainteth for thy salvation: but I hope in thy word.*

The psalmist was so full of longings, hungerings, thirstings, for God’s salvation that he had come even to faintness through the strength of his desire. Yet, in his faintness, he was not too far gone to hope; and we also have good ground for hoping and believing that God, who gave us his Word, will stand to it, for he is both able and willing to fulfill all that he has promised.

[Psalms 119:82](#). *Mine eyes fail for thy word, saying, When wilt thou comfort me?*

He looked out for a message from God as the watchers of the night looked for the breaking of the morning. His eyes ached to behold the comforts of his God. Oh, blessed state of strong desire! I pray God that we may all experience it

[Psalms 119:83](#). *For I am become like a bottle in the smoke; yet do I not forget thy statutes.*

When an empty skin bottle was hung up in one of the smoky dwellings of the East, it became withered, cracked, useless; and the psalmist says, “I

am become like a bottle in the smoke,' — I seem to be good for nothing, withered, dried up; — 'yet do I not forget thy statutes.'" A good memory is one of the best of things for us to possess; but a good memory for that which is good is better still.

[Psalms 119:84](#). *How many are the days of thy servant? when wilt thou execute judgment on them that persecute me?*

"I am not going to live here for ever, Lord; let me not have to wait to be vindicated until I am in my grave. O my God, hasten the day of my deliverance!"

[Psalms 119:85-86](#). *The proud have digged pits for me, which are not after thy law. All thy commandments are faithful: they persecute me wrongfully; help thou me.*

God's Word is all true; the longer we test and try it, the more shall we find it to be worthy of our fullest confidence. Those who doubt its truth have never really proved its power. Those who mistrust it, in any degree, are as yet like inexperienced mariners who are constantly doubting and fearing what is going to happen; but those who have long done business on the great waters of the ocean of divine inspiration, and who have seen the wonders of the Lord there, will tell you that, though heaven and earth shall pass away, God's Word shall endure for ever. We have seen a thousand things in the course of our earthly pilgrimage, but there is one thing that we have never seen, and that we never shall see, namely, God proving unfaithful to his promise, and deserting his people in their time of need. What a short yet comprehensive prayer the psalmist prayed when he uttered those three words, "Help thou me!" "Help thou me,' — that I may never be frightened by those who wrongfully persecute me; — that I may never do anything to deserve their persecution; — that I may be able to behave myself wisely while they are plotting against me." If you are in business, write this prayer on your shops, your offices, and your ledgers; if you are sick, have this petition hanging before your eyes, that you may be constantly reminded to cry to the Lord, "Help thou me."

[Psalms 119:87](#). *They had almost consumed me upon earth; but I forsook not thy precepts.*

Therefore his enemies could not consume him. As long as the believer holds fast to God's precepts, he is indigestible even to the old dragon himself; and no adversary shall ever be able to devour him as long as the Word of God is in his heart.

[Psalms 119:88](#). *Quicken me after thy lovingkindness; so shall I keep the testimony of thy mouth.*

Give me more true spiritual life, inspire me, revive me, ‘quicken me.’ At this very moment, good Lord, if I am cold, and half frozen, and almost dead, yet since I am like the trees, whose life is in them even when they have lost their leaves, give me a new spring-time: “Quicken me after thy lovingkindness.” We all need this quickening if we are to hold on and hold out to the end; and, blessed be the name of the Lord, — “New supplies each hour we meet while pressing on to God.”

Verses 81-96

[Psalms 119:81](#). *My soul fainteth for thy salvation: but I hope in thy word.*

The ship rocks, but the anchor holds; the singer is ready to faint, but he is not ready to despair. He knows where his restoring will come.

[Psalms 119:82](#). *Mine eyes fail for thy word, saying, When wilt thou comfort me?*

What a mercy it is to have our eyes on God’s word, full as it is of blessing to be waiting till the blessing comes out of it! Mine eyes watch thy word, that is so full of the rain of comfort; and I say to myself, “When will it descend and refresh me? When will the clouds let fall their silver drops upon my thirsty soul?”

[Psalms 119:83](#). *For I am become like a bottle in the smoke; yet do I not forget thy statutes.*

I feel dried up, besmeared and besmirched as with soot, my very beauty is gone from me, and my usefulness too. I am not fit to hold anything, but I have become like a skin bottle that is parched up; yet for all that I have a memory of thy word: the smoke and the heat have not dried out of me the flavour of that good old “wine on the lees well refined” that once filled my heart.

[Psalms 119:84](#). *How many are the days of thy servant? when wilt thou execute judgment on them that persecute me?*

“How many are the days of thy servant;” or rather, how few they are be; not long in coming to me, lest I die whilst thou art still on the road.

[Psalms 119:85](#). *The proud have digged pits for me, which are not after thy law.*

They might make pits for lions and tigers, but not for sheep. These pits were not after God’s law. There are still cruel enemies who would, if they

could, entrap the people of God; shall not this make us feel what a great mercy it is we have one to be our guardian and defender who knows where the pitfalls are?

[Psalms 119:86](#). *All thy commandments are faithful: they persecute me wrongfully;*

There is a fine prayer for us every day in the week: “Help thou me.” Lord, I am helpless if thou do not help me. Thou art the helper of Israel: he that keepeth Israel will not slumber nor sleep. “Help thou me.”

[Psalms 119:87](#). *They had almost consumed me upon earth; but I forsook not thy precepts.*

“They had almost consumed me upon earth.” They seemed as if they would swallow me up entirely, “but I forsook not thy precepts,” and therefore they could not consume me; I was invulnerable and invincible because I stuck to rectitude and kept to thy precepts.

[Psalms 119:88-89](#). *Quicken me after thy lovingkindness; so shall I keep the testimony of thy mouth. For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.*

There is not a new divine word, or a new gospel, or a new law; but it is a settled gospel, a settled law, a settled revelation, “settled in heaven,” stereotyped, fixed, made permanent. If perfect, then unalterable, if alterable, then would it be imperfect.

[Psalms 119:90](#). *Thy faithfulness is unto all generations: thou hast established the earth, and it abideth.*

“Thy faithfulness is unto all generations.” Thou who wast true to Abraham wilt be true to David; thou who wast true to David wilt be true to me. Thou art ever faithful to thine own nature and Godhead. “Thou hast established the earth, and it abideth.” It would rot out of its place, it would rush into space like a truant planet if thou didst not hold it where it is. Thou, therefore, wilt hold thy gospel where it is, and thy servants where they are.

[Psalms 119:91](#). *They continue this day according to thine ordinances: for all are thy servants.*

The fixed laws of the universe have their analogy in the fixed rules of revelation. Are not all material things thy servants, and they are kept; thou wilt therefore keep us.

[Psalms 119:92-93](#). *Unless thy law had been my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction. I will never forget thy precepts: for with them thou hast quickened me.*

We may well keep to that which is our life. If God's precepts breed life in us and then quicken us, and so renew that life, let us stand to them, be obedient to them, and that at all times.

[Psalms 119:94](#). *I am thine, save me; for I have sought thy precepts.*

"I am thine, save me." Oh, what a sweet assertion. "I am thine," — thy creature, thy redeemed one, thy chosen, thine espoused. "I am thine, save me; for I have sought thy precepts."

[Psalms 119:95](#). *The wicked have waited for me to destroy me:*

Let them wait.

[Psalms 119:95](#). *But I will consider thy testimonies.*

I will not consider them, they are not worth it, they would only distract or distress me. I will keep my thoughts fixed upon thy word, and so shall I be at peace and escape from their malice.

[Psalms 119:96](#). *I have seen an end of all perfection: but thy commandment is exceeding broad.*

Yes: all perfection in the creature! In very deed it is an attribute of the Creator, and whether it be true or false, whether men have the excellence they boast of, or have it not, there must be an end to it all, either as to its extent or its duration; but thy commandment has no limit, it covers everything; and it has no termination; it endures for ever. "Thy commandment is exceeding broad."

Verses 89-104

[Psalms 119:89](#). *For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.*

It is not a changeable or vanishing thing: "Thy word is settled," settled for ever, settled "for ever in heaven." As God changes not, so the Word which he has spoken to his servants changes not. If the foundations of the faith could be removed, what would the righteous do? What would any of us do? But, with an eternally fixed Word of God, we have something solid to build upon, a foundation on which we may confidently rest our everlasting hopes.

[Psalms 119:90](#). *Thy faithfulness is unto all generations: —*

God, who kept his promise to Abraham, keeps it also to us though we are far down the ages, and he will keep it to our children and our children's children as long as the world endures, and then for ever and ever. We need not be afraid to leave the generations to come in his hands. "Thy faithfulness is unto all generations:" —

[Psalms 119:90-91](#). *Thou hast established the earth, and it abideth. They continue this day according to thine ordinances: for all are thy servants.*

This material world whose laws appear to be so fixed, abides only because God has established it; but a day will come in which he will roll these things up like an outworn vesture, and he that sitteth upon the throne shall make all things new. But, at present, we have, in the fixity of the laws of nature, a type of the fixity of the promises and purposes of God.

[Psalms 119:92](#). *Unless thy law had been my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction.*

Notice the love of God's servant to God's Word: "Unless thy law had been my delights." The word is in the plural, for the psalmist not only took a delight in it, but all his delights were there. It was the sea of happiness wherein he bathed his entire soul. "Unless it had been so," says he, "I should then have perished in mine affliction." One of the best preservatives for the heart in times of trouble is an intense delight in the Word of God. Oh, to get away from this noisy world, from the turmoil of life, and its endless discussions and controversies, and to sit down, and quietly listen to what that Word has to say to us! This is the best way to recuperate drooping and fainting spirits.

[Psalms 119:93](#). *I will never forget thy precepts: for with them thou hast quickened me.*

Nothing makes a man remember the Word so well as the fact that it has quickened him. If you owe your spiritual life and the support of it to the Word of God, you will not forget that Word. If you feel that, every time you come into contact with it, it inspires you with fresh life, you will be anxious to be often diligently reading it.

[Psalms 119:94](#). *I am thine, —*

That is a grand thing for anyone to be able to say, what a heaven of bliss lies slumbering in these three words, "I am thine," —

[Psalms 119:94](#). *Save me; —*

That is a good argument: "'I am thine' by redemption, so do not lose me. 'I am thine' by a new creation, so let not the enemy steal me away from thee. I am thy servant, so exercise a master's rights over me, and protect me from all my foes. 'I am thine, save me;'" —

[Psalms 119:94](#). *For I have sought thy precepts.*

Notice how the psalmist here twice singles out the precepts rather than the promises; even hypocrites may love the promises, but only sincere

believers love the precepts. The true servant of God loves the burdens which his Lord and Master lays upon him, and he only wishes that he had more strength to bear still more of them.

[Psalms 119:95](#). *The wicked have waited for me to destroy me: —*

“They have lain in ambush, they have waited to catch me tripping, to ruin my character if possible, so what shall I do, — Counterplot them? No. Watch them night and day? No. ‘The wicked have waited for me to destroy me:’” —

[Psalms 119:95](#). *But I will consider thy testimonies.*

There is something that seems to me calmly defiant about the psalmist’s resolve. He does not say, “The wicked are waiting to destroy me, but I will fight them.” No, but he says, “I shall read my Bible, and I shall follow its directions. I shall act in obedience to my God, and in that way I shall baffle them.” To be obedient to God is the surest way to be victorious over wicked men. Keep thou God’s Word, and God will guard thy head in the day of danger.

[Psalms 119:96](#). *I have seen an end of all perfection: but thy commandment —*

“Ah, there I find perfection: ‘Thy commandment’” —

[Psalms 119:96](#). *Is exceeding broad.*

It is so broad that there is no limit to it. One of the early fathers used to say, “I delight in the infinity of Scripture,” and well he might, for there is no limit to it. Even one single text might suffice for a man’s meditation for a whole year; if it did not, it would be because of the scantiness of the man’s meditative power, and not because of the exhaustion of the meaning of the verse.

[Psalms 119:97](#). *O how love I thy law!*

The psalmist breaks out into a transport of delight. He does not say how much he loved God’s law, for the simple reason that he could not tell us that; but he says, “O how love I thy law!”

[Psalms 119:97](#). *It is my meditation all the day.*

That is the best proof of the psalmist’s love of God’s law, for love shows itself by its constant familiarity with its chosen object. “‘It is my meditation all the day.’ Every day, wherever I may be, I turn my daily experience into instructive meditation upon thy Word.” One of the best commentaries on God’s written Book is God’s Book of Providence when it is explained to us by his Holy Spirit.

[Psalms 119:98](#). *Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me.*

David knew how well God's Word had instructed him, and first he declared that he was wiser than his enemies; and, next, that he was wiser than his former instructors: —

[Psalms 119:99](#). *I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation.*

The man who rightly meditates upon this wondrous Book is, after all, the truly wise man. His wisdom is that of the heart, received by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, and it has a power of understanding in it that will make him wiser than those who are merely book-learned or man-taught.

[Psalms 119:100](#). *I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts.*

First his enemies, then his teachers, and now his elders, the ancients, — he could excel them all; and he gave the reason for it: "Because I keep thy precepts." Take this Book away, and give the man all the human learning that he could ever acquire, and how little he would know, after all! But let him study the Book, and even in the absence of other books, (though that need not be the case with him, such a man will still be wise, — wise for eternity.

[Psalms 119:101](#). *I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word.*

The Bible is a very sanctifying Book. If we keep its precepts, it holds us back from many things into which we might otherwise have run. "I have refrained my feet from every evil way." Notice the universality of the obedience of a true saint. He does not say, "I will avoid all sin except a certain one for which I have a great liking." Oh, no: "I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word."

[Psalms 119:102](#). *I have not departed from thy judgments: for thou hast taught me.*

Those who are taught of God are always well taught; they never unlearn what they have learned at the feet of Jesus. Those who backslide and apostatize were never truly taught of the Spirit of God.

[Psalms 119:103](#). *How sweet are thy words unto my taste!*

Have you a spiritual taste, dear hearer? It is one thing to hear the Word it is another thing to taste it. Hearing the Word is often blessed, but tasting it is a more inward and spiritual thing; it is the enjoyment of the truth in the

innermost parts of our being. Oh, that we were all as fond of the Word as were the old mystics who chewed the cud of meditation till they were fattened upon the Word of the Lord, and their souls grew strong in the divine love! I am sure of this, — the more you know of God’s Word, the more you will love it. It is ignorance that misses the sweetness of it.

[Psalms 119:103](#). *Yea, sweeter than honey to my month!*

There is an indescribable sweetness in it. It is sweet to my heart, and when I utter it, how sweet it is to my mouth! I heard one observe, the other day, that he noted a great difference between the preachers of his youth and many of those of the present day. He said, “The old men used to enjoy the Word so much while they were preaching it; they preached it with their eyes beaming with delight in it. You could see that, if there was no savour in it for other people, there was a divine savour about it for the preachers themselves.” This is the mark of the man who is taught of God, — that the Word is sweet to his mouth when he preaches it to others as well as sweet to his taste when he meditates upon it himself.

[Psalms 119:104](#). *Through thy precepts I get understanding: —*

The practical parts of God’s Word not only appeal to our understanding but they give us understanding. That is a marvellous thing, but it is true. Sometimes, when you are arguing with a man who is dull of comprehension, you are apt to say, “Well, I can give you arguments, but I cannot give you an understanding with which to appreciate them;” but this Word can give us understanding: “Through thy precepts I get understanding:” —

[Psalms 119:104](#). *Therefore I hate every false way.*

The best test of a true spiritual understanding is an intense and vigorous hatred of every thing that is false. The lover of truth is a follower of the truth, he is not a man of craft and guile. He keeps to the straight line and in the long run it shall be proved that he is the man who is indeed taught of God.

Verses 89-112

[Psalms 119:89](#). *For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.*

Other things come, and go, and change, moons wax and wane, tides ebb and flow, everything earthly is changeable; but “Thy word is settled — settled in heaven,” with the eternal settlements. No truth of it can fail, no promise of it can be broken. What a joy this is to our hearts tonight! There

is something sure, after all: “For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven.”

[Psalms 119:90](#). *Thy faithfulness is unto all generations: thou hast established the earth, and it abideth.*

That is, God has spoken to nature, and that word has established the earth, and made it to stand securely.

[Psalms 119:91](#). *They continue this day according to thine ordinances: for all are thy servants.*

It was God’s word that made the sun, and the moon, and the stars; and it is God’s word that bids creation still exist. And that is the almighty word upon which you and I are resting, if we are truly trusting in the living God.

“His very word of grace is strong As that which built the skies;
The voice that rolls the stars along Speaks all the promises.”

[Psalms 119:92](#). *Unless thy law had been my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction.*

Let us remember how God’s word has kept some of us alive when we had nothing else to live upon. Hope would have quite failed, and we should have been driven to despair, if it had not been for the precious, priceless word of God.

[Psalms 119:93](#). *I will never forget thy precepts: for with them thou hast quickened me.*

Nothing sharpens the memory like having been quickened. If we have been at death’s door, and the word of God has brought us renewed life, we shall never forget it.

[Psalms 119:94-96](#). *I am thine, save me; for I have sought thy precepts. The wicked have waited for me to destroy me: but I will consider thy testimonies. I have seen an end of all perfection:*

No matter who it is that boasts of being perfect, “I have seen an end of all perfection.”

[Psalms 119:96](#). *But thy commandment —
There lies the perfection —*

[Psalms 119:96](#). *Is exceeding broad.*

Covering the whole life, covering the thoughts, the intents, the desires of the inner and secret nature.

[Psalms 119:97-98](#). *O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day. Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me.*

If we have God's law always with us, we shall be wiser than the most crafty of our enemies; for, after all, there is nothing that puzzles and baffles cunning men like simple honesty. Do that which is right, and you will cut through the nets in which men would entangle you. They cannot trip you up if your feet are settled in God's ways.

[Psalms 119:99-100](#). *I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts.*

There is more wisdom in obeying God than in all the ethics of heathen philosophers. It matters not whence they take their precepts and maxims, there is no wisdom like yielding one's heart to God.

[Psalms 119:101-104](#). *I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word. I have not departed from thy judgments: for thou hast taught me. How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way.*

The man who cannot hate does not love; but he who loves that which is right, is by no means indifferent to the wrong and to the false; he hates it, and the more intensely he loves God, and loves right, the more intensely does he hate every false way. Especially does he hate it in himself. Oh, to be delivered altogether from every trace of falsehood!

[Psalms 119:105](#). *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.*

It shows me the way; it cheers me in the way; it reveals to me the difficulties of the way.

[Psalms 119:106-107](#). *I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments. I am afflicted very much: quicken me, O LORD, according unto thy word.*

Are any of you afflicted tonight? I commend this prayer to your use. One would have expected that David would have prayed, "I am afflicted very much: comfort me, O Lord." Or, "Relieve me, O Lord." Instead of praying so, he cries, "Quicken me, O Lord," and he did well. Let us imitate him, for if we get more spiritual light and life, we shall, by that means, get more comfort, and the trouble from which we are suffering will soon cease to vex our spirit.

[Psalms 119:108-112](#). *Accept, I beseech thee, the freewill offerings of my mouth, O LORD, and teach me thy judgments. My soul is continually in my*

hand: yet do I not forget thy law. The wicked have laid a snare for me: yet I erred not from thy precepts. Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart. I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes always, even unto the end.

Oh, that every one of us might be able to make this declaration of the psalmist our own! God grant it, for Christ's sake! Amen.

Verses 105-115

[Psalms 119:105](#). *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.*

We are walkers through the city of this world, and we are often called to go out into its darkness; let us never venture there without the light-giving word, lest we slip with our feet. Each man should use the word of God personally, practically, and habitually, that he may see his way and see what lies in it. When darkness settles down upon all around me, the word of the Lord, like a flaming torch, reveals my way. We should not know the way, or how to walk in it, if Scripture, like a blazing flambeau, did not reveal it. It is a lamp by night, a light by day, and a delight at all times. David guided his own steps by it, and also saw the difficulties of his road by its beams.

[Psalms 119:106](#). *I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.*

Under the influence of the clear light of knowledge he had firmly made up his mind, and solemnly declared his resolve in the sight of God. Perhaps mistrusting his own fickle mind, he had pledged himself in sacred form to abide faithful to the determinations of his God. Whatever path might open before him, he was sworn to follow that only upon which the lamp of the word was shining.

[Psalms 119:107](#). *I am afflicted very much: quicken me, O LORD, according unto thy word.*

According to the last verse he had been sworn in a soldier of the Lord, and in this next verse he is called to suffer hardness in that capacity. Our service of the Lord does not screen us from trial, but rather secures it for us. The Psalmist was a consecrated man, and yet a chastened man. Quicken is the best remedy for tribulation, the soul is raised above the thought of present distress, and is filled with that holy joy which attends all vigorous spiritual life, and so the affliction grows light.

[Psalms 119:108](#). *Accept, I beseech thee, the freewill offerings of my mouth, O LORD, and teach me thy judgments.*

He offers prayer, praise, confession, and testimony — these, presented with his voice in the presence of an audience, were the tribute of his mouth unto Jehovah. He trembles lest these should be so ill uttered so to displease the Lord, and therefore he implores acceptance. When we render unto the Lord our best, we become all the more concerned to do better. If, indeed, the Lord shall accept us, we then desire to be further instructed, that we may be still more acceptable.

[Psalms 119:109](#). *My soul is continually in my hand: yet do I not forget thy law.*

He lived in the midst of danger. He had to be always fighting for existence — hiding in caves, or contending in battles. This is a very uncomfortable and trying state of affairs, and men are apt to think any expedient justifiable by which they can end such a condition, but David did not turn aside to find safety in sin. They say that all things are fair in love and war; but the holy man thought not so: while he carried his life in his hand, he also carried the law in his heart.

[Psalms 119:110](#). *The wicked have laid a snare for me: yet I erred not from thy precepts.*

Spiritual life is the scene of constant danger. The believer lives with his life in his hand, and meanwhile all seem plotting to take it from him, by cunning if they cannot by violence. We shall not find it an easy thing to live the life of the faithful. Wicked spirits and wicked men will leave no stone unturned for our destruction. He was not snared, for he kept his eyes open, and kept near his God.

[Psalms 119:111](#). *Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart.*

He chose them so his lot, his portion, his estate; and what is more, he laid hold upon them and made them so, — taking them into possession and enjoyment. David's choice is our choice. If we might have our desire, we would desire to keep the commands of God perfectly. To know the doctrine, to enjoy the promise, to practice the command, — be this a kingdom large enough for me.

[Psalms 119:112](#). *I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes always, even unto the end.*

He was not half inclined to virtue, but heartily inclined to it. His whole heart was bent on practical, persevering godliness. He was resolved to keep the statutes of the Lord with all his heart, throughout all his time, without

erring or ending. He made it his end to keep the law unto the end, and that without end.

[Psalms 119:113](#). *I hate vain thoughts: but thy law do I love.*

The opposite of the fixed and infallible law of God is the wavering, changing opinion of men. David had an utter contempt and abhorrence for this, all his reverence and regard went to the sure word of testimony. In proportion to his love to the law was his hate of man's inventions. The thoughts of men are vanity; but the thoughts of God are verity.

[Psalms 119:114](#). *Thou art my hiding place and my shield: I hope in thy word.*

To his God he ran for shelter from vain thoughts, there he hid himself away from their tormenting intrusions, and in solemn silence of the soul he found God to be his hiding-place. When called into the world, if he could not be alone with God as his hiding-place, he could have the Lord with him as his shield, and by this means he could ward off the attacks of wicked suggestions.

[Psalms 119:115](#). *Depart from me, ye evildoers: for I will keep the commandments of my God.*

If we fly to God from vain thoughts, much more shall we avoid vain men. Evildoers make evil counselors. Those who say unto God, "Depart from us," ought to hear the immediate echo of their words from the mouths of God's children, "Depart from us. We cannot eat bread with traitors."

Verses 105-120

We will read tonight two of the stanzas which make up the 119th Psalm, beginning at the 105th verse.

[Psalms 119:105](#). *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.*

God's Word is full of brilliance; it is always giving out its blessed light. It casts a light upon all our daily life. It is a light for the house, and a light for the way, and happy is the man who never walks abroad without this lantern to light up his pathway. There are many pitfalls on the road, and many places where the traveler's garments may soon be besmeared, so he has great need of this light to guide him.

[Psalms 119:106](#). *I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.*

I scarcely remember ever hearing of a man swearing, and then approving of it, but this kind of swearing is right enough: "I have sworn,

and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.” We are to determine, with the most vehement resolution, that, God helping us, we will keep his righteous judgments; for, if we have only a weak resolution, we usually fall short even of our own determination. What shall we do then if that determination is itself weak? Some of us have lifted our hands to heaven, and pledged ourselves to the living God that we will be his faithful people.

“High heaven, that heard the solemn vow,
That vow renewed shall daily hear.”

[Psalms 119:107](#). *I am afflicted very much:-*

Here is a good man, a better man than most of us, a man who is determined to do right, yet he gets into trouble because he is determined to do right. God’s wheat will be threshed, his gold will be put into the furnace. If you were worth nothing to him, God might not take the trouble to afflict you; but when you are resolved to do right, you may expect that resolution to be tried and tested; and if it is worth anything, it will stand the trial. “I am afflicted very much:”-what will be the next words, “Lord, deliver me”? No, no.” Lord, bring me out of the furnace”? Nothing of the sort.” I am afflicted very much:”-

[Psalms 119:107](#). *Quicken me, O LORD, according unto thy word.*

“Give me more spiritual life; give me more spiritual strength; that is what I most need.” Oftentimes, that prayer is answered by the affliction itself. We are afflicted very much, and by that very affliction the Lord quickens our graces, strengthens our souls, drives away many of our wandering thoughts, and brings us nearer to himself.

[Psalms 119:108](#). *Accept, I beseech thee, the freewill offerings of my mouth, O LORD,-“*

My prayers, my praises, my testimonies, my ministries, accept them all, O Lord,”-

[Psalms 119:108](#). *And teach me thy judgment.*

He who teaches others needs teaching himself. He who hopes that what he says will be accepted by those who hear it opens his ear to hear what God says to him. There will be no acceptance of what thou sayest to others unless thou dost accept what God says to thee.

[Psalms 119:109](#). *My soul is continually in my hand:*

David’s life was often in jeopardy. Saul hunted him as a partridge upon the mountains. He was sometimes very sick, and ready to die. Perhaps also,

at times, he was in such great sorrow that he felt as if his soul was a thing that he held in his hand. We do not know exactly where our soul is, but we usually think of it as being somewhere in the very center of our being. David says that he had his soul in his hand, where he might at any time lose it; but what else does he say?

[Psalms 119:109](#). *Yet do I not forget thy law.*

“If I have even to die for it, I am willing to die for it. If I have to lay down my life because I will do right, I will do right even while I lay down my life.”

[Psalms 119:110](#). *The wicked have laid a snare for me: yet I erred not from thy precepts.*

“If I had done so, I should have been caught in their snare, but as I kept straight on in the way of thy precepts, it little mattered how many snares they laid for me.”

[Psalms 119:111](#). *Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever:-*

Some take their own thoughts for their heritage, but it is a poor portion for anyone to have. Some take other men’s philosophies for their heritage, but such a heritage as that is soon gone. But some of us can say, with regard to the eternal and immutable truth of God, that we have got such a grip of it that we cannot give it up. There may come a thousand other changes; but, by God’s grace, there will be no change in this matter: “Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever:”-

[Psalms 119:111](#). *For they are the rejoicing of my heart.*

Well may a man love that which rightly makes him glad. Shall we ever forsake that which is the source of our greatest comfort? If some men had greater gladness in the gospel, they would be more true to it. If they had ever eaten the sweet, and enjoyed the fat things full of marrow, they would never go away from the old old gospel which has made their hearts so glad.

[Psalms 119:112-113](#). *I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes always, even unto the end. I hate vain thoughts: but thy law do I love.*

Notice that the word “vain” is not in the original, the psalmist wrote, “I hate thoughts,” yet the word for thoughts includes the idea of mere thoughts. So, if any teaching in the world is the result of human thought alone, you may not rely upon it for a moment, for the Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity,” and they never will be anything better than that. The thoughts even of the most profound and the best instructed of men will not bear the weight and pressure of an immortal

soul's eternal interests. Revelation is the one reliable thing that we can rest upon. What God has spoken is all true, but as for what men have thought, I have been so often disappointed and deceived that I can say, with the psalmist, "I hate mere thoughts: but thy law do I love." In the law of the Lord there are verities, certainties, immutabilities, here may we abide, and rest securely.

[Psalms 119:114.](#) *Thou art my hiding place and my shield: I hope in thy word.*

For thou wilt be sure to do as thou hast said. Thy promises are not like men's, they cannot be broken, and when I get one of thy promises, O my God, I hide behind it, I am protected by it, and I am comforted through it.

[Psalms 119:115.](#) *Depart from me, ye evildoers: for I will keep the commandments of my God.*

Holy men often find that, in order to be holy, they have to be solitary. It sometimes happens that the force of evil companionship is too much for the gracious heart to bear, and the Christian man has to say to the ungodly, "Depart from me." Now, if even godly David had to say to evil-doers "Depart from me," you need not wonder that the Lord Jesus Christ will one day say to all impenitent men, "Depart from me, ye evil-doers." If we keep the commandments of our God, we shall often have to walk in a separate path from the ungodly; and even if we do not keep ourselves to ourselves, we shall keep ourselves to our God.

[Psalms 119:116.](#) *Uphold me-*

I thought we should soon come to that petition. We have been reading about David's resolutions, and we might have thought that he was too bold in speaking so positively, but now he shows us the modesty of his mind: "Uphold me"-

[Psalms 119:116.](#) *According unto thy word, that I may live:*

The Lord upholds us as a nurse holds up a little child, and teaches him to walk. "Uphold me," O Lord, for I cannot stand by myself. My good resolutions will soon evaporate unless thou dost sustain me. There is a gracious promise which just answers this petition, "I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."

[Psalms 119:116.](#) *And let me not be ashamed of my hope.*

O my God, never let me have to say that I have hoped in thee in vain! I know I never shall, but I trust to thee not to disappoint me. "Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth me "

[Psalms 119:117.](#) *Hold thou, me up,-*

One is fond of that short, simple prayer, first it is, “Uphold me,” and then, “Hold me up;” either way it is equally good: “Hold thou me up,”-

[Psalms 119:117.](#) *And I shall be safe: and I will have respect unto thy statutes continually.*

When God holds us up, there is no fear of our falling down; we have respect unto his statutes when he has respect unto us.

[Psalms 119:118-119.](#) *Thou hast trodden down all them that err from thy statutes: for their deceit is falsehood. Thou puttest away all the wicked of the earth like dross:-*

Perhaps some of you have seen the great heaps of slag lying outside the furnace, that is a picture of the ungodly: “Thou puttest away all the wicked of the earth like dross:”-

[Psalms 119:119.](#) *Therefore I love thy testimonies.*

What! does love to the truth, and to the God of truth spring out of this putting away of the wicked? Yes, even the stern justice of God makes his people love him, and love his truth. I am of the same mind as the children of Israel were when Pharaoh and his army were swallowed up in the Red Sea, and the emancipated slaves sang unto the Lord who had triumphed so gloriously. Some cannot do that because their sympathy is so entirely with the wicked, but the destruction of all that is evil creates a flow of joy in the heart of the true believer. Still, it is a fearsome joy, full of holy awe and trembling.

[Psalms 119:120.](#) *My flesh trembleth for fear of thee; and I am afraid of thy judgments.*

Well may we also tremble when we see how terrible God is out of his holy places. There is a fear which is akin to love. As there is a fear which perfect love casts out, so is there another fear which love dandles on her knee, and such is the fear which David felt. May we too ever have that holy awe of God in our hearts! Amen.

Verses 113-120

The proper way in which to read these verses is to peruse them in the spirit of prayer, turning every verse into a personal supplication to God. I do trust that many of us may be so in the Spirit today, that these words may suit us.

[Psalms 119:113.](#) *I hate vain thoughts: but thy law do I love.*

The moralist is quite content to look after his actions, but the Christian is never happy until his thoughts are sanctified. The true believer hates vain thoughts, because they lead to vain words and to vain actions; because vain thoughts nailed his Saviour to the tree; because vain thoughts spoil his devotion, mar his communion with God, and, like the birds which came down upon Abraham's sacrifice, would destroy all his offering. "I hate vain thoughts." The converse of this is, "But thy law do I love." There is nothing vain there; nothing in thy law to distract me; nothing to give me unhallowed thoughts. But, there is a cure for vain thoughts. When you have been assailed of vain thoughts, let your mind be lovingly stored with texts of Scripture, with passages of God's Word. The Psalmist, whilst writing these words, is evidently under a sense of danger, so he said: —

[Psalms 119:114](#). *Thou art my hiding place and my shield: I hope in thy word.*

Here is a hiding-place to escape to from danger, and a shield to protect whilst in danger. A hiding-place is not enough, because that cannot be moved, but the shield can be carried everywhere. It is buckled, on the warrior's arm; and into every conflict he can take it. So, at even-time, when I tell my troubles to my God, he is my hiding-place; But all the day long, while I myself abide in, the heat of the conflict, he is my shield. See where the Christian's hope is, dear friends! It is not in his own integrity, or faithfulness, or sincerity; but "I hope in thy word."

"The gospel bears my spirit up;
A faithful and unchanging God
Lays the foundation for my hope
In oaths, and promises, and blood."

[Psalms 119:115](#). *Depart from me, ye evildoers: for I will keep the commandments of my God.*

By which David did not mean that he would not speak with ungodly men. Monkish seclusion would be no advantage to a Christian. We are to be in the world, though not of it, as a ship is in the sea, but the sea is not in the ship, or else soon would she go to the bottom. We are to take care of the world; to hold such society with them as may come from necessity, but as to any nearer communion, "Depart from me, ye evildoers; your company I cannot bear; your example pollutes the air: ye do me damage; ye vex my ears, ye dishonour my God; depart from me, ye evildoers, for I will keep the commandments of my God." You see, it seems as if this was not possible as

long as there was an infinite association with the ungodly. I know nothing that is so likely to destroy the purity of a Christian's life as any intimate association, with ungodly people. You cannot run with the hare and hold with the hounds, too. It is impossible for you to join with the world, and yet be true followers of Christ.

[Psalms 119:116](#). *Uphold me according unto thy word, that I may live: and let me not be ashamed of my hope.*

You see, he feels his weakness, and he cries to his God.

[Psalms 119:117](#). *Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe: and I will have respect unto thy statutes continually.*

The brightest archangel owes all his glory to God, and the perpetuity of that glory depends upon the constant gift of the gracious One. How wise, then, is it of men, conscious of their weakness, to hang constantly upon their God. As the vessel hangs upon the nail, and if the nail can move, the vessel must fall, so must we hang upon God. If he be not faithful, and true, and potent, then must we perish; but, thank God. concerning this we have no doubt.

[Psalms 119:118-119](#). *Thou hast trodden down all them that err from thy statutes: for their deceit is falsehood. Thou puttest away all the wicked of the earth like dross: therefore I love thy testimonies.*

You see, the Psalmist's mind is entirely occupied with this spirit of perseverance. He seems to tremble, and to be filled with awe lest he should by any means prove an apostate, and be unworthy to enter into the kingdom. He looks with solemn mind upon God as casting all the wicked of the earth down under his feet, just as men cast out the refuse: as the slag of the furnace is sometimes thrown down to make the footpath: so, he says, "Thou puttest away the wicked of the earth like dross; thou hast trodden them down." Filled with a heavy trembling lest this should be his lot — lest, after he had thought he had known and experienced the happiness of communion with God, he should be found to be reprobate silver and be given over to destruction. Does such a fear as this come upon you, my brethren? If it does not, there is room for you to fear, for even our holy Apostle had this as his anxiety, "Lest, after having preached to others I myself should be a castaway." It is not as to whether God will be faithful to me, but whether I am really his, whether my conversion has been genuine, and my union to Christ vital. These are questions which breed a holy anxiety, which is one of the very best means of keeping a Christian in the

path of right, and so of guaranteeing the perseverance which God has promised.

[Psalms 119:120](#). *My flesh trembleth for fear of thee; and I am afraid of thy judgments.*

Verses 113-128

[Psalms 119:1-3](#). *I hate vain thoughts: but thy law do I love.*

Presumptuous thoughts, erroneous thoughts, wicked thoughts, foolish thoughts,-all three David hated. A good man ought to be a good hater, as well as a good lover. What should he hate? He should hate sin thoughts. What should he love? He should love the law of the Lord. If we do not hate sin in the very egg, we shall not be likely to hate it in its fuller development. The very thought of sin must be detestable to us; and if we do not think of evil, we shall not speak evil, nor do evil. We ought to begin with David at the beginning, and say, "I hate vain thoughts;" yet negative religion is not sufficient, so we should go on to the positive form: "'Thy law do I love;' and I love it so much that I wish I could always keep it, and never transgress it, and never forget it."

[Psalms 119:114](#). *Thou art my hiding place and my shield: I hope in thy word.*

"Thou art my protection against every kind of danger." David had been accustomed to hide in the caves of the mountains, but now he says that he hid himself in his God. When he did not hide, but stood out bravely against the serried ranks of his foes, then God was his shield to cover him in the day of battle.

[Psalms 119:115](#). *Depart from me, ye evildoers: for I will keep the commandments of my God.*

If, by your evil example, you would take me off from serving my God, I will make you take yourselves off so that I may neither see nor follow your ill example: "Depart from me, ye evil-doers: for I will keep the commandments of my God." David puts his foot down firmly, and says, "I will keep the commandments of my God." It is a grand thing to be able to speak of "my God." Another man's God would be of little use to me, but when he is my own God, my God in covenant relationship, then I may well say, "I will keep the commandments of my God."

[Psalms 119:116](#). *Uphold me according unto thy word, that I may live:*

“Lord, I cannot even live unless thou dost uphold me according to thy promise.” The Christian man is so dependent upon God that he owes his life and the continuance of it to upholding grace.

[Psalms 119:116](#). *And let me not be ashamed of my hope.*

“If thy promise could fail me, then I should have cause to be ashamed of my hope. Therefore, O Lord, let me never at any time have the shadow of a doubt concerning the truthfulness of thy promises, lest I should begin to be ashamed of my hope!”

[Psalms 119:117-118](#). *Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe: and I will have respect unto thy statutes continually. Thou hast trodden down all them that err from thy statutes: for their deceit is falsehood.*

“They are like salt that has lost its savour, which is neither fit for the land nor yet for the dunghill, but men cast it out, and tread it under their feet; and this is what thou doest with ungodly men, especially with those ‘that err from thy statutes.’ Then treadest them beneath thy feet, ‘for their deceit is falsehood.’ They try to make it look like truth, but it is falsehood all the while.” How much of deceit there is in this world which men gloss and varnish so that the thing looks right enough though all the while it is deception and a sham! May God keep us from all the trickeries and falsehoods and errors of the age!

[Psalms 119:119](#). *Thou puttest away all the wicked of the earth like dross:*

“As the dross is thrown away when the useful metal has been extracted from it, so, O Lord, when thou hast taken all thy saints out of the world thou will put the wicked of the earth away like dross.”

[Psalms 119:119](#). *Therefore I love thy testimonies.*

What? Does David love God’s testimonies because they are thus severe? Yes, for it is the mark of a true believer that he does not kick against the severities of his God. Worldlings can rejoice in the god of this age, who is said to be nothing but effeminate benevolence, but the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob is the God of justice, who will by no means spare iniquity; and for that very reason a true believer says, with David, “I love thy testimonies.”

[Psalms 119:120](#). *My flesh trembleth for fear of thee; and I am afraid of thy judgments.*

This is the man who truly loves God, and this is the kind of fear that perfect love does not cast out. Though we love God supremely, we become

for that very reason God-fearing men, and dread to do anything that would cause him anger or sorrow.

[Psalms 119:121](#). *I have done judgment and justice: leave me not to mine oppressors.*

When a man is conscious of doing right, he has a good ground of appeal to God. If, when it was in your power, you did not oppress others, you may plead with God that he will not let others oppress you. If it has been your habit to act with judgment and justice towards others, you may respect that God will defend you against all your oppressors.

[Psalms 119:122-123](#). *Be surety for thy servant for good: let not the proud oppress me. Mine eyes fail for thy salvation,-*

“I have looked for it so long, I have longed for it so eagerly, that my eyes seem to grow inflamed with watching, a film seems to come over them so that I cannot see out of them: ‘Mine eyes fail for thy salvation.’”

[Psalms 119:123](#). *And for the word of thy righteousness.*

“I look for no salvation except in the way revealed in thy Word, and I do not wish thee to do an unrighteous thing even to save me from my oppressors.”

[Psalms 119:124](#). *Deal with thy servant according unto thy mercy,-*

He dare not ask to be dealt with by God on any other ground than that of mercy. Though he is innocent of that which the ungodly laid to his charge, he is not innocent before God, and therefore he pleads for mercy. He owns that God is his Lord and Master, and that he is God’s servant, and as a man should deal mercifully with his servant he pleads that God will so deal with him: “Deal with thy servant according unto thy mercy,” —

[Psalms 119:124](#). *And teach me thy statutes.*

He had kept God’s statutes so far as the eyes of men could see; but, before God, he takes a humbler position, and begs to be taught what he is to do, asks to be instructed, like a child, in the statutes of his God.

[Psalms 119:125](#). *I am thy servant;-*

This is the third time in four verses that David mentions this relationship; he seems proud of being God’s servant. Though he were but as a menial, yet would he glory in it: “I am thy servant;” —

[Psalms 119:125](#). *Give me understanding, that I may know thy testimonies.*

“Lord, do not merely teach me, but give me understanding.” That is what our teachers cannot do. They may put the truth before us so plainly

that we ought to understand it, but they cannot give us understanding.

[Psalms 119:126](#). *It is time for thee, LORD, to work: for they have made void thy law.*

And surely this is an age in which this prayer is very suitable. On all hands we see God's law ridiculed, or denied, or travestied, or else hidden under tradition or under the dicta of so-called scientific men, or in some way or other "made void." Oh, that God's right hand of grace might be stretched out to do some miracle of mercy in the land at this very time!

[Psalms 119:127](#). *Therefore I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold.*

"Therefore" — because the wicked tasted God's law, and made it void, David loved it all the more. It is a live fish that swims against the stream, it is a live man of God who can say, "They have made void thy law, Therefore I love thy commandments above gold; yes, above fine gold."

[Psalms 119:128](#). *Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right;-*

"Ungodly men think they are wrong; that is an additional proof to me that they are right." When a certain old philosopher had been praised by a bad man, he asked, "What have I done amiss that he should speak well of me?" And there are some men's mouths out of which the praise of Christ or the praise of the Scriptures would be to God's dishonour. They tell me that So-and-so spoke blasphemously against Christ; but why should he not do so? It is natural for him to be a blasphemer. When serpents hiss, do they not act according to their nature? I do not read that Christ stopped men's mouths when they blasphemed him, but I do know that when the demons bore witness to him, he silenced them, for he liked not to be praised by diabolical mouths. Let ungodly men say what they may, we know the value of their speeches, and we are not troubled by them.

[Psalms 119:128](#). *And I hate every false way.*

Again David mentions his hatred of all falseness. Some men are such "chips in the porridge" that they neither love nor hate; but the believer is a man who has both loves and aversions. He loves the truth, and therefore he hates every false way.

Verses 119-126

[Psalms 119:119-121](#). *Thou putteth away all the wicked of the earth like dross: therefore I love thy testimonies. My flesh trembleth for fear of thee;*

and I am afraid of thy judgments. I have done judgment and justice: leave me not to mine oppressors.

Eastern kings cannot often say as much as this, but David had been a just king. This was for his comfort when he himself came under unjust treatment. “I have done judgment and justice: leave me not to mine oppressors.” It is of the same tenor as another prayer: “Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.” God often deals with men as they deal with others: “With the forward, he will show himself forward”; “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.” May our conduct be such that, though we plead no merit, yet we may dare to mention it in prayer.

[Psalms 119:122](#). *Be surety for thy servant for good: let not the proud oppress me.*

As nearly as I remember, this is the only verse which does not mention the law or the Word of God. Here you have a “surety,” and that is something even better. If the law fails us, the surety stands us in good stead. How I like to think of God the surety of his people! When there is a trial against them, and the oppressor is heavy upon them, they can come to God to be a surety for them in the great action of life. “Be surety for thy servant for good: let not the proud oppress me.” My Master is surety for his servants; his servant is sure enough.

[Psalms 119:123](#). *Mine eyes fail for thy salvation, and for the word of thy righteousness.*

I have looked until I have looked my eyes out: I am weary with waiting, with watching, with weeping: “Mine eyes fail for thy salvation.” Some do not even look for him. Here is a man who looked until his very eyes gave out.

[Psalms 119:124](#). *Deal with thy servant according unto thy mercy, and teach me thy statutes.*

He is a just man; he can plead that he has done justly; but he does not ask to be dealt with according to justice: “Deal with thy servant according unto thy mercy” — as far as any one of us can get. If you have been greatly sanctified, have walked very near to God, I would not advise you still to go beyond this prayer: “Deal with thy servant according to thy mercy.” Singular is the next sentence: “And teach me thy statutes.” It is a great mercy to be taught the ways of God, to understand his way, to understand the practical part of it, the statutes. To be made holy is a high honour, a

great privilege. When you are seeking great favors of God, ask for great holiness.

[Psalms 119:125](#). *I am thy servant;*

He called himself “servant” many times before; and in this wonderful passage this is the third time. He is delighted to be the “servant of God.” He says little about being a king; he says a great deal about being a servant: “I am thy servant.”

[Psalms 119:125](#). *Give me understanding, that I may know thy testimonies.*

You know, generally a teacher finds the teaching; the pupil has to find understanding. But here is a prayer: “Give me understanding.” The last verse he asked to be taught; here he asks to have an understanding given to him. What a God we have to deal with! And when we are taught of the Lord, how effectually we are taught: he not only gives the facts, but gives the understanding with which to get at their meaning.

[Psalms 119:126](#). *It is time for thee, LORD, to work: for they have made void thy law.*

When men begin to exercise a destructive criticism upon the Word of God, it is time for God to work. When God’s law is held in small esteem, when men go their own way, call vice by the name of pleasure, “It is time for thee, Lord, to work: for they have made void thy law.”

Verses 129-144

[Psalms 119:129](#). *Thy testimonies are wonderful: therefore doth my soul keep them.*

It is very wonderful that God should speak to us at all, and still more marvellous that he should write to us such a book as this Bible is. The Book itself is full of wonders, and one of those wonders is that it reveals him whose name is “Wonderful.” Observe that the psalmist, having said to the Lord, “Thy testimonies are wonderful,” does not add, “Therefore do I sit down and wonder at them.” No, his appreciation was practical, let ours be the same: “Thy testimonies are wonderful: therefore doth my soul keep them.”

[Psalms 119:130](#). *The entrance of thy words giveth light;*

Those who are most ignorant, and have least confidence in their own abilities, will nevertheless become very wise if they study God’s Word.

[Psalms 119:130-131](#). *It giveth understanding unto the simple. I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for thy commandments.*

What a wonderful verse that is! The psalmist cannot describe his longing for God's commandments except by going to the brute creation for a suitable metaphor. He had probably seen the hunted stag stand still, and pant to get its breath, all the while longing for the waterbrooks. So he says, "I opened my mouth, and panted." "I could not put my prayer into words, so I panted. My heart, my breath, my lungs, my very soul panted, for I longed for thy commandments."

[Psalms 119:132](#). *Look thou upon me, —*

That is all the psalmist wants, and all that we want, too. If a look from us to God will save us, what must a look from God to us do for us? "Look thou upon me," —

[Psalms 119:132-134](#). *And be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name. Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me. Deliver me from the oppression of man: so will I keep thy precepts.*

Some of you, perhaps, may hardly be able to do as you would if you were perfectly free to act, for you are to a certain extent under the government and power of ungodly persons. Well, here is a prayer for you to present to the Lord: "Deliver me from the oppression of man: so will I keep thy precepts."

[Psalms 119:135](#). *Make thy face to shine upon thy servant;*

That is the best sunshine for us; let us but have the light of God's countenance, and nothing can put us out of countenance. If the Lord will smile, men may frown as much as they please. So we pray with the psalmist, "Make thy face to shine upon thy servant."

[Psalms 119:135-136](#). *And teach me thy statutes. Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law.*

The psalmist felt for others as well as for himself. It was not enough for him to be holy; he would have others to be the same. Sin in other men brought sorrow to his heart: "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law."

[Psalms 119:137](#). *Righteous art thou, O LORD, and upright are thy judgments.*

After having wept over the sin of men, the psalmist turns with sweet calmness of spirit to the goodness of God.

[Psalms 119:138](#). *Thy testimonies that thou hast commanded are righteous and very faithful.*

“Very faithful.” You who have tried and proved God’s promises must have found them so; not only faithful, but very faithful, faithful to the letter, faithful to the moment. God seems rather to exceed his promise than ever to fall short of it.

[Psalms 119:139-140](#). *My zeal hath consumed me, because mine enemies have forgotten thy words. Thy word is very pure: —*

Just now the psalmist said, “Thy testimonies are very faithful. Now he says, “Thy word is very pure.” There is no adulteration in this blessed Book; it is pure truth. You cannot add to it or take from it without making it imperfect: “Thy word is very pure:” —

[Psalms 119:140](#). *Therefore thy servant loveth it.*

It is only a pure heart that loves the pure Word of the Lord; so, if you love the Word of God because of its purity, it is an argument that your heart has been renewed by grace.

[Psalms 119:141](#). *I am small and despised: yet do not I forget thy precepts.*

In verse 139, the psalmist complained that his enemies had forgotten God’s words, and he does not complain of the fault in others, and then fall into it himself; but he says, “Yet do not I forget thy precepts.” There are some people who seem to think that it does not much matter what they do. If they were persons of influence, they think that they would be very careful of their example. “But,” says one, “I am only a feeble woman, — a poor mother with a few children.” “Oh!” exclaims another, “I am only a child as yet, I cannot influence others.” “Oh!” cries a third, “I am simply an ordinary working man, nobody notices me.” Listen to what the psalmist says, “I am small and despised: yet do not I forget thy precepts.” “I do not make all excuse out of my littleness, that I may be careless in my living.” Take that message home, dear friends, and learn its lesson, for it applies to many of you.

[Psalms 119:142](#). *Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, —*

What a wonderful sentence! Just now, the psalmist said, “Thy testimonies that thou hast commanded are righteousness.” (See the marginal reading of verse 138.) Now he advances another step, and says, “Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness.”

[Psalms 119:142](#). *And thy law is the truth.*

That is what I believe this Book of God is, — “the truth.” I know of nothing infallible but the Bible. Every man must have a fixed point

somewhere; some believe in an infallible pope, and some in an infallible church, but I believe in an infallible Book, expounded by the infallible Spirit who is ready to guide us into all truth: “Thy law is the truth.”

[Psalms 119:143](#). *Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me: yet thy commandments are my delight.*

What a curious mixture this verse describes! Here is a man full of trouble and anguish, and yet full of delight at the same time. Little do they understand human nature, and especially gracious human nature, who cannot comprehend this paradox. There are many seeming contradictions in the Christian life, and this is one of them: “Trouble and anguish have taken hold of me:” — as dogs lay hold of their prey, — “yet thy commandments are my delights.” The apostle Paul pictured another such a case as this when he wrote, “We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed,” and he also described the Christian paradox, “As unknown, and yet well known, as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.” May we all understand these paradoxes in our own experiences!

[Psalms 119:144](#). *The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting: give me understanding, and I shall live.*

Now let us read what the Lord Jesus said to those who professed to reverence the Scripture, but who really made it void by their traditions.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Psalms 119:129-144](#); and [Matthew 15:1-13](#).

Verses 137-152

[Psalms 119:137](#). *Righteous art thou, O LORD, and upright are thy judgments.*

It is well to be able to say this when you are being tried, when the hand of God lies heavy upon you; it is hard to kick against the pricks, but it is very sweet to submit, and to say, “Righteous art thou, O Lord, and upright are thy judgments.”

[Psalms 119:138](#). *Thy testimonies that thou hast commanded are righteous and very faithful.*

“Righteous” for the present, “faithful” for the future. There is no mistake about God’s Word, it will never fail, we may trust it implicitly, and we shall never be disappointed.

[Psalms 119:139](#). *My zeal hath consumed me,*

The psalmist had such zeal for God's Word that he seemed like a sacrifice consumed with the fire upon the Lord's altar.

[Psalms 119:139](#). *Because mine enemies have forgotten thy words.*

First, they despised them, then, they neglected them, at last, they got as far as even to forget them. Forgetfulness of God's Word is a very dreadful stage of disease in the heart.

[Psalms 119:140](#). *Thy word is very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it.*

To love God's Word for its purity, is an index of a pure heart. Some love it for its poetry, some love it for its doctrine, some love it for its mercy; but he is an advanced man in the kingdom of grace who loves it for its purity.

[Psalms 119:141](#). *I am small and despised: yet do not I forget thy precepts.*

Others may, but I am not following their example. It is well when a Christian man is a contrast to other men. When they call him a mere nobody, he adopts their words, and says, "Yes, I am nothing, 'I am small and despised,' yet I do not forget the Lord's precepts."

[Psalms 119:142](#). *Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is the truth.*

Pilate asked, "What is truth?" Here is the best possible answer: "Thy law is the truth." Not only does it contain the truth, but it is the truth. The Word of God is not only true, that is its quality; but it is the truth, that is its essence. It is the cream of all truths. "Thy law is the truth."

[Psalms 119:143](#). *Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me: yet thy commandments are my delights.*

"Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me:" like two fierce dogs they had fixed their teeth in him; yet even then he could say, "yet thy commandments are my delights." What a riddle is the man who knows God! He has great trouble and is full of anguish, yet he is delighted; how can these things be? The child of God knows what it is to be troubled on every side, and yet not to be troubled within.

[Psalms 119:144](#). *The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting: give me understanding, and I shall live.*

As if he could not live without it, he did not call it true living except as he understood and enjoyed the precepts of his God.

[Psalms 119:145](#). *I cried with my whole heart; hear me, O LORD: I will keep thy statutes.*

Here we have both a prayer and a resolve; but the resolution grew out of the prayer, and was connected with it. The psalmist prays to God to help him to keep his statutes. Are any of you hard put to it just now by strong temptation? I commend this verse to you: “Hear me, O Lord: I will keep thy statutes.” Cry unto God, “Do help me, O Lord; let not strong temptation drag me away from thee! I do long to be holy, my whole heart’s desire is to keep Thy ways; O help me, I pray thee!” This verse begins with “I cried,” and the next verse begins in the same way: —

[Psalms 119:146](#). *I cried unto thee;*

It is good when you can cry. The living child cries, and it is the man of God whose prayer is a cry of almost inarticulate utterance and grief: “I cried,” “I cried.” What did he cry?

[Psalms 119:146](#). *Save me, and I shall keep thy testimonies.*

David had no notion of salvation without obedience; so he prays, “Save me, and I shall keep thy testimonies.” Is that the salvation you desire, — salvation from sin? If so, you shall have it. God, the Holy One, delights to bestow holiness; and he will speedily hear and answer such a prayer as that.

[Psalms 119:147](#). *I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried:*

The psalmist was still crying, crying early in the morning; before the sun was up, he was up, and crying unto God.

[Psalms 119:147](#). *I hoped in thy word.*

It is well when hope goes with prayer, when you begin to see daylight even before the sun is up. “I hoped in thy Word.” Not in any enthusiastic impression of his own, but in God’s Word itself, the psalmist placed all his confidence.

[Psalms 119:148](#). *Mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I might meditate in thy word.*

As he was up before the sun, so he was praying before they set the guards for the night-watch; and when they were changing guards, and he heard the cry of the hour from the watchman, he was still crying to God; and at the same time he was meditating: “that I might meditate in thy Word.” Ah, that is the way to cry! Meditation is very much neglected nowadays; we read, perhaps, too much, we meditate, for certain, too little; and meditation is to reading like digestion after eating. The cows in the pasture eat the grass, and then they lie down, and chew the cud, and get all the good they can out of what they have eaten. Reading snips off the grass, but meditation chews the cud. Therefore, “read, mark, learn, and inwardly

digest.” In this matter we often fail; we shall be wise to imitate David, who devoted the early morning to prayer, and the night watches to meditation.

[Psalms 119:149](#). *Hear my voice —*

So the psalmist used to pray aloud. It is a very great help in prayer if you can do the same. If we pray aloud to be heard of men, it is a sin; but if we pray aloud that we may hear ourselves, so that our devotion may be excited, we shall often find it very profitable, and if people hear us by accident, so much the better; they are not hearing anything that will do them hurt, they are hearing that which may do them good.

[Psalms 119:149](#). *According unto thy lovingkindness:*

That is, do not hear it to judge it, to censure it, to criticize it, but hear it as a father hears his child, loving to hear its little voice speaking in broken accents.

[Psalms 119:149](#). *O LORD, quicken me according to thy judgment.*

Just now, the psalmist prayed, “Hear me, O Lord!” In the 146th verse, he cried, “Save me;” now his prayer is, “O Lord, quicken me!” When God puts more life into us, then we have more strength to bear our burdens, and having more spiritual life, we have more power to resist temptation. Quickening is an essential mercy, containing within itself a multitude of blessings: “Quicken me according to thy judgment.”

[Psalms 119:150](#). *They draw nigh that follow of after mischief:*

He could hear the sound of their feet behind him; they were running after him, and he could detect the pit-pat of their malicious footsteps.

[Psalms 119:150-151](#). *They are far from thy law. Thou art near, O LORD*

What a comfort that is! They are trying to get near, but thou art near. I can hear the tread of their feet behind me, but I can see thy face close to me. How comforted is the psalmist in the time of trouble! His adversaries may be as keen of scent as bloodhounds, but God is with him, therefore he fears them not.

[Psalms 119:151-152](#). *And all thy commandments are truth, Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old that thou hast founded them for ever.*

So that this Psalm was written by David when he was an old man. He had known the Lord’s commandments when he was young, and now, in his declining days, he can say, “I have known of old that thou hast founded them for ever.” O young men, if you want to be happy old men, begin by knowing God’s Word! If you have known that God has founded his Word of old, you know that which will comfort you when you grow old. In fact, you

have found a perpetual spring within your heart, if from your youth up you have known in the fullest sense the Word of the Lord. Some are changing their creed every day in the week, as the weather changes, but blessed is that man who has so learned Christ to begin with that he keeps in the old way all his life. He is the man who can truly grow. Transplant a tree six times a year, and you will not get any fruit from it; but blessed are they that are planted in the courts of the Lord, for they shall flourish there, and shall still bring forth fruit in old age.

Verses 145-168

[Psalms 119:145](#). *I cried with my whole heart: hear me, O LORD: I will keep thy statutes.*

In the time of trouble there is no resort like that of prayer, but it must be intense and earnest. "I cried with my whole heart." And sometimes it should be accompanied with a resolve to profit by the affliction. "I will keep thy statutes." As the child under the rod prays to be spared because he hopes in future to be obedient, so does the Psalmist here say, "Hear me, O Lord; I will keep thy statutes." This ought to be the effect of every affliction, to make us more careful in our obedience. It is not always so, but so it ought always to be.

[Psalms 119:146](#). *I cried unto thee: save me, and I shall keep thy testimonies.*

As if he felt that the force of gratitude would constrain him to obedience. He did not merely promise it, but he prophesied it as a matter of certainty that he should keep the Lord's testimony.

[Psalms 119:147](#). *I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried: I hoped in thy word.*

Early prayers seem seasonable. Before we have gone into the world, should we not first go to our God? Prayer ought to be the key of the morning to open it, as well as the key of the night to close it. And notice what should always be associated with prayer, namely, hope. "I hoped in thy word." There is no prayer like a hopeful prayer, in which a man hopes, believes, expects, that God will send him a blessing.

[Psalms 119:148](#). *Mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I might meditate in thy word.*

Before the watchman can cry the hour of night, mine eyes are upon the Word of God, and I am studying that. Oh! it is well when we prove our love

to the Word of God by our meditation upon it, our constant, searching into it.

[Psalms 119:149](#). *Hear my voice according unto thy lovingkindness:*

Not according to my earnestness, much less according to my merit, but “Hear my voice, according to thy loving-kindness.” Oh! what a large measure this, for who can tell how boundless is the loving-kindness of God? Such be the answer to my prayer, O my Lord.

[Psalms 119:149](#). *O LORD, quicken me according to thy judgment.*

As thou dost try me, quicken me. Just as thou art I have need of it give me more spiritual life.

[Psalms 119:150](#). *They draw nigh that follow after mischief: they are far from thy law.*

Dogs are at my heels. I have heard them long ago pursuing me, but now they are getting nearer to me than ever.

[Psalms 119:151](#). *Thou art near, O LORD*

Is not that a blessed sentence, that, when the adversaries are near, the Friend of friends is near too? What if he be like a hunted stag, and the dogs are at his heels, yet the omnipotent Lord, the Interposer, can come between and save his darling from the power of the dogs.

[Psalms 119:151](#); [Psalms 119:159](#). *And all thy commandments are truth. Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old that thou hast founded them for ever.*

It is an old story with me that thy love is without beginning, thy covenant from all eternity, thy grace immutable, not fickle, changeable as if it were founded yesterday upon the sand, but “Thou hast founded them for ever.”

[Psalms 119:153-155](#). *Consider mine affliction, and deliver me: for I do not forget thy law. Plead my cause, and deliver me: quicken me according to thy word. Salvation is far from the wicked: for they seek not thy statutes.*

If they sought that salvation, they would cease to be wicked; they would find salvation; but while they follow out their wicked ways they get further and further away from anything like salvation.

[Psalms 119:156-158](#). *Great are thy tender mercies, O LORD: quicken me according to thy judgments. Many are my persecutors and mine enemies; yet do I not decline from thy testimonies. I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved; because they kept not thy word.*

It is enough to make any man grieve that the Word of God, which is so right, so just, so good, should be despised. What madness is this which is in the hearts of men, that they despise the best of the best?

[Psalms 119:159](#). *Consider how I love thy precepts: quicken me, O LORD, according to thy lovingkindness.*

It is a fair argument; as a friend may say to another, “Consider how I love you;” as a child might say to his angry father when he is about to chasten him, “My father, I love you, although I have transgressed; look at my heart, and see how I love you, notwithstanding all the mistakes of my character, and even the faults that I have committed.

[Psalms 119:160-161](#). *Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever. Princes have persecuted me without a cause: but my heart standeth in awe of thy word.*

“Princes have persecuted me without a cause; but my heart standeth in awe of” — them? No, but “of thy Word.”

[Psalms 119:162-166](#). *I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil. I hate and abhor lying: but thy law do I love. Seven times a day do I praise thee because of thy righteous judgments, Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them. LORD, I have hoped for thy salvation, and done thy commandments.*

Present duty, future expectation. It is no use our hoping for great things unless we ourselves cultivate good things. God will make tomorrow bright: let us make today holy.

[Psalms 119:167-168](#). *My soul hath kept thy testimonies; and I love them exceedingly.*

I have kept thy precepts and thy testimonies: for all my ways are before thee.

Verses 153-174

[Psalms 119:153](#). *Consider mine affliction, and deliver me: for I do not forget thy law.*

As much as if he said, “Lord, I do not forget thee; do not forget me.” Thy grace has kept my memory; let thy grace keep me altogether.

[Psalms 119:154-156](#). *Plead my cause, and deliver me: quicken me according to thy word. Salvation is far from the wicked: for they seek not thy statutes. great are thy tender mercies, O LORD: quicken me according to thy judgments.*

Oh! how the saints want quickening. They know they do. They feel that they get dull, and they cannot endure it. They are not happy unless they possess vivid grace and true light.

[Psalms 119:157-158](#) *Many are my persecutors and mine enemies: yet do I not decline from thy testimonies. I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved; because they kept not thy word.*

The very sight of them gave me sorrow. Even though they tried to be mirthful, I was not amused by them, and beheld them and was grieved, “Because they kept not thy word.”

[Psalms 119:159](#). *Consider how I love thy precepts: quicken me, O LORD, according to thy lovingkindness.*

My heart is right, I do love thee; but I feel dull and heavy. Lord, come and quicken me, not according to my love to thee, but according to thy lovingkindness, come and quicken me. “Thy word is true from the beginning” — from the first page of the book of Genesis to the very last — true about everything, true from the first moment it began with me. Every promise has been kept. There has not been a falsehood all the way through.

[Psalms 119:160](#). *Thy word is true from the beginning: and everyone of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever.*

“Princes have persecuted me without a cause.” David was a prince and a man expects to be fairly dealt with by his peers; but it was not so in this case.

[Psalms 119:161](#). *Princes have persecuted me without a cause: but my heart standeth in awe of thy word.*

When we are in awe of God’s word, we shall not be in awe of princes. The fear of God is the best cure for the fear of men.

[Psalms 119:162](#). *I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil.*

He had more joy in reading the Scriptures than in winning a great battle, or in being surprised at the finding of a great treasure.

[Psalms 119:163](#). *I hate and abhor lying: but thy law do I love.*

Now the Orientals did not hate lying; they generally tried to be proficient at it. The only fault about lying with them is to be found out. Then they think they must have been very unskillful. David, therefore, was far ahead of his time — far ahead of his fellow-countrymen.

[Psalms 119:164](#). *Seven times a day do I praise thee because of thy righteous judgments.*

He could not have enough of praise; he did it often, he did it perfectly — seven times a day — and if he praised God seven times a day because of his righteous judgments how much more ought we to do it because of his abounding grace! Ah! there is a special cause for thanks.

[Psalms 119:165-166](#). *Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them. LORD, I have hoped for thy salvation, and done thy commandments,*

Two good things to put together — hope in God’s mercy, and obedience to God’s will.

[Psalms 119:167-174](#). *My soul hath kept thy testimonies; and I love them exceedingly. I have kept thy precepts and thy testimonies: for all my ways are before thee. Let my cry come near before thee, O LORD: give me understanding according to thy word. Let my supplication come before thee: deliver me according to thy word. My lips shall utter praise, when thou hast taught me thy statutes. My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments are righteousness. Let thine hand help me; for I have chosen thy precepts. I have longed for thy salvation, O LORD and thy law is my delight.*

Cannot we say that, dear friends, this morning? I hope we can — with all our failings and wandering, yet the law of God is our delight, and if we could have our wish, we would never again go beyond its restraints, nor fall short of its demands.

[PSALMS CONTENTS](#)

PSALM 120

Verses 1-3

[Psalms 120:1](#). *In my distress I cried unto the LORD, and he heard me.*

Slander occasions distress of the most grievous kind. Those who have felt the edge of a cruel tongue know assuredly that it is sharper than the sword. Calumny rouses our indignation by a sense of injustice, and yet we find ourselves helpless to fight with the evil, or to act in our own defense. We could ward off the strokes of a cutlass, but we have no shield against a liar’s tongue. Silence to man and prayer to God are the best cures for the evil of slander. It is of little use to appeal to our fellows on the matter of slander, for the more we stir in it the more it spreads, it is of no avail to

appeal to the honour of the slanderer, for they have none, and the most piteous demands for justice will only increase their malignity and encourage them to fresh insult. However, when cries to man would be our weakness, cries to God will be our strength. The ear of our God is not deaf, nor even heavy. He listens attentively, he catches the first accent of supplication; he makes each of his children confess, — “he heard me.”

[Psalms 120:2](#). *Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue.*

Lips are soft; but when they are “lying lips” they suck away the life of character and are as murderous as razors. Lips should never be red with the blood of honest men’s reputes, nor salved with malicious falsehoods. The faculty of speech becomes a curse when it is degraded into a mean weapon for smiting men behind their backs. Those who fawn and flatter, too, and all the while have enmity in their hearts, are horrible beings; they are the seed of the devil, and he worketh in them after his own deceptive nature. Better to meet wild beasts and serpents than deceivers: these are a kind of monster whose birth is from beneath, and whose end lies far below.

[Psalms 120:3](#). *What shall be given unto thee? or what shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue?*

The Psalmist seems lost to suggest a fitting punishment. It is the worst of offences — this detraction, calumny, and slander. Judgment sharp and crushing would be measured out to it if men were visited for their transgressions. But what punishment could be heavy enough? What will God do with lying tongues? He has uttered his most terrible threats against them, and he will terribly execute them in due time.

[PSALMS CONTENTS](#)

PSALM 121

Verses 1-7

[Psalms 121:1](#). *I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.*

It is wise to look to the strong for strength. Dwellers in valleys are subject to many disorders for which there is no cure but a sojourn in the uplands, and it is well when they shake off their lethargy and resolve upon a climb. The holy man who here sings a choice sonnet looked away from the

slanderers by whom he was tormented to the Lord who saw all from his high places, and was ready to pour down succor for his injured servant. Help comes to saints only from above, they look elsewhere in vain: let us lift up our eyes with hope, expectancy, desire, and confidence. Satan will endeavor to keep our eyes upon our sorrows that we may be disquieted and discouraged, be it ours firmly to resolve that we will look out and look up, for there is good cheer for the eyes, and they that lift up their eyes to the eternal hills shall soon have their hearts lifted up also. The purposes of God; the divine attributes. The immutable promises, the covenant, ordered in all things and sure. The providence, predestination, and proved faithfulness of the Lord — these are the things to which we must lift up our eyes, for from these our help must come.

[Psalms 121:2](#). *My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth.*

What we need is help, — help powerful, efficient, constant: we need a very present help in trouble. What a mercy that we have it in our God. Our hope is in Jehovah, for our help comes from him. Help is on the road and will not fail to reach us in due time, for he who sends it to us was never known to be too late. Jehovah who created all things is equal to every emergency; heaven and earth are at the disposal of him who made them, therefore let us be very joyful in our infinite helper. He will sooner destroy heaven and earth than permit his people to be destroyed, and the perpetual hills themselves shall bow rather than he shall fail whose ways are everlasting. We are bound to look beyond heaven and earth to him who made them both: it is vain to trust the creatures: it is wise to trust the Creator.

[Psalms 121:3](#). *He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber.*

Though the paths of life are dangerous and difficult, yet we shall stand fast, for Jehovah will not permit our feet to slide, and if he will not suffer it we shall not suffer it. If our foot will be thus kept we may be sure that our head and heart will be preserved also. In the original the words express a wish or prayer, — “May he not suffer thy foot to be moved.” Promised preservation should be the subject of perpetual prayer; and we may pray believingly; for those who have God for their keeper shall be safe from all the perils of the way. Among the hills and ravines of Palestine the literal keeping of the feet is a great mercy, but in the slippery ways of a tried and

afflicted life, the boon of upholding is of priceless value for a single false step might cause us a fall fraught with awful danger. We should not stand a moment if our keeper were to sleep, we need him by day and by night, not a single step can be safely taken except under his guardian eye. God is the convoy and bodyguard of his saints. No fatigue or exhaustion can cast our God into sleep; his watchful eyes are never closed.

[Psalms 121:4](#). *Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.*

The consoling truth must be repeated: it is too rich to be dismissed in a single line. It were well if we always imitated the sweet singer, and would dwell a little upon a choice doctrine, sucking the honey from it. What a glorious title is in the Hebrew — “The keeper of Israel,” and how delightful to think that no form of unconsciousness ever steals over him, neither the deep slumber nor the lighter sleep. This is a subject of wonder, a theme for attentive consideration, therefore the word “Behold” is set up as a waymark. Israel fell asleep, but his God was awake. Jacob had neither walls, nor curtains, nor bodyguard around him, but the Lord was in that place though Jacob knew it not, and therefore the defenseless man was safe as in a castle. He keeps us as a rich man keeps his treasure, as a captain keeps a city with a garrison, as a royal guard keeps his monarch’s head. If the former verse is in strict accuracy a prayer, this is the answer to it, it affirms the matter thus, “Lo he shall not slumber nor sleep — the Keeper of Israel.” Happy are the pilgrims to whom this psalm is a safe conduct; they may journey all the way to the celestial city without fear.

[Psalms 121:5](#). *The LORD is thy keeper: the LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand.*

Here the preserving One who had been spoken of by pronouns in the two previous verses, is distinctly named — Jehovah is thy keeper. What a mint of meaning lies here: the sentence is a mass of bullion, and when coined and stamped with the king’s name it will bear all our expenses between our birthplace on earth and our rest in heaven. Here is a glorious person — “Jehovah,” assuming a gracious office and fulfilling it in person, — Jehovah is thy “keeper,” in behalf of a favoured individual — my, and a firm assurance of revelation that it is even so at this hour — Jehovah is thy keeper. A shade gives protection from burning heat and glaring light. We cannot bear too much blessing; even divine goodness, which is a right-hand dispensation must be toned down and shaded to suit our infirmity, and this

the Lord will do for us. When a blazing sun pours down its burning beams upon our heads the Lord Jehovah himself will interpose to shade us and that in the most honourable manner, acting as our right-hand attendant, and placing us in comfort and safety.

[Psalms 121:6](#). *The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night.*

None but the Lord could shelter us from these tremendous forces. There are dangers of the light and of the dark, but in both and from both we shall be preserved — literally from excessive heat and from baneful chills; mystically from any injurious effects which might follow from doctrine bright or dim; spiritually from the evils of prosperity and adversity; eternally from the strain of overpowering glory and from the pressure of terrible events, such as judgment and the burning of the world. Day and night make up all time: thus the ever-present protection never ceases.

[Psalms 121:7](#). *The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul.*

It is a great pity that our admirable translation did not keep to the word “keep” all through the psalm, for all along it is one. God not only keeps his own in all evil times but from all evil influences and operations, yea, from evils themselves. This is a far-reaching word of covering: it includes everything and excludes nothing: the wings of Jehovah amply guard his own from evils great and small, temporary and eternal. Soul-keeping is the soul of keeping. If the soul be kept all is kept. The preservation of the greater includes that of the less so far as it is essential to the main design: the kernel shall be preserved, and in order thereto the shell shall be preserved also. Our soul is kept from the dominion of sin, the infection of error, the crush of despondency, the puffing up of pride; kept from the world, the flesh, and the devil; kept for holier and greater things; kept in the love of God; kept unto the eternal kingdom and glory. What can harm a soul that is kept of the Lord?

This exposition consisted of readings from [Isaiah 5:1-19](#), and [Psalms 121:1-7](#).

Verses 1-8

[Psalms 121:1](#). *I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.*

No help comes from anywhere else but from the eternal hills. Let us lift up our eyes, therefore, hopefully expecting help from the hills; it is on the

road, it “cometh.” The psalmist with the eye of faith could see it coming, so he watched its approach.

[Psalms 121:2](#). *My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth.*

He would sooner unmake them than desert his people. He that made heaven and earth could certainly find shelter for us either in heaven or in earth. He cannot, he will not leave us, he will make room for us in heaven when there is no room for us here. What a blessed thing it is to look right away from the creature to the Creator! The creature may fail you; but the Creator is an ever-springing well of all-sufficient grace.

[Psalms 121:3](#). *He will not suffer thy foot to be moved:*

He will not endure it, he will not suffer it. Many would like to trip thee up; but he will not allow it, he loves thee too well.

[Psalms 121:3](#). *He that keepeth thee will not slumber.*

Thou mayest slumber, for thou art frail, but he is a Watchman to whose eyes sleep never comes. You are always safe. Alexander went to sleep, he said, because Parmenio watched; and you may take the sleep of the beloved because Jehovah watches over you.

[Psalms 121:4](#). *Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.*

Behold it, that is, mark it; put a nota bene at the side of it, take cognizance of this as a great and sure truth. Jacob went to sleep with a stone for his pillow, but he that kept him did not sleep; he came to him in the night-watches, and revealed to him his covenant.

[Psalms 121:5](#). *The Lord is thy keeper: the LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand.*

Oh, what a keeper we have! Can you not trust him? Will you not be at peace in your mind if it be indeed true that Jehovah keeps you, and is your guard in the hour of danger?

[Psalms 121:6](#). *The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night.*

Then, when canst thou get hurt? If thou art protected both day and night, these make up all the time. God does not make a new sun for his people, the sun would smite us as well as others, but he takes the sting out of the sun’s excessive brightness: and we have the same sickly moon as others have, with the same influences over us, but God takes care that the moonbeams do not harm his people. Neither the sun of prosperity nor the night of

adversity, neither the light of truth nor even the dimness of mystery, shall injure one of the chosen seed.

[Psalms 121:7](#). *The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul.*

That is the soul of our preservation; if the life, the soul, be kept, then are we kept altogether.

[Psalms 121:8](#). *The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in*

—
Thine early days of youth, when thou art going out into life; and thy coming in, when the older days creep over thee, and thou art coming in to God and heaven; thy going out into business, and thy coming in to private devotion.

[Psalms 121:8](#). *From this time forth, and even for evermore.*

Let us, therefore, feel restful at this time, and even for evermore, having the Lord for our Keeper and Preserver.

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 121, 122.

[PSALMS CONTENTS](#)

PSALM 122

Verses 1-9

[Psalms 122:1](#). *I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD.*

I was glad for their sake, glad to think they were so willing to go. I was glad also for my own sake, for I was glad to go, too.

[Psalms 122:2](#). *Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem.*

Happy men who were citizens of such a city! Happy worshippers coming together to the place whose very name signifies the vision of peace, the metropolis of God, type of the New Jerusalem which is from above!

[Psalms 122:3](#). *Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together:*

Not a conglomeration of huts, but builded as a city with substantial structures; and not a straggling city, like some we read of, that have been called “cities of magnificent distances,” but it was “compact together.” Happy is the church that is at peace; blessed are the people who are joined together by a gracious brotherly love.

[Psalms 122:4](#). *Whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the LORD.*

The Church is the point of meeting: “Whither the tribes go up.” The Church is the place of “testimony,” and saints go to hear testimony, and they go to bear it. I wish there was more of this bearing testimony among Christian people, and that they looked upon it as a sacred duty to tell to others what God has told to them. “To give thanks unto the name of the Lord” — that is another part of true worship, — praise, joyful thanksgiving, should be one of the saints’ continual avocations; let us not forget it at this time. Some are here who have been sick; let them give thanks unto the name of the Lord. Some are here who are still weak, yet able to come up with God’s people; let us give thanks unto the name of the Lord. We have all some special mercy, some choice favor, for which to praise his name; then let us all give thanks unto the name of the Lord.

[Psalms 122:6](#). *For there are set thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David.*

If any of the people had been wronged by the petty magistrates, they went up to Jerusalem, and made their appeal to the king. Here may we bring our suit before God, and order our case before him, for he is true and just, and nothing shall go amiss that is left with him.

[Psalms 122:6](#). *Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:*

Pray for it now, breathe a silent prayer to God.

[Psalms 122:6](#). *They shall prosper that love thee.*

God loves those who love his Church, and love his cause, and he rewards them with prosperity, as much of earthly prosperity as they can bear, and prosperity to their souls beyond measure.

[Psalms 122:7](#). *Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palace.*

The psalmist bade us pray, and now he himself prays. He who bids others do a thing should be prepared to set the example.

[Psalms 122:8](#). *For my brethren and companions’ sakes, I will now pray, Peace be within Thee.*

Let us say it, for the sake of beloved ones in heaven, and dear ones on earth who are on the way thither, “Peace be within thee.”

[Psalms 122:9](#). *Because of the house of the LORD our God I will seek thy good.*

Not only pray for it, but work for it, give for it, live for it: “I will seek thy good!” God bless to us these two Psalms and put us all in a right state of heart tonight! Amen.

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 121, 122.

[PSALMS CONTENTS](#)

PSALM 123

Verses 1-4

[Psalms 123:1](#). *Unto thee lift I up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens.*

Our eyes are far too apt to look below, or to look within, or to look around, but it is wisdom on our part to look up. There is always something blessed to see upward, especially when we look up to him who dwells in the highest heavens, — our Father, our Saviour, our Comforter. There is little down here that is worth looking at, but there is everything for our comfort when we look up.

[Psalms 123:2](#). *Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the LORD our God, until that he have mercy upon us.*

This is what we are looking for, — the mercy of the Lord our God. It comes from his great heart, through his almighty hand. A wave of his hand is sufficient to drive away all our troubles. When he opens his hand he supplies the needs of every living thing, so mighty and so bountiful is he. Let us, therefore, keep our eyes upon our Lord’s hands “until that he have mercy upon us.”

[Psalms 123:3](#). *Have mercy upon us, O LORD, have mercy upon us:*

The longing soul does not wait in utter silence without expressing its desires. I have heard of some who have said that their will was so fully conformed to God’s will that they had left off praying to him, but surely that was a satanic delusion, for the will of Christ was perfectly conformed to that of his Father, yet for that very reason he abounded in prayer. We must be in an evil case if we leave off praying. The psalmist says that he and those who were like-minded with him waited until the Lord had mercy upon them, and then he began a sort of litany, “Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy upon us.” He uses the same words twice as if to express

the greatness of his need, the clearness of his perception of what he needed, the earnestness of his desire, and his expectation that his need would be supplied. In this verse and the previous one, we have the petition, “Have mercy upon us,” presented no less than three times, for mercy is the greatest need of the best man who ever lived.

[Psalms 123:3](#). *For we are exceedingly filed with contempt.*

That is a sharp cutting thing, most trying to the soul that has to endure it; and many have been greatly depressed in spirit by the contempt that has been poured upon them. But, Lord, thy mercy is a cure for man’s want of mercy; thy thoughtfulness of us will take off the edge from man’s contempt of us.

[Psalms 123:4](#). *Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease, and with the contempt of the proud.*

It does not seem to be a desirable thing to be at ease, for it was such people who were the scornors of the psalmist and his godly companions. Job also said, “He that is ready to slip with his feet is as a lamp despised in the thought of him that is at ease.” In the stagnant air of a life of ease, all kinds of mischiefs breed, and especially that fever of pride which leads ungodly men to have contempt for God’s people.

This exposition consisted of readings from PSALMS 123, 124, and 125.

[PSALMS CONTENTS](#)

PSALM 124

Verses 1-8

[Psalms 124:1-3](#). *If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, now may Israel say; if it had not been the LORD who was on our side, when men rose up against us: then they had swallowed us up quick, —*

That is, alive, —

[Psalms 124:3](#). *When their wrath was kindled against us:*

If it had not been God who had engaged to take care of his people, they would all have perished, but that God must be Jehovah. I wish that our translators had not been carried away by the superstition of the Jews, and that they had used the word “Jehovah” where it is employed in the original. This verse and the previous one would have read, “If it had not been Jehovah who was on our side, when men rose up against us: then they had

swallowed us up alive,” as some beasts, and birds, and fishes swallow their prey and as some men would do with us if they could, that is, swallow us up alive, making a short and speedy end of us, not waiting to tear us in pieces, but swallowing us whole and alive.

[Psalms 124:4-5](#). *Then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul: then the proud waters had gone over our soul.*

The figure is varied. We are first likened to the lamb that is liable to be swallowed by the lion, and next we are compared to one who is in danger of being carried away by a devouring flood, which shows no pity to any, but sweeps everything before it down to destruction.

[Psalms 124:6](#). *Blessed be the LORD, who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth.*

Neither to Satan and his legions, nor to wicked men, has God delivered us. We are not to be their prey, for God claims us as his own.

[Psalms 124:7](#). *Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken, and we are escaped.*

What a joyous song that is for the escaped soul to sing! Whenever a Christian man has fallen into difficulties through not walking uprightly when he has gone astray from the right path, and has been caught in the fowler’s net, and is in such trouble that he does not know what to do, — when God comes, and cuts the net, perhaps with the sharp knife of affliction, and the imprisoned soul again finds freedom from worldly associations, and happy liberty in the service of God, I do not know a sweeter song than this that he and others of God’s rescued birds can sing as they mount up into the clear light of God’s countenance, “Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken, and we are escaped.”

[Psalms 124:8](#). *Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth.*

This is a good lesson for us to learn from the past experience of the Lord’s people. God and God alone did deliver his servants in the past and herein is our confidence for the present and the future; — our help is in the name — the revealed and manifested character — of Jehovah, the Creator of heaven and earth.

This exposition consisted of readings from PSALMS 123, 124, and 125.

[PSALMS CONTENTS](#)

PSALM 125

Verses 1-5

[Psalms 125:1-3](#). *They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever. As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the LORD is round about his people from henceforth even for ever. For the rod of the wicked shall not test upon the lot of the righteous; lest the righteous put forth their hands unto iniquity.*

By “the rod” is here meant “the scepter.” The wicked shall not permanently rule over the righteous; they may have a temporary dominion and sovereignty; but, in due season, their rod shall be broken, and their power shall be scattered to the winds.

[Psalms 125:4-5](#). *Do good O Lord, unto those that be good, and to them that are upright in their hearts. As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the LORD shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity: but peace shall be upon Israel.*

May we have faith to lay hold upon that last blood promise, and so enjoy the peace of God which passeth all understanding! Amen!

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 123, 124, 125.

[PSALMS CONTENTS](#)

PSALM 126

Verses 1-6

[Psalms 126:1](#). *When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream.*

We could hardly believe it; we began to talk incoherently, as men do in their sleep. We were so carried away with joyful rapture that we did not know where we were: “we were like them that dream.”

[Psalms 126:2](#). *Then was our mouth filled with laughter, —*

We became Issacs, for he was the child of laughter. We laughed as Abraham did, for very joy of faith. Sometimes, laughter may become the holiest possible expression. It may be one of the meanest utterances of our nature, but it may also be one of the loftiest. These people not only laughed, but their mouth was filled with laughter; they could not laugh loudly

enough, there was no expression of articulate speech that sufficed them at all: “Then was our mouth filled with laughter,” —

[Psalms 126:2](#). *And our tongue with singing:*

When they did find their tongue, they could not speak, they must sing. They could not have anything so slow as a mere declaration, they must have a Psalm: “Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing.”

[Psalms 126:2](#). *Then said they among the heathen, The LORD hath done great things for them.*

The heathen could not help seeing that it was the Lord who had delivered Israel. No other people except the Jews ever came back from captivity. The Babylonish tyrant never restored any others to their land, but he did restore these people; and the very heathen said, “It is their God, Jehovah, that hath done it.” And what did God’s own people say?

[Psalms 126:3](#). *The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad.*

See the difference between the outsider and the insider. The outsider says, “The Lord hath done great things for them.” Ah! but they who belong to God say, “The Lord hath done great things for us.” Oh, the privilege of being able to say “for us!” Dear hearts, can you join with all the saints, and say, “The Lord hath done great things for us”? This is what happened to God’s people before, but now they have fallen into another trouble, so hear how they pray.

[Psalms 126:4](#). *Turn again our captivity, O LORD, as the streams in the south.*

“Thou didst it once; do it again. Thou madest us to live; make us to live again. We sang then, O Lord; enable us to sing again, ‘Turn again our captivity.’ As the dry river-beds are suddenly made to be filled with water at the melting of the snow, so come, and fill our hearts, ‘as the streams in the south.’”

[Psalms 126:5](#). *They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.*

Take that for certain; lay it down as a Scripture proverb. When God sends us a wet time, and we have to sow in the moist foggy atmosphere, never mind; there are brighter days yet to come. We shall reap amid the sunbeams, and carry home our sheaves with joy.

[Psalms 126:6](#). *He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.*

“He shall doubtless come again with rejoicing.” Now, ye disconsolate workers, ye who have only a handful of seed, ye shall come back with an armful of sheaves. You shall come back rejoicing though you go forth now sorrowing, for the Lord has said it; wherefore be of good courage.

This exposition consisted of readings from PSALMS 126. and 127.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 127

Verses 1-5

Psalm 127:1-3. *Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.*

It is vain for you, to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows for so he giveth his beloved sleep. Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD and the fruit of the womb is his reward.

The psalmist had been speaking about house-building, and there is the building up of the house in the sense of a family being built up by children. Some people think children an encumbrance, but they are “a heritage of the Lord,” and they are to be looked upon with gladness. One said, “I have twelve sons,” and his friend answered, “That is exactly Jacob’s number.” “Yes,” said the first speaker, “and I have Jacob’s God to enable me to sustain them.” There is a comfort in that thought; may God grant that none may be troubled by those whom God sends to us for a heritage!

Psalm 127:4. *As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth.*

In the case of an arrow, you know it all depends which way you shoot it. Mind, therefore, that you direct your children aright; give them a good start, a true aim from the very first, God helping you, and then they shall fly from you like the arrows of a mighty archer.

Psalm 127:5. *Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them:*

That is, when they are like arrows; — not when they are gnarled and knotty, like crooked sticks. When they are unwilling to be tutored and trained, then they become a trial and a trouble; but happy is the man who has a quiver full of arrows; the more the merrier of such children as the psalmist here speaks of.

[Psalms 127:5](#). *They shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.*

When there was any suit at law, these sons of his would be there to plead for him; if there was any fighting to be done, they also would be to the front. It was a dangerous thing to attack a man who had a house full of strong, loyal, loving sons. They would be his defense, they would speak, and speak with very considerable emphasis, too, with his enemies in the gate.

This exposition consisted of readings from PSALMS 126. and 127.

[PSALMS CONTENTS](#)

Psalm Chapter 128

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

PSALM 129

Verses 1-8

Three Songs of degrees.

[Psalms 129:1-2](#). *Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth, may Israel now say: many a time have they afflicted me from my youth: yet they have not prevailed against me.*

The trials of some of God's people begin very early. When first we put on the armor of God, the adversary is usually very bitter against us. Some of our old friends and acquaintances cannot bear to see the change in us, and they bitterly oppose us, so that God's children may have to say, "From our youth they have afflicted us." But you must not think that the beginning of sorrows will be the end of them. Oh, no! "Many a time have they afflicted me." God's children are often called to pass under the rod, and the rod is frequently held in the hands of the children of men. Your Saviour carried the cross, and he expects you to carry it, too. He does not tell you to take it up now and then, but to take it up always, and to follow him with a constant will, cheerfully bearing it for his dear name's sake. "Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth: yet"-Is not that sweetly put?-"yet they have not prevailed against me." You recollect how Joseph's brothers

envied him, and at last sold him into Egypt; yet from the dungeon he rose to the throne, and he could say. “Yet they have not prevailed against me.” If thou art of the seed royal, one of the chosen people of God, they shall not prevail against thee. Even proud Haman, with all his plotting, was not able to overcome poor Mordecai; and the Lord thy God will preserve thee from the fury of all thy adversaries, and bring good to thee out of all the evil they try to do unto thee.

[Psalms 129:3](#). *The plowers plowed upon my back: they made long their furrows.*

Like one that has been cruelly scourged until each cut of the lash seemed to make a furrow through the quivering flesh: “The plowers plowed upon my back: they made long their furrows.” How truly could our blessed Lord utter these words when he was delivered up to wicked men to be scourged!

[Psalms 129:4](#). *The LORD is righteous: he hath cut asunder the cords of the wicked.*

“The Lord is righteous.” There is our hope and comfort. He takes away from them the scourge, and cuts up the cords of which it is made; and those cords with which they would bind the righteous he cuts into pieces, so that they can do nothing against them: “He hath cut asunder the cords of the wicked.”

[Psalms 129:5](#). *Let them all be confounded and turned back that hate Zion.*

So it seems that the one aimed at, and made to suffer, is the Church of God, “Zion.” She has often been scourged and afflicted. Her experience is like that of her covenant Head, and her triumph will be like his triumph.

[Psalms 129:6-8](#). *Let them be as the grass upon the housetops, which withereth afore it groweth up: wherewith the mower filleth not his hand; nor he that bindeth sheaves his bosom. Neither do they which go by say, The blessing of the LORD be upon you: we bless you in the name of the LORD.*

So the adversaries of the Church of God may grow as fast as grass on the roof of a house, but they will perish just as fast, and there will be nothing left of them. They threaten, they bully, they rage, they rave; but it is only for a little while.

Now we will read the “De profundis” Psalm.

This exposition consisted of readings from PSALMS 129, 130, and 131.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 130

Verses 1-8

I will first read the Psalm through, and afterwards say a few words by way of exposition.

Psalm 130:1-8. *Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O LORD. Lord, hear my voice: let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. If thou Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared. I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope. My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning. Let Israel hope in the LORD for with the LORD there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption. And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.*

You notice that this is one of the Songs of Degrees; that is, Psalms ascending by steps, and it begins at the very bottom: “Out of the depths.” But it gradually climbs up to the heights: “He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.” May your experience and mine, beloved, be like a ladder, — upward, always upward, step by step, ever rising, and getting nearer to our God!

The Psalm begins very low: “Out of the depths.” The psalmist is in the depths of sorrow and conscious sin, the depths of weakness, the depths of doubt and fear; yet, though he is in those depths, he does not leave off praying: “Out of the depths have I cried.” Some of the best prayers that were ever prayed have been offered in the depths. There are some men who never prayed at all until they came into the depths of sorrow, and those sorrows pressed their prayers out of them. The psalmist’s prayer was a cry. That is a child’s prayer; it cries to its mother or its father: “Out of the depths have I cried.” But it was not like a child’s cries sometimes are, — cries to itself, or cries to nobody: “Out of the depths have I cried unto THEE, O Jehovah.” That is the right kind of prayer which is directed to God as an arrow is aimed at the target.

In looking back over his past experience, the psalmist tells the Lord that he has prayed. Sometimes, it is a good thing to pray over your prayers. “I have prayed, Lord; now I present one more petition, ‘I pray thee to

remember that I have prayed. I pray thee to hear me. Lord, hear my voice.” What is the good of prayer if God does not hear it? Sometimes we ask God to answer our supplication. That is right, but, at the same time, remember that it may be a greater blessing for God to hear our prayers than to answer them; for if he were to make it an absolute rule that he would grant all our requests, it might be a curse rather than a blessing. At any rate, I should feel it a very dreadful responsibility to have cast upon me; for then, after all, I should have to depend upon my own prayers, and therefore have to order my own way. But when I read that God will hear my prayer, that is much better, for he can do as he likes about answering it; and if I pray an improper prayer, what is better for me than for God to hear it, and then to set it on one side? And, often, mine are such poor feeble prayers that it is much better for me that he should hear them, and then do for me exceeding abundantly above what I have asked or thought. I used to think that we ought to say that he is a prayer-hearing and a prayer-answering God; but I do not say that now. It is enough that he hears, enough that you have presented your petition, and that God has heard it. “Lord, hear my voice: let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.” That is, “Lord, consider my prayer; have respect unto it.

Answer it according to thy wise consideration of it; ‘let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication.’” Our prayers must usually be supplications; that is the word for a beggar’s pleading when he supplicates and asks for favors. That is what we do when we plead with God; and even if we do not speak, yet there is a voice in our supplications. In the sixth Psalm, David speaks of the voice of his weeping; and there is often a voice in that sorrow which cannot find a voice. God hears the grief that cannot itself speak to him: “Let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.”

And now, having put up his petition, notice his confession: “If thou, Jehovah, shouldest mark iniquities, O Adonai, who shall stand?” So it should run. If God were to sit like a judge taking notes of the evidence, and putting down against his people all their errors, who would be able to stand in that court? We should all be condemned. Then, does not God mark iniquities? Yes, he does in one sense, but not in another; and, through his infinite love and mercy, he does not deal with us after our sins, nor reward us according to our iniquities. “If he did,” David seems to say, “I could not stand.” But he says more, “Who shall stand?” Whatever pretensions to

perfection any persons may make, they are false. There is no man who can stand in God's sight when he comes to mark our iniquities; and if we are taught of God's Spirit, we shall know it to be so. In fact, the more holy a man becomes, the more conscious he is of unholiness.

“But” — and what a blessed “but” this is! — one of the most blessed “buts” in the Word of God: “But there is forgiveness with thee;” or, “There is a propitiation with thee.” There is a readiness to deal with men, not according to their just deserts, but according to free grace and the infinite mercy of God. “There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.” Is not that a very strange expression? One would have thought that it would have said, “There is judgment with thee, that thou mayest be feared.” But no, brethren, if there were judgment with God, and no forgiveness, then men would grow despairing, and they would be hardened and rebellious; or else all would be swept away in God's wrath, and there would be nobody left to fear him. It is mercy that softens the heart, it is the forgiveness of God that leads men to love him and to fear him. The true fear of God — the holy filial fear — never rises out of judgment, but springs out of forgiving love. I hope, beloved, you feel that, because you are forgiven, you fear to offend God; because of so much love, you fear to grieve the blessed Spirit of God.

“I wait for Jehovah, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope. My soul waiteth for Adonai,” — the King, the Sovereign Lord, — “more than they that watch for the morning, they that watch for the morning.” Our translators put in the words, “I say more than,” — I suppose, to make the sense more clear; but, by doing so, they spoiled the beautiful poetic simplicity of the original. “Let Israel hope in the Lord.” Until this verse, the psalmist has been talking about himself; now he speaks about all the people of God. True religion is expansive; as your own heart gets warmed, you begin to call others in to share your felicity. “Let Israel hope in the Lord.” Did not their father Jacob do so? When all night he wrestled at the brook Jabbok, he hoped in the Lord, and so he gained his name Israel, and went away triumphant because he hoped in Jehovah.

“For with Jehovah there is mercy.” Believe that, O seeking sinner! “With Jehovah there is mercy.” Believe this, O backslider! “With Jehovah there is mercy.” Believe this, downcast child of God; “and with him is plenteous redemption.” There is enough for you, and there is enough for all

who come to him. There is not a slave of sin whom God cannot redeem, for “with him is plenteous redemption.”

“And he shall redeem.” There is the comfort of it; he not only has the redemption, but he will make use of it. “He shall redeem Israel” — the whole of his Israel, all his people — “He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.” Oh, come to him, then, with all your iniquities, and pray to be redeemed from them; and as surely as Jehovah lives, he will fulfill this promise, and redeem you from all your iniquities.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 131

Verses 1-3

Psalms 131:1. *LORD, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me.*

I commend this verse to some who profess to be Christians, but who are always puzzling their poor brains with intricate questions, who want to solve the mystery of where free will and predestination can meet, how man can be responsible, and yet God’s predestination can be fulfilled, and I know not what beside. These are great waters the waves whereof are too big for our little barques. We have quite enough to do, my brother, to attend to the plain things of God’s Word, and to strive after holiness and the salvation of our fellow men, without addicting ourselves to tying knots and trying to untie them. It is an unprofitable business; it gendereth to pride rather than to anything else, and well did David say, “My heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me.”

Psalms 131:2. *Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child.*

That is a very blessed thing to be able to do, to quiet yourself when, like a weaned child, you are crying under the afflicting hand of God, when you feel a proud spirit murmuring, or when you want to pierce the darkness that veils divine truth, and want to understand what cannot be understood, and you worry because you are not omniscient. Oh, it is a blessed thing, then, to say to yourself, “Be quiet, child! Be quiet! “ What art thou but a child, after all, at thy best? What dost thou know? What canst thou know? Art thou not

satisfied to hear thy Father say, “What thou knowest not now, thou shalt know hereafter”? Dost thou not know that here we know but in part, and see but in part? By-and-by, we shall know even as we are known, but not yet. “I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother:”- as a child who sucks his finger, and goes to sleep sobbing “my soul is even as a weaned child.” David did not say, “My soul is even as a weaning child,” fretting, worrying, wanting to have its own will. There is no happiness in that state; but when it is not the weaning, but the weaned,-not the present participle, but the past,-then we get into comfort: “My soul is even as a weaned child,” who has given up his old comfort, that which he thought was as necessary to him as his life. He finds that, after all, he can live without it, and grow without it, and come to a better manhood without it than with it: “My soul is even as a weaned child.”

Psalms 131:3. Let Israel hope in the LORD-

You will never be weaned from him if you are his; but if you are weaned from the world, so as to have all your hope in the Lord, thrice happy are you. Now, too, you will grow; now you will come to the fullness of the stature of a man in Christ Jesus, which you could never have done if you had not been weaned. I remember that when Sarah weaned Isaac there was a great feast at the weaning, and I believe that God’s children often have a great feast at their weaning from the world. All the while they are but babes, and suck their comforts from the world, they get but little real joy; but when, by divine grace, they outgrow that state of things, then is there a great feast made for them.

Psalms 131:3. From henceforth and for ever.

That is real comfort that you may always enjoy, hoping in the Lord from henceforth and for ever. In life and in death here is a blessed confidence that will never fail you. God grant that we may enjoy it now and evermore! Amen.

This exposition consisted of readings from PSALMS 129, 130, and 131.

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PSALM 132

Verses 1-18

A Song of Degrees.

[Psalms 132:1](#). *LORD, remember David, and all his afflictions.*

God had entered into an everlasting covenant with David, “ordered in all things and sure,” and in this Psalm either David himself or some of his people or descendants pleaded that covenant in time of affliction and trial: “Lord, remember David, and all his afflictions.” The Lord would not forget either David or his people, yet it pleased him for them to come before him in prayer, and to remind him of the covenant that he had made with his servant. Using this prayer in a gospel sense, we bow before the Lord, and cry, “Lord, remember Jesus, the Son of David, and all his afflictions; remember all that he endured as his people’s Substitute, and have pity upon us, for his sake, as we plead that eternal covenant which thou hast made with him on our behalf.” That ancient covenant was made With David and the far more ancient covenant of grace was made with great David’s greater Son,” our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

[Psalms 132:2-5](#). *How he sware unto the LORD, and vowed unto the mighty God of Jacob; surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed; I will not give sleep to mine eyes, or slumber to mine eyelids, until I find out a place for the LORD, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob.*

David remembered that he had built himself a palace, but he wished even more ardently to build a palace for his God, a house for the celebration of his worship: “an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob.” But where can a worthy house be built for God? Where can there be made a fit dwelling place for the Most High? He filleth all things, yet all things cannot contain him. There is but one dwelling place of God, it is in Christ Jesus, for “in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” Oh! how we ought to thank God that he has provided himself a fitting dwelling place in the person of his dear Son, in whom all believers also are builded together for a habitation of God through the spirit. As for the ark of the covenant, it had long ago in David’s day dwelt in obscurity.

[Psalms 132:6](#). *Lo, we heard of it at Ephratah: we found it in the fields of the wood.*

God is willing to dwell in the woods. Many a time he does so. In many a cottage far removed from the haunts of men, God is found; and to many a backwoodsman God is as near as he is to those who worship him in temple or cathedral. “We found it in the fields of the wood.”

[Psalms 132:7](#). *We will go into his tabernacles: we will worship at his footstool.*

This Psalm is called “ A Song of degrees.” Notice the steps here described. We heard of it, we found it, we will go into it, we will worship in it. It is a good thing when, in our prayers and praises, we ascend step by step,-not on the stepping-stones of our dead selves, which is a piece of rubbish,-but by the living stepping-stones upon which the ever-living Spirit helps us to rise tier above tier, his own almighty hand helping us continually to rise higher and higher.

[Psalms 132:8](#). *Arise, O LORD into thy rest; thou, and the ark of thy strength.*

Let us pray that the Lord may constantly find rest in the midst of his people. He finds rest in them because they are one with his well-beloved Son. Come, Lord, at this moment, and take thy rest in the midst of this assembly, and make us all rest in thee.

[Psalms 132:9](#). *And let thy priests be clothed with righteousness;*

This is the best robe for all God’s holy ones, who are priests and kings unto him; this is better than snow white linen or robes bedecked with crimson and gold.

[Psalms 132:9](#). *And let thy saints shout for joy.*

The worship of God should be very gladsome and even demonstrative. We may shout. Sometimes the overflowings of joy demand more than ordinary expression, therefore we pray, “ Let thy holy ones shout for joy.”

[Psalms 132:10](#). *For thy servant David’s sake turn not away the face of thine anointed.*

Much more may we ask this for our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake. O God, remember thy Son, our Lord and our King, and for his sake look in love and pity upon us today !

[Psalms 132:11-12](#). *The LORD hath sworn in truth unto David, he will not turn from it; Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne. If thy children will keep my covenant and my testimony that I shall teach them, their children shall also sit upon thy throne for evermore.*

Long did the house of David reign over Israel; but they proved unfaithful, and therefore the scepter passed out of their hands, but it is still in the hand of another Son of David. In a spiritual sense Jesus Christ has a throne and a dominion that shall know no end.

“ Jesus shall reign wherever the sun

Does his successive journeys run;
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
Till moons shall wax and wane no more.”

[Psalms 132:13](#). *For the LORD hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation.*

The literal Zion was the Lord’s habitation for a time, but the spiritual Zion will be his dwelling place throughout eternity.

[Psalms 132:14](#). *This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it.*

God rests in his people; the whole company of the redeemed shall be his abiding place for ever.

[Psalms 132:15](#). *I will abundantly bless her provision: will satisfy her poor with bread.*

God sends the needful provision for his people, and sends his blessing with it. We are so poor that we have not even spiritual bread for our souls to eat unless he gives it to us; but here is his gracious promise, “ I will satisfy her poor with bread.” This he will do both literally and spiritually.

[Psalms 132:16](#). *I will also clothe her priests with salvation: and her saints, shall shout aloud for joy.*

In the 9th verse we had a silver prayer, but here, in this 16th verse, we have a golden answer. The prayer of the psalmist was, “ Let thy saints shout for joy;” the Lord’s answer is, “Her saints shall shout aloud for joy.” God always gives good measure, pressed down, and running over. Often, we have not because we ask not, or because we ask amiss. His command to each one of us is, “ Open thy mouth wide,” and his promise is, “ I will fill it.” If you ask great things of him, he will give you yet greater things for he is “ able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.”

[Psalms 132:17](#). *There will I make the horn of David to bud: I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed.*

Oh, that today the horn of David might again bud! May every believer in Jesus feel the life of God reviving within him, and in many a case where there is no spiritual life at all may life divine begin today ! Pray for it, beloved; and then look for it, and you shall surely see it.

[Psalms 132:18](#). *His enemies will I clothe with shame: but upon himself shall his crown flourish.*

We have no King but Jesus and his crown is always flourishing. It wears well upon a blessed head. Let us crown him once again this day with our

gladsome praise and thanksgiving.

PSALMS CONTENTS

Psalm Chapter 133

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

Psalm Chapter 134

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

PSALM 135

Verses 1-21

[Psalms 135:1](#). *Praise ye the LORD.*

Or, “Hallelujah.” “Hallelujah” is the key-note of it. So this is one of the Hallelujah Psalms, for so it begins; and if you look at the end, you will see that so it closes. There is “Hallelujah” again. The whole Psalm is shut in at the beginning and at the end with this which is both our duty and our delight: “Praise ye the Lord.”

[Psalms 135:1](#). *Praise ye the name of the LORD*

The character, the work, all that is revealed of God, is a subject for praise: and especially that wonderful and incommunicable name Jehovah, — never mention it without praise: “Praise ye the name of the Lord.”

[Psalms 135:1](#). *Praise him, O ye servants of the LORD.*

Make it a part of your service. Praise him because you are his servants. Praise him because he accepts your service. You ought to be first in sounding his praises, therefore, “Praise him, O ye servants of the Lord.”

[Psalms 135:2](#). *Ye that stand in the house of the LORD, in the courts of the house of our God, —*

You are permitted to dwell near to him. You have a standing and an abode, an office and a work, in the courts of the Lord’s house; therefore take care that you begin the strain. Should not the King’s courtiers praise

him? Praise him, then, “ye that stand in the courts of the house of our God,”

—

[Psalms 135:3](#). *Praise the LORD for the LORD is good:*

There is one excellent reason for praising him, and you can never praise him too much. He is so good that you can never extol him to an exaggeration.

[Psalms 135:3](#). *Sing praises unto his name; for it is pleasant.*

That is, singing God’s praises is pleasant; it is a pleasant duty, and the Lord’s name is pleasant, or lovely. The very thought of God brings the sweetest emotions to every renewed heart; there is no pleasure in the world that exceeds that of devotion. As we sing praises unto the Lord, we shake off the cares of the world, we rise above its smoke and mists, and we get there the clearer atmosphere of communion with him.

[Psalms 135:4](#). *For the LORD hath chosen Jacob unto himself, and Israel for his peculiar treasure.*

There is something for you who are the Lord’s chosen to sing about.

“In songs of sublime adoration and praise,
Ye pilgrims to Zion who press,
Break forth, and extol the great Ancient of days,
His rich and distinguishing grace.”

[Psalms 135:5](#). *For I know that the LORD is great, and that our Lord is above all gods.*

“I know it,” says the writer of the Psalm; “I know it by experience; I know it by observation; I am sure of it. There is no god like unto our God. He is a great Creator, a great Preserver, a great Redeemer, a great Friend, a great Helper. ‘I know that Jehovah is great, and that our Adonai is above all gods.’”

[Psalms 135:6](#). *Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places.*

The heathen divided out the universe into provinces, and they had Jupiter to rule heaven and earth, and Neptune for the sea, and even today many sing, but, oh! how inaccurately, “Britannia rules the waves.” It is Jehovah, and no one else, that rules the waves, and the people on either land or sea. He is Lord everywhere, and whatever he pleases to do is done. He is no lackey to wait upon the free will of his creatures: “Whatsoever Jehovah pleased, that did he.”

[Psalms 135:7](#). *He causeth the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth;*

That is a very wonderful work; what millions of tons of water are every day turned into vapor, and caused to ascend from different regions of the earth to fall again afterwards in cheerful, refreshing rain! What should we do if this process were suspended? It is the very life-blood of the world.

[Psalms 135:7](#). *He maketh lightnings for the rain;*

It is said that the Bible was written to teach us religion, not science. That is very true, but the Bible never makes a mistake in its science; and I would rather agree with the old writers, who held that the Bible contained all science, than I would go with those who blasphemously pretend to correct the Holy Ghost, and to set him right upon geology, and I know not what besides. In the long run, it shall be proved that the old Book beats all the scientists; and when they have made some wonderful discovery, it will turn out that it was all recorded here long before. “He maketh lightnings for the rain.” There is an intimate connection between electricity and the formation of rain; and in the East this is very clear, for we are constantly reading in books of travel of heavy downpours of rain almost always accompanied by thunderstorms.

[Psalms 135:7](#). *Re bringeth the wind out of his treasuries.*

The wind never comes puffing around us according to some freak of its own; but “He bringeth the wind out of his treasuries; “counting, and spending it as men do their money, not suffering more wind to blow than is needed for the high purposes of his wise government. Let praise for this be given to the God of nature who is ruling over all, and ever doing as he wills. The psalmist goes on to show that the God of nature is also the God of his people: —

[Psalms 135:8](#). *Who smote the firstborn of Egypt, both of man and beast.*

It was God’s own hand that did it. The firstborn of man and beast could not have died by accident all over the land of Egypt at the same hour of the night; but Jehovah thus punished the guilty nation. Had they not oppressed his firstborn? Had they not cruelly trampled on his people, and refused to hearken to his Word? And when the time came for this last and heaviest blow, the Lord did but act in justice to them, and in mercy to his people.

[Psalms 135:9](#). *Who sent tokens and wonders into the midst of thee, O Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his servants.*

“Tokens and wonders;” — not only prodigies which astounded the people, but “tokens” which taught them, for the plagues were directed against their deities, and large books might be written to show how every plague exposed the impotence of some one or other of the false gods which the Egyptians worshipped. Pharaoh and his servants were all involved in the sin, so they were all included in the punishment. How much better was it to be a servant of Jehovah than to be a servant of Pharaoh!

[Psalms 135:10](#). *Who smote great nations, and slew mighty kings;*

Two of them are mentioned, perhaps because they were two of the most powerful kings who blocked the road of Israel.

[Psalms 135:11-13](#). *Sihon king of the Amorites, and Og king of Bashan, and all the kingdoms of Canaan: and gave their land for an heritage, an heritage unto Israel his people. Thy name, O LORD, endureth for ever;—*

He is the same Jehovah now as ever he was. Multitudes of people, nowadays, have made unto themselves new gods; they have imagined a new character for Jehovah altogether, and the God of the Old Testament is ignored and slandered; but not by his chosen people, they still cling to him.

The God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob is not the God of the dead, but of the living; and that is true spiritually as well as naturally. Those who are spiritually dead refuse to own him, and set up gods that they have imagined; but those who are quickened by his grace delight in him, and glorify his name. Let this, beloved, be our joyful song, “Thy name, O Lord, endureth for ever; —

[Psalms 135:13-14](#). *And thy memorial, O LORD, throughout all generations. For the LORD will judge his people, and he will repent himself concerning his servants.*

For they have their dark times, and are often in trouble through their sin. Then the Lord sends chastisement upon them, but when it has answered his purpose, he gladly enough withdraws it. How different are the idols of the heathen from our God!

[Psalms 135:15](#). *The idols of the heathen are silver and gold, the work of men’s hands.*

They can do no works, for they are themselves the result of the work of men. Their handiwork can be nothing, for they are the work of men’s hands.

[Psalms 135:16-18](#). *They have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not; they have ears, but they hear not; neither is there any*

breath in their mouths. They that make them are like unto them: so is every one that trusteth in them.

The original conveys the idea that those who make such gods grow to be like them, they are continually getting to be more and more like them. They become dumb, blind, deaf, dead, as they worship such idols as these.

[Psalms 135:19-20](#). *Bless the LORD, O house of Israel: bless the LORD, O house of Aaron: bless the LORD, O house of Levi: ye that fear the LORD, bless the LORD.*

All of you, whether you be of the house of Aaron or of the tribe of Levi, to whatever house or tribe you belong, bless the Lord; and if you are Gentiles, even though Abraham acknowledge you not, yet, “ye that fear the Lord, bless the Lord.”

[Psalms 135:21](#). *Blessed be the LORD out of Zion, which dwelleth at Jerusalem.*

Our inmost hearts would bless him. We cannot make him more blessed than he is; we cannot add to his glory; but, oh! we do wish that everything we can do, everything that can be done to his honour, may be done.

[Psalms 135:21](#). *Praise ye the LORD.*

That is, once again, “Hallelujah.” Oh, for the spirit of divine grace to set us praising God from the heart, and to keep us at that holy exercise all our days!

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PSALM 136

Verses 1-26

Let us make this occasion a time of praise and thanksgiving: let our hearts dance at the name of our God: let our lips give expression thereto, in joyful music.

[Psalms 136:1](#). *O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.*

That is the beginning of our praise, the essential goodness of God from which all the streams of mercy flow. Oh, deep abyss of infinite love.

[Psalms 136:2-3](#). *O give thanks unto the God of gods: for his mercy endureth for ever. O give thanks to the Lord of lords: for his mercy endureth for ever.*

His greatness, which is beyond that of all potentates on earth or principalities in heaven, — this also is to be our joyous theme of song. His greatness and his goodness together make us magnify his name.

[Psalms 136:4](#). *To him who alone doeth great wonders: for his mercy endureth for ever.*

Nothing is absolutely wonderful except God, and all other things are dwarfed and diminished in wondrousness as compared with him. The Seven Wonders of the World are trifles compared with the seven-million wonders of God.

[Psalms 136:5](#). *To him that by wisdom made the heavens: for his mercy endureth for ever.*

They boasted of the Colossus that strode across the sea, but what shall we say to the heavens that span not only the earth but all the universe? And in those heavens there is mercy to be seen as well as wisdom, the adaptation of the physical world to the circumstances of man, so that there is a relation between the weight of every dewdrop and the structure of the human body.

[Psalms 136:6-9](#). *To him that stretched out the earth above the waters: for his mercy endureth for ever. To him that made great light: for his mercy endureth for ever. The sun to rule by day: for his mercy endureth for ever. The moon and stars to rule by night: for his mercy endureth for ever.*

See how these ancient godly ones loved to dwell upon a thing. When the note was “light” they did not just sing it through and have done with it, but there were choruses and repeats in their music; but the music of today is “rattle through it as fast as ever you can, and have done quickly, with it.” Our forefathers liked to linger a bit on these sweet praises of God. So did the Hebrews.” “Great lights!” Aye, but there must be the sun and the moon and the stars. They could never have enough of it: they rolled these sweet morsels under their tongue and then out upon their lips as they praised God.

[Psalms 136:10](#). *To him that smote Egypt in their firstborn: for his mercy endureth for ever:*

Yet it was an awful judgment, and it needs a reverent, lowly, saintly spirit to sing over even the judgments of God. Had certain theologians of the present time been present at the Red Sea they would have cried in sentimental sympathy over the Egyptians, but instead of that Miriam took a timbrel and said, “Sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously.” The fates of sinful men are of small moment as compared with the glory of God. Jehovah filleth all things, and when the heart is fully taken up with the

glory of God, it learns to sing even this stern refrain: “To him that smote Egypt in their firstborn: for his mercy endureth for ever.”

[Psalms 136:11-15](#). *And brought out Israel from among them: for his mercy endureth for ever: with a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm: for his mercy endureth for ever. To him which divided the Red sea into parts: for his mercy endureth for ever: and made Israel to pass through the midst of it: for his mercy endureth for ever: but overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red sea: for his mercy endureth for ever.*

See how they prolonged the strain: and what blessed exercise this is, to take mercies to pieces and examine all the details, and have a fresh verse for each particular of God’s goodness to us. Glory be unto his blessed name for ever and ever.

[Psalms 136:16](#). *To him which led his people through the wilderness: for his mercy endureth for ever.*

Therefore he will lead you through the wilderness, and bring you through great droughts, and your manna shall drop from heaven, and your waters flow from the rock. Sing then to his name, ye that are in the wilderness.

[Psalms 136:17](#). *To him which smote great kings: for his mercy endureth for ever:*

That is a terrible and tragic matter, that smiting of kings. Yes, but these singers did not groan over it. There are no less than four notes over this.

[Psalms 136:18-23](#). *And slew famous kings: for his mercy endureth for ever: Sihon king of the Amorites: for his mercy endureth for ever: and Og the king of Bashan: for his mercy endureth for ever: and gave their land for an heritage: for his mercy endureth for ever: even an heritage unto Israel his servant: for his mercy endureth for ever. Who remembered us in our low estate: for his mercy endureth for ever:*

The note descends a little from the martial strain of trumpet, from smitten kings and the drowned chivalry of Egypt; but though it sinks, how it sweetens! What a soft, clear sound there is about it.

[Psalms 136:24-26](#). *And hath redeemed us from our enemies: for his mercy endureth for ever. Who giveth food to all flesh: for his mercy endureth for ever. O give thanks unto the God of heaven: for his mercy endureth for ever.*

Glorious redemption! That is ever the choicest note of all. Ring that silver bell again.

This is the Christian's true promised land of great spiritual blessings. May we have faith enough to enter into the full possession of it. It is a very wonderful chapter.

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 136, and Ephesians 1.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 137

Verses 1-9

Psalm 137:1-2. *By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.*

Babylon was full of canals and rivers; the captive Israelites sought out lonely places where they might be away from their oppressors, and might in the company of their countrymen pour out the sad stream of their griefs and sorrows. "The rivers of Babylon" seemed congenial to them, and they mingled their tears with the flowing waters. They "sat down" as if they felt they were to be there a long while, and were not soon to go back to their own land; and they "wept" — not simply because of their banishment and their woes, but also because of the mournful condition of their beloved Zion, which had been ravaged by the Chaldeans, ploughed as a field, and given over to desolation. Some of these poor captives had been singers in the courts of the Lord's house which had been burnt with fire, and others had brought their "harps" with them into their captivity; but they could not find any music in their hearts, and therefore they fetched no melodious notes out of their harp-strings. They did not break their harps, however, for they might want them someday, so they hung them up on the weeping willows which abounded by the water-courses. Then came one of the sharpest trials they had ever had, — a piece of bitter cruelty on the part of their oppressors, who had no compassion upon the poor prisoners whom they had taken from their own land.

Psalm 137:3. *For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion.*

As no cups except those that were taken out of God's holy house would do for Belshazzar when he wanted to make himself drunk, so no music would suit these heathen captors of Israel but the songs of God's house: "Sing us one of the songs of Zion." These poor people were crestfallen and utterly broken down, yet their enemies cried, "Make mirthful music for us, sing us one of your sacred songs." They only wanted to laugh at it, or, at the very best, to listen to it simply as a piece of music that they might criticize, so they said, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion." But the captives could not and would not sing for any such purpose. Zion's songs were not meant to be sung for mere amusement, nor were her chants intended to be made the theme of mockery and ridicule by the ungodly.

[Psalms 137:4-5](#). *How shall we sing the LORD'S song in a strange land? If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning.*

"No," they said, "if we were to make mirth for the Babylonians, we should be doing serious damage to Zion, we should be traitors to Jerusalem;" so the harpers said, "Sooner than we will play a tune to make mirth for you, let our right hands become paralyzed."

[Psalms 137:6](#). *If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth;-*

They said it each one for himself; they would sooner be dumb than sing these sacred songs for the amusement of the ungodly revelers who had gathered round about them. Instead of a song, they offered a prayer which must have sounded terribly in the ears of those who mocked them; it was a fierce prayer, — a prayer made under a very different dispensation from that under which we live, — a prayer by a patriot who had seen his wife murdered, and his children dashed to pieces, and he prays thus: —

[Psalms 137:6-7](#). *If I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy. Remember, O LORD, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem; who said, Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof.*

These Edomites, who ought to have been like brothers to the Jews, were their most ferocious enemies, and they stirred up the Chaldeans to be more terribly cruel than they otherwise would have been.

[Psalms 137:8-9](#). *O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed: happy shall he be, that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us. Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones.*

For these people had gone all over the world, wherever they could, murdering and mutilating. Tens of thousands of little children had they

brutally killed, multitudes of women had they ravished, a vast number of cities had they destroyed. They were the scourges of all nations; and, therefore, moved to righteous indignation, the Jews felt that anybody who should overthrow that city of Babylon, and put to death its inhabitants, would be doing good service to the rest of mankind. And, mark you, all this came to pass in due time. When Cyrus turned aside the waters of the river which had been Babylon's great protection, and left the river-bed quite dry, he marched his troops right into the center of the city; and when the Babylonians, to defend themselves and a part of the city, were driven to great straits, we are told by historians that they themselves destroyed their own wives and children, calling them useless mouths, that they might be able to defend themselves a little longer from the sword of Cyrus, so that, literally, it came to pass that the man who had destroyed his own children thought himself happy to be rid of them that he might maintain the fight. How dreadful is God when he deals with nations that have been cruel and ferocious! Go ye to Babylon this day, and see what ruinous heaps he hath made, what desolation he hath wrought in that land.

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PSALM 138

Verses 1-6

A Psalm of David.

[Psalms 138:1](#). *I will praise thee with my whole heart: before the gods will I sing praise unto thee.*

Before the heathen gods, however highly exalted — I will sing thy praises so in their very teeth; and the magistrates and princes and kings who think themselves gods on earth — I will not fear them or be silenced by them.

[Psalms 138:2](#). *I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.*

For thou wert far more glorious in revelation than in creation — thy promise did greatly transcend every other display of thyself above all we have ever known or conceived of thee. Thou hast magnified thyself by thy

covenant of grace, and thy works of grace toward thy people. For this worship and praise are for ever due!

[Psalms 138:3](#). *In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul.*

That is a thing to make a man King — when in the day of trouble God comes to him, hears his prayer and works his deliverance, when none else can help. God’s rescues demand our grateful songs: his deliverances our new anthems of exultant praise.

[Psalms 138:4](#). *All the kings of the earth shall praise thee, O LORD, when they hear the words of thy mouth.*

When thy gospel is preached, and they know it, they shall count it their honour to honour thee. It is ignorance of its glory and grace that makes silence possible: but to hear it as God’s word of caring love is to be compelled to extol.

[Psalms 138:5](#). *Yea, they shall sing in the ways of the Lord: for great is the glory of the LORD.*

David was a king, and he danced before the ark, and he anticipated the time when other kings should not be ashamed of exuberant rejoicing in the King of kings. Oh, that it were come! May the Lord hasten it in his own time, and the choral hosts of heaven be swelled by the presence of the crowned monarchs of earth!

[Psalms 138:6](#). *Though the LORD be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly:*

That is a sweet text. One who was a scoffer met a humble child of God one morning, and he said to him, “Tell me, is your God a great God or a little God,” and the poor man said, “Sir, he is both, for, though he is so great that the heaven of heavens cannot contain him, yet he makes himself so little that he condescends to dwell in my poor heart.” Ah, it was sweetly said. He who fills the heavens, nay all things, will be our abiding guest and friend if we will but welcome him.

[Psalms 138:6](#). *But the proud he knoweth afar off.*

He has enough of them. He does not want them to come near to him. When they are miles away he knows all about them. They make a fair show, but he sees that it is all a fable and pretence. He knows them — afar off!

Verses 1-8

[Psalms 138:1](#). *I will praise thee with my whole heart: before the gods will I sing praise unto thee.*

“Gods or no gods, whatever they may be, ‘I will praise thee with my whole heart,’ I will not be ashamed to declare my confidence in Jehovah, whoever may listen to me.”

[Psalms 138:2](#). *I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.*

Now was his time to speak. The gods of the heathen had their worshippers; then, should Jehovah be deserted by his loyal subjects? “No,” says David, “I will worship thee, and I will praise thee, whoever may oppose me.”

[Psalms 138:3](#). *In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul.*

What worshipper of idols could ever say that of his god? “Ears have they,” but they bear not the cries of their worshippers. “Hands have they,” but they cannot deliver those who cry to them. “Feet have they,” but they cannot come to the help of their votaries. But David declares that God had heard him in the day of his trouble, and strengthened him with strength in his soul.

[Psalms 138:4](#). *All the kings of the earth shall praise thee, O Lord, when they hear the words of thy mouth.*

He felt that he had had such good things to say concerning God, such blessed words of God to make known, that even the kings of the earth, when they began to listen to him, would become attentive, and would even become converts, and begin to praise Jehovah with him.

[Psalms 138:5](#). *Yea, they shall sing in the ways of the Lord: for great is the glory of the Lord.*

Think of that,— kings singing in the ways of the Lord, crowned princes becoming choristers in God’s service. Someone has said that there are few in heaven who wore crowns on earth; and I am afraid it is true that, of all who are crowned on earth, few ever get to that land where all are kings and priests unto God. To have a crown on earth, and a crown above, is a rare thing; but David says that these kings “shall sing in the ways of Jehovah: for great is the glory of Jehovah;” and they shall be overpowered by that glory,— melted, subdued, wooed, won, converted by its power.

[Psalms 138:6-7](#). *Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly: but the proud he knoweth afar off. Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me: —*

He was a king, yet he expected trouble; and do you complain when it comes to your cottage, after it had been to David's palace? "Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me:

[Psalms 138:7](#). *Thou shalt stretch forth thine hand against the wrath of mine enemies, and thy right hand shall save me.*

He expected first to be revived, and afterwards to be protected. He believed that God would stretch out his hand, as men do when they make a supreme effort, and put forth all their force: "Thou shalt stretch forth thine hand against the wrath of mine enemies." David also expected ultimate preservation: "'Thy right hand shall save me.' Thou wilt do it; dexterously, readily, gladly, wilt thou do it: 'Thy right hand shall save me.'"

[Psalms 138:8](#). *The LORD will perfect that which concerneth me:*

"All that has to do with me — my business, my family, my work, my temporal and my eternal interests,— 'that which concerneth me,' and that which troubles me, moves my heart with the deepest concern, Jehovah will perfect."

[Psalms 138:8](#). *Thy mercy, O LORD, endureth for ever: forsake not the works of thine own hands.*

And he will not do it; he will carry on unto completion the work which he has begun, blessed be his holy name!

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PSALM 139

Verses 1-18

[Psalms 139:1](#). *O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me.*

"Thou hast explored me, as men dig in mines, and make subterranean excavations. Thou hast searched into my secret parts, and known me."

[Psalms 139:2](#). *Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising,*

"My simplest acts, those which I scarcely premeditated."

[Psalms 139:2](#). *Thou understandest my thought afar off.*

"Before I think it, when I think it, and when I forget it, thou dost understand my every thought."

[Psalms 139:3](#). *Thou compassest my path and my lying down,*

Making a ring around me, so that I am entirely under thine observation. My roving and my resting are both known to thee."

Psalms 139:3. *And art acquainted with all my ways.*

“My habits, and the exceptions from my habits, are all known to thee.”

Psalms 139:4. *For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether.*

“When it is in my tongue, and not spoken, like a seed sown, hidden away, not yet sprouted, thou, O Jehovah, knowest it altogether!”

Psalms 139:5. *Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me.*

“I am like a prisoner, with guards before me and behind me, and the officer’s hand upon my shoulder all the while. Thou hast arrested me, O Lord; I can never get away from thee.”

Psalms 139:6. *Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain up to it.*

“I believe it, but I cannot understand it; even my imagination cannot picture it to me.”

Psalms 139:7. *Whither shall I go from thy spirit?*

“If I want to do so, if I desire to avoid thee, where can I go to escape from thine omnipresent Spirit?”

Psalms 139:7-8. *Or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there:*

The true glory of that bright world.

Psalms 139:8. *If I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.*

“The terror of that place of woe, in the land of death-shadow and darkness, thou art living, whoever else is dead. If I make my abode in Hades, in Hell, thou art there.”

Psalms 139:9-10. *If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me,*

“If the breath of the morning breeze should bear me far away across the pathless sea, thou art there before me; if I ride upon a flash of light, thou art swifter than the sunbeam: even there shall thy hand lead me.” The lone missionary in the furthest parts of the earth is led by God. When, he knows not his way, God leads him; and when he has no companion to cheer him Gods hand upholds him. What a comfort to any of you who have to journey far away from your kindred! You cannot be alone, for God is there; be of good comfort, and go as bravely as if you walked the crowded streets of this great city.

Psalms 139:10-12. *And thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee, but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.*

It is impossible to conceive that God should need the light in order to see. He can see as well in the midnight shades as in the blaze of noon. Let no man think that he may sin in secret, because he is not seen of the eye of man; God's eye is on him in the dark as much as in the light.

Psalms 139:13-14. *For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.*

He was no agnostic, he never dreamed of being a know-nothing.

Psalms 139:15-17. *My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them. How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them!*

How sweet to be thought of by God! How charming and how cheering to be the perpetual object of the Lord's thoughts! The psalmist does not tell us how precious are God's thoughts; but he sets a note of admiration to them: "How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God!" He does not try to calculate the total of their value; but he says, "How great is the sum of them!"

Psalms 139:18. *If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee.*

"Thou hast thought of me when I was asleep, and when I wake, I think of thee." Happy living, happy dying, to feel that, if we never wake again on earth, we shall wake up with God! How precious it is to think that when good and useful men fall asleep, when they awake, they are for ever with the Lord! Our turn will come soon, my brothers and sisters. May it be our portion to die in harness, and to be taken away while yet we have the light of God's sustenance resting upon our work!

Verses 1-24

This is a Psalm we can never read too often. It will be to us one of the greatest safeguards against sin if we have its teaching constantly before our

mind's eye, and the teaching of this Psalm is simply this, "Thou God seest me."

Psalms 139:1. O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me.

Thou hast looked into my most secret parse. The most intricate labyrinths of my spirit are all observed of thee. Thou hast not searched, and yet been unable to discover the secret of my nature but thou hast searched me and known me. Thy search has been an efficient one, thou hast read the secrets of my soul,

Psalms 139:2. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thoughts afar off.

It is a common enough thing to sit down and to rise up and I myself oftentimes scarce know why I do the one or the other, but thou knowest and understandest all. "Thou understandest my thought afar off." My heart forms a thought that never comes to a word or an act, but thou not only dost perceive it, but thou dost translate it; thou understandest my thought.

Psalms 139:3. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways.

I am surrounded by thee as by a ring of observers.

Psalms 139:4. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether.

Not only the words on my tongue, but those that slumber in my tongue, the unspoken words, thou knowest them perfectly and altogether.

Psalms 139:5. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me.

Thy presence amounts to actual contact. Thou dost not only see, but touch, like the physician, who does not merely look at the wound, but by-and-by comes to probe it. So dost thou probe my wounds, and see the depths of my sins.

Psalms 139:6-7. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?

It seems as if the first impulse was to fly away from a God whose attributes were so lofty. 'Twas but a transient impression, yet David words it so.

Psalms 139:8; Psalms 139:10. If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the

morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold, me.

How swift he supposes his flight to be, as swift as the light, for he borrows the wings of the morning, and yet the hand of God was controlling his destiny even then. As Watts rhymes it —

“If mounted on the morning ray,
I fly beyond the western sea,
Thy swifter hand should first arrive,
And there arrest thy fugitive.”

Psalms 139:11-12. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee, but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.

For, mystery of mysteries, and more wondrous still, thou not only dost observe, but thou always hast observed, and thou hast not only observed my well-formed being and my visible life but before I had a being thou didst observe what I should be, and when I was yet in embryo thine all-observing eye watched me.

Psalms 139:13-16. For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect, and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.

In so vivid a manner doth our holy poet sing of the omniscience of God with regard to our creation. Before we had breath he formed and fashioned us.

Psalms 139:17. How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!

How many thoughts has God towards us! We cannot count them, and how kind are those thoughts — we cannot estimate them — how precious, how great!

Psalms 139:18. If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee.

I suppose I had finished the tale, had counted up all thy thoughts to me, and then fell asleep. I should then but begin to count again, for thou

continuest to thrust out mercies from thy hand. My God, my numeration shall never overtake thee, much less my gratitude, and the service that is thy due!

Psalms 139:19. Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God: depart from me therefore, ye bloody men.

“Surely” — here is a solemn inference from the omniscience of God — “surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God.” Thou hast seen their wickedness. They have committed their wickedness in thy presence. Thou wilt need no witnesses, no jury, thou art all in one. Art thou not the Judge of all the earth, and shalt thou not do right? “Surely thou wilt destroy the wicked, O God.” Then I desire not to have those in my company who are condemned criminals, and are soon to be executed. “Depart from me, therefore, ye bloody men.” See how this sets David upon purging his company and keeping himself clean in his associations, since God, who sees all, and will surely punish, would hold it to be evil on the part of his servant to be found associating with rebellious men.

Psalms 139:20-22. For they speak against thee wickedly, and thine enemies take thy name in vain. Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies.

We are bound to love our own enemies, but not God’s enemies, since they are haters of all that is good and all that is true, and the essentially good One himself. We love them as our fellow-beings, but we hate them as haters of God.

Psalms 139:23-24. Search me, O God. and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

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PSALM 140

Verses 1-13

To the Chief Musician, a Psalm of David. Very likely this Psalm was written by David while he was being hunted about by Saul, and while all manner of falsehoods were being spoken against him. He therefore comforts himself in his God. He writes this Psalm, and he means to have it

sung, and sung well; so he dedicates it “to the chief Musician.” There are some parts of our life which are so crowded with urgent necessity, and so full of divine mercy that we feel that, if we ever get through them, we will make a song about our deliverance, and dedicate that song unto God through “the chief Musician.”

[Psalms 140:1](#). *Deliver me, O Lord, from the evil man: preserve me from the violent man;*

He is wicked at heart, and violent in his temper. Whenever we meet with such an adversary, we have good reason to cry to God: “Deliver me: preserve me.” Yet, if we must have enemies, we prefer that they should be bad men; we do not wish to have a child of God against us; if we must have an antagonist, we would much rather that he should be one who is “evil” and “violent.”

[Psalms 140:2](#). *Which imagine mischief’s in their heart; continually are they gathered together for war.*

It goes hard with a peace-loving man — a man of quiet spirit, — when he is beset by those whose very heart is set on mischief, and who cannot meet one another without conspiring to prepare for some fresh form of battle.

[Psalms 140:3](#). *They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent; adders’ poison is under their lips. Selah.*

Before a serpent strikes any object, its tongue is in quick motion. If you ever see a cobra when he is angry, you will notice that his tongue darts to and fro, as if impatient to sting; and the psalmist here, writing of the tongue of the ungodly, remarks how quickly it moves. They seem to have sharpened it — to have prepared it — for all manner of mischief. “Adders’ poison” — the poison of the deadliest known serpent in the East — “is under their lips.” Perhaps you think that this is a very dreadful description of some remarkably bad man; so it is, but remember that, when Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, wishes to describe us all, both Jews and Gentiles, he quotes this very passage, and says, “The poison of asps is under their lips.”

There is poison in our mouths still unless grace has taken it away. We, too, shall soon be speaking evil, and talking slanderously, if the grace of God does not keep our tongues and our lips.

[Psalms 140:4-5](#). *Keep me, O LORD, from the hands of the wicked; preserve me from the violent man; who have planned to overthrow my goings. The proud have hid a snare for me,-*

“They have put it where I cannot see it; I do not know where it is, nor what it is; but know that they want to lead me into such sin that they can afterwards turn round upon me, and accuse me for it: ‘The proud have hid a snare for me,’” —

[Psalms 140:5](#). *And cords; they have spread a net by the wayside;-*

“Close to where I am walking, so that, if I go even an inch out of the way, I shall be caught in it. They seem to be tempting me in my usual course of life: ‘They have spread a net by the wayside;’” —

[Psalms 140:5](#). *They have set gins for me. Selah.*

As men try to ensnare poor birds in all kinds of traps, so the ungodly sometimes seek the destruction of the righteous by setting many snares for them.

[Psalms 140:6](#). *I said unto the LORD, Thou art my God:*

Ah! that was the right thing to do, — to leave the ungodly and their traps, and go straight away to God: “I said unto the Lord, Thou art my God.”

[Psalms 140:6-7](#). *Hear the voice of my supplications, O Lord. O GOD the Lord, the strength of my salvation, thou hast covered my head in the day of battle.*

“When the darts flew thick and fast, and when the battleaxe came down with a mighty crash, ‘Thou hast covered my head in the day of battle.’” This Psalm reminds me of that passage in the song of Deborah and Barak: “O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength.” What wonders we also have been enabled to do by the upholding and preserving grace of God!

[Psalms 140:8](#). *Grant not, O LORD, the desires of the wicked: further not his wicked device; lest they exalt themselves. Selah.*

If it seemed that God’s providence was helping them against the righteous, they would be too proud to be borne with; they would lift up their heads on high, and say, “See how God is with us, how he permits us to have our way.”

[Psalms 140:9](#). *As for the head of those that compass me about, let the mischief of their own lips cover them.*

This may be read as a prophecy in the future tense: “The mischief of their own lips shall cover them.”

[Psalms 140:10](#). *Let burning coals fall upon them :-*

Or, “Burning coals shall fall upon them.”

[Psalms 140:10](#). *Let them be cast into the fire; into deep pits, that they rise not up again.*

The Psalmist doubtless had before his mind's eye the picture of Sodom, where burning coals fell on the guilty cities, and where men stumbled into the fire, and when they tried to escape, fell into the deep slime pits, and perished. And, truly, it is but just that, if men lie, and slander, and try to tempt the righteous to their destruction, they should fall into the pits that they have themselves digged.

[Psalms 140:11](#). *Let not an evil speaker be established in the earth:*

Neither shall he be; the man who is glib of tongue, and who uses that facility of speech for the destruction of the characters of godly men, shall never be established.

[Psalms 140:11](#). *Evil shall hunt the violent man to overthrow him.*

His own dogs shall eat him; he was a huntsman against the righteous, and, behold, the evil of his own mouth shall turn upon him to devour him: "Evil shall hunt the violent man to overthrow him."

[Psalms 140:12](#). *I know that the LORD will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and the right of the poor.*

We may always leave such matters with the Lord. God is the poor man's Executor, and the proud man's Executioner. He will take care of the oppressed, and such as are down-trodden.

[Psalms 140:13](#). *Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto thy name: the upright shall dwell in thy presence.*

Now let us read the next Psalm, which is to much the same effect.

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 140, 141.

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PSALM 141

Verses 1-10

[Psalms 141:1](#). *LORD, I cry unto thee: make haste unto me; give ear unto my voice, when I cry unto thee.*

You see how a child of God prays when he is in trouble. David says, "I cry unto thee," and then the second time, "I cry unto thee." And he cried for God as well as to him: "Make haste unto me." The very best thing you can do, when you cannot help yourself, is to cry unto God, for he will help you.

[Psalms 141:2](#). *Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.*

David was probably far away from the tabernacle, and he could not join in presenting the morning or the evening sacrifice there; but he prayed God to let his prayer be such a sacrifice: “Let it be sweet as the perfume of the smoking spices of the morning; let it be as acceptable as the burning lamb of eventide.

[Psalms 141:3](#). *Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.*

Our mouth is a door, and it needs a watchman, and there is no watchman who can keep it except God himself: “Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.”

[Psalms 141:4](#). *Incline not my heart to any evil thing, to practice wicked works with men that work iniquity : and let me not eat of their dainties.*

That last petition is a very proper one; we are neither to think the thoughts of the wicked, nor to practice their ways, nor to enjoy their pleasures: “Let me not eat of their dainties.” There are certain amusements which are fraught with sin: “Let me not eat of their dainties.” There are some erroneous doctrines, which are very pleasant to the taste of those who believe them: “Let me not eat of their dainties.” There are some sins that seem to have a peculiarly sweet flavor, and so are very attractive to men: “Let me not eat of their dainties.”

[Psalms 141:5](#). *Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness :-*

You see, dear friends, David cries out against slander, he cannot bear that wicked men should lie against his character; but he says, “I do not want to be let alone where I am in the wrong; I do not wish to be flattered: ‘ Let the righteous smite me.’ He is the man who ought to do it. When I have done wrong, it is his duty to correct me; and I wish him to do it: ‘ Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness.’”

[Psalms 141:5](#). *And let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head:*

Some people cannot bear to be spoken to about a fault; they feel as if the reprover had broken their head directly, and they are as savage as a bear with a sore head. But the child of God is not so; he looks upon the rebuke of a good man as being like healing, sweet-smelling oil, and he prizes it. Depend upon it, the man who will tell you your faults is your best friend. It may not be a pleasant thing for him to do it, and he knows that he is running

the risk of losing your friendship; but he is a true and sincere friend, therefore thank him for his reproof, and learn how you may improve by what he tells you.

[Psalms 141:5](#). *For yet my prayer also shall be in their calamities.*

I will try to repay the righteous for their rebukes by praying for them when they are in trouble. I will say to my God, “These good men tried to keep me right, and they smote me when I did wrong; now, Lord, they are in trouble, I pray thee to help them, and bring them out of it.”

[Psalms 141:6](#). *When their judges are overthrown in stony places, they shall hear my words; for they are sweet.*

Wicked men often will not hear the gospel; but when they get into trouble, then they will. When their judges are overthrown in stony places, then they begin to be willing to hear what good men have to say. A bitter world makes a sweet Word; and when providence frowns upon us, it often happens that we love the gospel all the more, and smile upon its messengers, for their words are sweet.

[Psalms 141:7](#). *Our bones are scattered at the grave’s mouth, —*

“We are like men ready to be put into their graves; or the cause that we advocate seems so totally dead that we seem to be like dry bones that are flung out of a grave.”

[Psalms 141:7](#). *As when one cutteth and cleaveth wood upon the earth.*

“We feel as if we were like chips out of a tree that has been cut down.”

[Psalms 141:8](#). *But mine eyes are unto thee, O God the Lord: in thee is my trust;*

“I may be cut to pieces, I may be chopped up, I may seem to be made into a bundle of firewood; but, Lord, my eyes are unto thee: ‘ O God the Lord: in thee is my trust.’”

[Psalms 141:8](#). *Leave not my soul destitute.*

“If I have thee, I am still rich. Even if I lie at the grave’s mouth, I may still live; but if thou be gone from me, then am I destitute indeed.”

[Psalms 141:9-10](#). *Keep me from the snares which they have laid for me, and the gins of the workers of iniquity. Let the wicked fall into their own nets, whilst that I withal escape.*

Amen! So let it be!

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 140, 141.

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PSALM 142

Verses 1-7

Maschil of David. A prayer when he was in the cave. This “Maschil of David” is instructive to us, for the experience of one believer is very edifying to another. We are so much alike that, as in water face answereth to face, so the heart of men answereth to man, and what one believer has felt awakens sympathy in the rest of God’s people.

[Psalms 142:1-2](#). *I cried unto the LORD with my voice; with my voice unto the LORD did I make my supplication. I poured out my complaint before him; I shewed before him my trouble.*

David mentions that he prayed with his voice. This is an unimportant matter compared with praying with the heart; but when the heart is full of prayer, it is often very helpful to be able to use the voice to give expression to the emotions of the soul. To have a room in which, without disturbing others, and without ostentatiously revealing your private experiences to others, you can speak aloud unto the Lord, will be found to be a great advantage in prayer. Some men’s thoughts become more concentrated, and how more freely, and their hearts are better able to pour out their deepest and fullest expressions, when they can pray aloud. So David says that, in the cave, where he would not be likely to disturb anybody, he cried with his voice unto the Lord: “With my voice unto the Lord did I make my supplication.” You can see from verse 2 what was the style of his prayer. “I poured out my complaint.” The figure is a very simple one. Just as you pour out water from a bottle, so David let his heart’s complaint flow out before the Lord. In pouring out water, it sometimes comes slowly gurgling, and sometimes fast; at times with a rush, followed by a pause. There is no prayer better than that which naturally flows from the renewed heart, without any strain or effort, it was so with David: “I poured out my complaint before him, I shewed before him my trouble.” Just as a patient shows his wounds to the surgeon, so take away the covering from your broken heart and wounded spirit, and set your trouble before the Lord, who already sees it. It will be no novelty or cause of surprise to him, but he desires you to manifest such trustfulness in him as will lead you to lay before him your complaint and your trouble.

[Psalms 142:3](#). *When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou knewest my path.*

“My spirit was so overwhelmed within me, that I did not know where I was, or what I was. I could not make head or tail of myself. I seemed to be like a skein of silk or wool in a tangle. My thoughts, as George Herbert would have said, were all a case of knives, sharp to cut and wound. I could not make myself out; I was a puzzle even to myself, but thou knewest my path even then.”

[Psalms 142:3-4](#). *In the way wherein I walked have they privily laid a snare for me. I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul.*

This is a terrible condition for anyone to be in, — to have every friend forsake you, — to find that those who used to know you best, do not want to know you any longer, but turn their heads away as if it would be a disgrace to them to be known to have been your friends. This is a grand opportunity for testing the reality of your faith. Can you believe God now? Can you take him to be your Friend now that you have not another friend in the world? Fine weather faith is very cheap, and easily to be obtained; but the faith that can stand fast in the time of the storm and tempest, — that hardy mountaineering faith which hides in God in the coldest winter, and finds its summertime in him alone, — that is the faith that is worth having and worth keeping.

[Psalms 142:5](#). *I cried unto thee, O LORD: I said, Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living.*

“I left the broken reeds alone, and leaned upon my God. I said, Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living.”

[Psalms 142:6-7](#). *Attend unto my cry; for I am brought very low: deliver me from my persecutors for they are stronger than I. Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name: the righteous shall compass me about; for thou shalt deal bountifully with me.*

This is a beautiful metaphor, suggesting that, when the saints heard that God brought him out of prison, they would round about him, gaze upon him as a miracle of mercy, and ask him to tell them his wonderful tale. He would be the center of their delighted observation, and their own faith and hope in the Lord would be greatly increased. As a little imprisoned bird might long for emancipation, David says, “O Lord, open my cage-door, and let me fly; and I will sing, as I mount, to the praise of him who gave me my

liberty. Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name: the righteous shall compass me about, for thou shalt deal bountifully with me.”

This exposition consisted of readings from PSALMS 51. and 142.

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PSALM 143

Verses 1-12

“A psalm of David.”

Psalms 143:1. *Hear my prayer, O LORD, give ear to my supplications: in thy faithfulness answer me, and in thy righteousness.*

It is a theory held by some persons of skeptical minds that the only benefit of prayer is the good it does to us. That was not David’s theory. Here, three times, he begs to be heard, and to be answered. Oh! do they think us such idiots that we would go on speaking in a keyhole with nobody to hear us? Do they think us brought so low — so destitute of wit — that we think it worth our while to speak out what is in our heart if God does not hear and does not answer? I reckon prayer to be the most idiotic of all occupations unless there be really a God to hear, and a God to answer. And the benefit of prayer is not in itself so much as in the full confidence that it is a real thing, and an effective thing — that God does hear and does interpose on our behalf.

Psalms 143:2. *And enter not into judgment with thy servant:*

“Thy servant I am. I am not one of the ungodly, whom thou wilt judge and cast away, but still even thy servant though I am, enter not into judgment with me. I know thou wilt not judge me now as a rebel, and condemn me, for thou hast put away my sin, but even as thy servant I fear thy chastising rod, if thou enter into judgment with me.”

Psalms 143:2. *For in thy sight shall no man living be justified.*

I have heard some living that think they would. They have said that the very root and branch of sin have been cut up in them, and that they walk in the fear of God perfectly well, but times must have changed very wonderfully. Ah! but I think they have not, but that these are mistaken, for still it is very true concerning the very best of men that they have need to pray, “Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.”

Psalms 143:3-4 *For the enemy hath persecuted my soul; he hath smitten my life down to the ground; he hath made me dwell in darkness, as those that have been long dead. Therefore is my spirit overwhelmed within me; my heart within me is desolate.*

Children of God, do not expect to be always happy, or else you will be disappointed. You will have more troubles, if nobody else does. Depend upon it, that adversity is one of the covenant promises. “In the world ye shall have tribulation,” is your Master’s own word to you, and you must not expect to find it untrue. You will find it true to the letter. And sometimes the troubles of life will penetrate even to your heart, and make you feel desolate. When you are so, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial as though yours were a new path in which nobody ever walked before you. Ah! no; David was there. Many others have been there.

Psalms 143:5-6. *I remember the days of old; I meditate on all thy works; I muse on the work of thy hands. I stretch forth my hands unto thee: my soul thirsteth after thee, as a thirsty land. Selah.*

As a child puts out its hand to its mother, so did he stretch out his hands to his God. As a thirsty land chaps — becomes dry — turns to dust in its longing after rain, so did his whole being thirst for his God.

Psalms 143:7. *Hear me speedily, O LORD: my spirit faileth: hide not thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit.*

“Lest I swoon away — lest I die — lest my hope should utterly expire. Come, Lord: come, Lord, and rescue me.”

Psalms 143:8. *Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning; for in thee do I trust: cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto thee.*

Very heavy, but I lift it up. With all my might, as though it were a dead lift, I seek to raise it out of its doubt, and out of its sorrow.

Psalms 143:9-10. *Deliver me, O Lord, from mine enemies: I flee unto thee to hide me. Teach me to do thy will; for thy art my God: thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness.*

Or “lead me in a straight path.” So it is rendered by the best scholars.

Psalms 143:11. *Quicken me, O LORD, for thy name’s sake:*

Felt as if he should die, and, therefore, he says, “Quicken me: put new life into me.” To whom should we go for life, but to the living God, and who can communicate with us, but the same God who first made us live in his name.

Psalms 143:11-12. *For thy righteousness sake bring my soul out of trouble. And of thy mercy cut off mine enemies, and destroy all them that afflict my soul: for I am thy servant.*

This exposition consisted of readings from PSALM 142. and 143.

[PSALMS CONTENTS](#)

PSALM 144

Verses 1-15

A Psalm of David. No doubt written after some great victory, and also before another severe struggle. The Christian man seldom escapes from one difficulty without falling into another. Thanks be unto God, he that is with us in six troubles will not forsake us in the seventh!

[Psalms 144:1](#). *Blessed be the LORD my strength, which teacheth my hand to war, and my fingers to fight:*

David does not ascribe any honour to himself. Human strength is from within, from the nerves, and sinews, and muscles, but the believer's strength is from without: "Blessed be Jehovah my strength." Now, if Jehovah be our strength, then nothing can be too difficult for us, for he whose strength is the omnipotence of God can do all things. "Which teacheth my hands to war:" just as the young soldier was, as it were, bound apprentice to the old warrior, went out to learn the drill, and afterwards was taken by him into the battle, so does the Lord by providence and by experience train his people's hands to war, and their fingers to fight.

[Psalms 144:2](#). *My goodness, and my fortress; my high tower, and my deliverer; my shield, and he in whom I trust;*

Here are six names, or rather, five titles of God, and then an inference from them: "He in whom I trust." Oh! I know, ye people of God, you can say of Jehovah, "He is the One in whom I trust." Rely upon anyone else, and your hopes are doomed to disappointment, as a bowing wall shall he be, and as a tottering fence. Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his refuge! Mind that ye stand to this, and never depart from it.

[Psalms 144:2](#). *Who subdueth my people under me.*

Probably this Psalm was written after the crushing out of the great revolt under Absalom, and well might David ascribe to the divine hand his deliverance from that trial. It seemed as if the kingdom had gone from him;

his ungrateful son had stolen the people's hearts, and yet God was pleased to give him back his kingdom, and to set him upon his throne yet more firmly than before: "Who subdueth my people under me." Christian, say that it is God who subdues your troubles, God who conquers your sins, God who enlightens your darkness, God who doeth all things for you; give him all the praise for every deliverance.

[Psalms 144:3](#). *LORD, what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him! or the son of man, that thou makest account of him!*

Have you not often felt like this? You have said, "Lord, how couldst thou have bestowed such favors upon me, so utterly unworthy, so insignificant, so unknown, so worthless? "What is man, that thou takest knowledge of him!"

[Psalms 144:4](#). *Man is like to vanity: his days are as a shadow that passeth away.*

You know that a shadow is nothing; it is rather the absence of something than anything in itself. Shadow is the absence of light; and what is man but, as it were, the absence of light, the absence of anything that is substantial? He is but the fleeting shadow of some earthly object, which soon passes away. Having thus magnified God for the past, and marvelled at his loving-kindness, the psalmist now turns to prayer: —

[Psalms 144:5](#). *Bow thy heavens, O LORD, and come down: touch the mountains, and they shall smoke.*

God did but set one foot upon Mount Sinai, and it became altogether on a smoke. "The hills melted like wax at the presence of the Lord." Well, believer, you have many mountains; but you can ask God to "touch the mountains, and they shall smoke." No matter what the mountains may be; high as the heavens your troubles may ascend, till they even seem to block up your pathway to the skies, yet one touch of the divine finger shall make them melt away, like wax before the fire, and you shall march on triumphantly to your God.

[Psalms 144:6-7](#). *Cast forth lightning, and scatter them: shoot out thine arrows, and destroy them. Send thine hand from above; rid me, and deliver me out of great waters, from the hand of strange children;*

Moses, you know, was called "one drawn out of the water", so are all Gods people, they are drawn out of floods of tribulation. They are surrounded by those floods as though deserted, and left there to perish; but

keen is the eye that watches over them, strong is the hand that preserves them, and sure is the arm that delivers them.

[Psalms 144:8](#). *Whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood.*

They swear, but they perjure themselves; they lift up the right hand, but they lie all the while. Rid me, O God, from such men; for, of all enemies, those that can lie are the worst, for you never know where you are with such people. Snakes in the grass are the most dangerous reptiles and enemies who will do any evil thing in order to ruin you, and who will tell any lie in the world in order to injure you, are just the hardest to overthrow.

[Psalms 144:9-11](#). *I will sing a new song unto thee, O God: upon a psaltery and an instrument of ten strings will I sing praises unto thee. It is he that giveth salvation unto kings: who delivereth David his servant from the hurtful sword. Rid me, and deliver me from the hand of strange children, whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood:*

You see, good men sometimes repeat their prayers; they present the same petition over again, and they thus follow the example of Christ, who prayed three times, "saying the same words."

[Psalms 144:12](#). *That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth; that our daughters may be as corner stones, polished after the similitude of a palace:*

Or, rather, "of a temple." This should be the prayer of every parent, that his sons may be bringing forth fruit unto God, that his daughters may be fixed as polished stones in the Church of God, to form a part of the great spiritual temple.

[Psalms 144:13](#). *That our garners may be full, affording all manner of store:*

When this is the case spiritually, when there is milk for babes, meat for strong men, and not a little of each, but more than enough for all, then are we very happy. Spiritual fertility is a blessed thing, when each Christian, each of the Lord's sheep, becomes prolific in increasing Christ's flock.

[Psalms 144:14](#). *That our oxen may be strong to labour;*

That the ministers of God may be mighty; that Sabbath-school teachers, and all earnest labourers, may have strength given to them.

[Psalms 144:14](#). *That there be no breaking in, nor going out;*

That there be no wolves to destroy by breaking in; and that there be no sheep to suffer injury by going astray.

[Psalms 144:14-15](#). *That there be no complaining in our street. Happy is that people, that is in such a case: yea, happy is that people, whose God is the LORD.*

May this be our case! And if it is our case, then the Lord is our God even at this day.

[Psalms 144:13](#). *That our sheep may bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our streets:*

Spiritual fertility is a blessed thing, when each Christian, each of the Lord's sheep, becomes prolific in increasing Christ's flock.

[Psalms 144:14](#). *That our oxen may be strong to labour:*

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[Psalms 144:14-15](#). *That there be no complaining in our streets. Happy is that people, that is in such a case: yea, happy is that people, whose God is the LORD.*

May this be our case! And if that is our case, then the Lord is our God even at this day. Now let us read about two interesting incidents in David's warrior life.

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 144, And [2 Samuel 5:17-25](#).

[PSALMS CONTENTS](#)

PSALM 145

Verses 1-21

When you get to the 145th Psalm, you enter the Beulah Land of the Psalms. Henceforth, the time of the singing of birds is come; and you go from one Hallelujah to another. In the Hebrew, this is one of the alphabetical Psalms, but one letter (nun) is omitted, perhaps, as Dr. Bonar suggests, that "we must be kept from putting stress on the mere form of the composition." Those ancient singers sang their way through the alphabet

from A to Z, and it is well for us also to begin to praise the Lord while we are yet children, and to keep on praising him till we get to the “Z” in the very hour of death, gasping his praises till we get into eternity.

“My God, I’ll praise thee while I live,
And praise thee when I die,
And praise thee when I rise again,
And to eternity.”

[Psalms 145:1-3](#). *I will extol thee, my God, O king, and I will bless thy name for ever and ever. Every day will I bless thee, and I will praise thy name for ever and ever. Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable.*

Such as the Lord is, such should his worship be. If he were a little God, he would deserve little praise; but the great God is “greatly to be praised.” There is no fear of going to any excess in our praises; we must never laud him too highly, however lofty our expressions may be. “Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable.” David knew what it was to be himself searched by God and he prayed, “Search me, O God;” but he could not search the greatness of his God. There, he was utterly lost, the utmost range of his faculties could not compass the greatness of Jehovah: “his greatness is unsearchable.”

[Psalms 145:4](#). *One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts.*

There is a hallowed tradition of praise; each generation should hand out the praise of God as a precious legacy to the next one. Train up your sons and daughters to praise your God, so that, when your voice is silent in death, another voice, like your own, may continue the strain.

[Psalms 145:5](#). *I will speak of the glorious honour of thy majesty, and of thy wondrous works.*

“I will speak.” What a powerful speaker David was! Note how he piles up his golden words. He is not content merely to talk of God’s majesty, but he speaks of its “glorious honour.” When he talked of God’s works, he calls them “wondrous works.”

[Psalms 145:6](#). *And men shall speak of the might of thy terrible acts:*

If they will not speak of anything else, they shall be obliged to speak with awe when the terrors of the Lord are abroad in the earth. If they were as dumb as fishes before, they shall begin to say to one another, with bated

breath, when earthquakes, and famines, and war, and pestilence are rife, “What a terrible God he is!”

[Psalms 145:6](#). *And I will declare thy greatness.*

While other men were talking, David did not say, “Now I can be quiet.” When they did not speak, he did, and when they began to speak, he still added his quota of praise to Jehovah.

[Psalms 145:7](#). *They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness, and shall sing of thy righteousness.*

What a beautiful expression! “They shall abundantly utter.” The original has in it the idea of bubbling up, boiling over, bursting out like a fountain; men’s hearts shall get to be so full of gratitude to God that they shall overflow with the memory of his great goodness. Then they shall sing. Singing is the language of jubilant nature: “The mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing.” Singing is the language of men when they wish to express their highest joys. The saints sing the high praises of their God. Singing is the language of the holy angels; did they not, when they came to Bethlehem, sing concerning the newborn King? Singing is the language of heaven, and most marvellous of all, singing is the highest language that ever God uses: “He will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.” Oh, for more holy singing!

[Psalms 145:8](#). *The LORD is gracious, —*

That alone is enough to make us sinners sing, for we need grace, and “the Lord is gracious,” —

[Psalms 145:8](#). *And full of compassion; —*

There is no “passion” in him, but there is “compassion” in him; what a mercy that is for us! He is full of compassion;” —

[Psalms 145:8](#). *Slow to anger, and of great mercy.*

Hear that, ye great sinners, and ye saints who need great forbearance.

[Psalms 145:9](#). *The Lord is good to all:*

Even to his enemies. Does not the dewdrop hang upon the thistle as well as upon the rose?

[Psalms 145:9](#). *And his tender mercies are over all his works.*

He cares for the worm in the sod and for the fish in the sea as well as for men upon the face of the earth.

[Psalms 145:10](#). *All thy works shall praise thee, O Lord; and thy saint shall bless thee.*

Their voices can reach a higher note and a loftier strain than God's works can ever reach: "thy saints shall bless thee."

[Psalms 145:11](#). *They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom,*

For the saints love God as their King, and they rejoice to remember what the King's Son said to his disciples, "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom;" so well may they sing of it.

[Psalms 145:11-13](#). *And talk of thy power; to make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom. Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations.*

What is the use of preaching if it does not glorify God? What is the use of a tongue that does not speak or sing of the glory of God's kingdom? But let one of God's bards have this as the theme of his song, and he feels like a hind let loose, rejoicing in glorious liberty.

[Psalms 145:14](#). *The Lord upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all those that be bowed down.*

Does not this seem to be a singular change in the strain? The Lord is a King, and his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom; yet what is he doing? Why, he is upholding, propping up those that are ready to fall, and lifting up those that are crushed and oppressed. Earthly kings often glory in the terror of their power, and the splendor of their majesty. What a condescending God is ours, whose glory is a moral glory, and whose chief delight consists in blessing the poor and needy! Let us bless his name for this. Are any of you ready to fall? Then praise him for this glorious truth, "The Lord upholdeth all that fall." Are any of you bowed down? Daughter of Abraham, have you been bowed down these many years? Oh, that you might be made straight this very hour! And you may be, for God can lift you up, for he "raiseth up all those that be bowed down."

[Psalms 145:15-16](#). *The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thine hand, and satisfied the desire of every living thing.*

What a glorious God we have! How easily can he supply the needs of his people! He has but to open his hand, and it is done! We need not be afraid to come to him, as though our needs would be too great for him to supply. The commissariat of the universe is superintended by this truly

Universal Provider, who hath but to open his hand to satisfy “the desire of every living thing.”

[Psalms 145:17](#). *The LORD is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.*

This is a thing for which many modern divines do not praise God. The attribute of righteousness in the character of God is expelled from a good deal of modern theology. But he, who loves God aright, loves the righteousness of God. I would not care to have even salvation if it were unrighteous salvation. The righteousness of God gleams like a sharp two-edged sword, and it is terrible to those who are at enmity against him; but the true children of the Most High delight to see this sword of state carried in the front of the great King of kings. The seraphim cried, one to another, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts.” The redeemed in glory sing, “Just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints; but the captious critics of the present day care nothing for these attributes of Jehovah.

[Psalms 145:18](#). *The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth.*

If you read this Psalm through carefully, you will notice the great number of “alls” with which the latter part of the Psalm is studded; and this is appropriate, for God is All-in-all, he is the One, the All, so let him have all praise from all.

[Psalms 145:19](#). *He will fulfill the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them.*

When you have respect to God’s will, God will have respect to your will. When you fear him, you will have no one else to fear, and when you make his service your delight, he will make your wants his care.

[Psalms 145:20](#). *The LORD preserveth all them that love him: but all the wicked will he destroy.*

As in a state of sanitary perfection, everything that breeds miasma and disease is banished, so must it be in God’s great universe, when he has completed his works “all the wicked will he destroy.”

[Psalms 145:21](#). *My mouth shall speak the praise of the LORD: and let all flesh bless his holy name for ever and ever.*

[PSALMS CONTENTS](#)

Verses 1-10

[Psalms 146:1](#). *Praise ye the LORD.*

Or, “Hallelujah.” I am sorry to see that great word, Hallelujah, Hallelujah, praise to Jah, Jehovah, become so hackneyed as it is, by talk about “Hallelujah lasses”, and Hallelujah — I know not what. The Jews will not even pronounce the word Jah, or write it; it seems a great pity that it should be thus dragged in the dirt by Gentiles. “Praise ye the Lord.” Whenever you make use of the word Hallelujah, let it be with the due reverence which should be given to that blessed name, for remember “the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.”

[Psalms 146:1](#). *Praise the LORD, O my soul.*

Whatever we exhort others to do, we should be ready to do ourselves; yea, our own soul should praise the Lord most of all, since, if we rightly know our obligations, no one in the world is so much indebted to God as each one of us should feel himself to be. “Praise the Lord, O my soul;” not my lips only, but my innermost spirit, for soul-music is the soul of music: “Praise the Lord, O my soul.”

[Psalms 146:2](#). *While I live will I praise the LORD: I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being.*

I will lisp his praises when I can do no more; when my being seems to be dried up, in the weakness of the death-throe, still, “I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being.”

[Psalms 146:3](#). *Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help.*

What is the connection here between praising God and not trusting man? Why, this connection, that we never praise God better than by exercising faith in him! Quiet trust is among the sweetest music that reaches the heart of God; and when we put our trust in man, we rob God of his glory; we are giving to others the confidence which belongs alone to him.

[Psalms 146:4](#). *His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.*

What is man, — with a life dependent upon his breath, such a vapory thing, each a thin, unsubstantial thing is human life, — what is he that we should trust in him?

[Psalms 146:5](#). *Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LORD his God:*

He is the happy man who has learned to trust in the invisible God.

[Psalms 146:6](#). *Which made heaven, and earth, the sea, and all that therein is: which keepeth truth for ever:*

Never did his promise fail. Perhaps, dear brother, you have not pleaded the promises enough of late. Then the mercy-seat is the place where promises must be pleaded, with the certainty that then they shall be fulfilled.

[Psalms 146:7](#). *Which executeth judgment for the oppressed: which giveth food to the hungry. The LORD looseth the prisoners:*

Souls that are in bondage will never get freedom till the Lord looses them. Oh, that prisoners of hope, who are here this evening, might have grace to look to God! You cannot pick the lock of your prison yourself, nor forge your way through the iron berg of despair, but, “the Lord looseth the prisoners.” Ay, but when they get loose, they are blind, for man by nature is blinded by sin! Therefore the psalmist adds, —

[Psalms 146:8](#). *The LORD openeth the eyes of the blind:*

He can not only give you liberty, but understanding, insight into his Word, a knowledge of himself. Ay, but when men get their eyes opened, they see much to make them sorry, and he that increaseth knowledge often increaseth sorrow! Yes, but look at the next words, —

[Psalms 146:8](#). *The LORD raiseth them that are bowed down:*

He can take away depression of spirit, and relieve the heart of its burdens and, as the woman who was bowed down for many years was made straight by the word of Christ, so can those that suffer from mental infirmity be restored. And best of all, —

[Psalms 146:8](#). *The LORD loveth the righteous:*

He loves them, and his love is wealth and health. The love of God is all a creature wants.

[Psalms 146:9](#). *The Lord preserveth the strangers;*

When our eyes are opened, and we are no more bowed down, but feel we have a sense of God’s love, yet still we know that we are exiles, banished ones, strangers and foreigners, as all our fathers were. It is comforting, therefore, to be assured that “the Lord preserveth the strangers.”

[Psalms 146:9](#). *He relieveth the fatherless and widow:*

He does so literally: “A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation.” He also relieves such spiritually.

When any feel themselves to be poverty-stricken, and unable to help themselves, let them look to him who is both able and willing to succor them, for “he relieveth the fatherless and the widow.”

[Psalms 146:9](#). *But the way of the wicked he turneth upside down.*

Where they looked for joy, they experienced disappointment, where they expected success, they met with defeat, and whereas they thought to heap to themselves pleasures according to their lusts, they find that they have only increased their misery.

[Psalms 146:10](#). *The LORD shall reign for ever, even thy God, O Zion, unto all generations. Praise ye the LORD.*

The sovereignty of God should be the delight of his people. God anywhere is blessed, but God on his throne should make his people shout their Hallelujahs with all their heart.

Now let us read in the New Testament about one who glorified God and gave thanks to Jesus.

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 146, and [Luke 17:11-19](#)

[PSALMS CONTENTS](#)

PSALM 147

Verses 1-20

[Psalms 147:1](#). *Praise ye the LORD:*

This Psalm begins and ends with Hallelujah. So may this service, and so may our lives, commence and conclude with Hallelujah!

[Psalms 147:1-2](#). *For it is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant; and praise is comely. The LORD doth build up Jerusalem:*

Oh, that the Lord would do so here tonight!

[Psalms 147:2](#). *He gathereth together the outcasts of Israel.*

We want that blessing, too. Oh, that some outcasts might be gathered together! It shall make our hearts cry “Hallelujah!” indeed, if there be a building up of the church and an ingathering of the outcasts.

[Psalms 147:3](#). *He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.*

As we read that, we may well say again, “Hallelujah!”

[Psalms 147:4](#). *He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names.*

And the Hallelujah is not louder because of that fact than it is for the other truth. What a condescending God: “He healeth the broken in heart.” How infinite is his mind: “He telleth the number of the stars.”

[Psalms 147:5-6](#). *Great is our lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite.*

The LORD lifteth up the meek:

How wonderful it is that the Lord should use the greatness of his power and the infinity of his understanding for the lifting up of those whom men often despise, “the meek”!

[Psalms 147:6-11](#). *He casteth the wicked down to the ground. Sing unto the LORD with thanksgiving; sing praise upon the harp unto our God: who covereth the heaven with clouds, who prepareth rain for the earth, who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains. He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry. He delighteth not in the strength of the horse: he taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man. The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.*

Other kings tell of their cavalry and infantry, they boast of their regiments of horse and foot guards, but our great God finds his delight in them that fear him and even in the feebler sort of these: “those that hope in his mercy.” These are the courtiers of Jehovah. These are the forces of our God, through whom he will win great victories.

[Psalms 147:12-16](#). *Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem; praise thy God, O Zion. For he hath strengthened the bars of thy gates; he hath blessed thy children within thee. He maketh peace in thy borders, and filleth thee with the finest of the wheat. He sendeth forth his commandment upon earth: his word runneth very swiftly.*

Our King’s warrant runs everywhere, all over the world. He has universal power in nature, in providence, and in grace: “His word runneth very swiftly.”

[Psalms 147:16](#). *He giveth snow like wool: he scattereth the hoarfrost like ashes.*

The Hebrews saw God in all the phenomena of nature; let us do the same. Let us attribute every snow-flake to the divine hand, and every breath of frost to the divine mouth.

[Psalms 147:17-18](#). *He casteth forth his ice like morsels: who can stand before his cold? He sendeth out his word, and melteth them:*

It is just as easy for him to send warm weather as to give us the chill of winter.

[Psalms 147:18](#). *He causeth his wind to blow, and the waters flow.*

His own soft south wind comes, and the fetters of frost dissolve, and the waters flow. It is the Lord that doeth it all. He is not far from any of us; therefore let us not forget him.

[Psalms 147:19](#). *He showeth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel.*

The rest of the world can only see him in nature, but his own people see him in revelation, in the movements of his Holy Spirit.

[Psalms 147:20](#). *He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for his judgments, they have not known them. Praise ye the Lord.*

Therefore, ye who are favored with his special manifestations of love, take you up the joyous song even if others do not. Hallelujah! “Praise ye the Lord.”

Now let us read in the Gospel according to Matthew, chapter 26, beginning at the sixth verse.

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 147, And [Matthew 26:6-30](#).

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PSALM 148

Verses 1-14

We will first read a short Psalm inciting all to praise the Lord, and then we will read part of the first chapter of Luke’s Gospel, specially noticing Mary’s song of praise. It is a blessed thing to indulge our holy gratitude, and to let it have speech in sacred psalm and song. Praise is the end of prayer and preaching. It is the ear of the wheat: it is God’s harvest from all the seed of grace that he has sown.

[Psalms 148:1](#). *Praise ye the LORD.*

Hallelujah!

[Psalms 148:1](#). *Praise ye the LORD from the heavens:*

Begin the song, ye holy angels before the throne; lead us in praise, O ye glorified spirits above!

[Psalms 148:1](#). *Praise him in the heights.*

Sing aloud, ye that sit at God's right hand in the heavenly places; let the highest praises be given to the Most High

[Psalms 148:2-3](#). *Praise ye him, all his angels: praise ye him all his hosts. Praise ye him, sun and moon: praise him, all ye stars of light.*

Shine out his glory. Ye are but dim reflections of his brightness; yet, praise ye him.

[Psalms 148:4](#). *Praise him, ye heaven of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens.*

Stored up there for man's use and benefit. Ye clouds that look black to us, and yet are big with blessings, praise ye the Lord. See, beloved, how the song comes down from the praises of the angels nearest the throne, to the glorified saints, then to the sun, and moon, and stars, and the clouds that float in the firmament of heaven.

[Psalms 148:5-6](#). *Let them praise the name of the LORD: for he commanded, and they were created. He hath also established them for ever and ever: he hath made a decree which shall not pass.*

Or, pass away. Now the psalmist begins at the bottom, and works up to the top.

[Psalms 148:7](#). *Praise the LORD from the earth, ye dragons, and all deeps:*

Right down there, however low the caverns may be, let the strange creatures that inhabit the secret places in the very bottoms of the mountains and the depths of the seas, — let them send out the deep bass of their praise.

[Psalms 148:8-10](#). *Fire, and hail; snow, and vapor; stormy wind fulfilling his word: Mountains, and all hills; fruitful trees, and all cedars: Beasts, and all cattle; creeping things, and flying fowl:*

If you cannot praise God by soaring up like eagles, if you feel more like the creeping things of the earth, still praise him. There is something very pleasant in the spiritual allusion that grows out of this verse. You who seem like poor worms of the dust, or insects of an hour, can yield your little need of praise to God.

[Psalms 148:11-14](#). *Kings of the earth, and all people; princes, and all judges of the earth: Both young men, and maidens; old men, and children: Let them praise the name of the LORD: for his name alone is excellent; his*

glory is above the earth and heaven. He also exalteth the horn of his people, the praise of all his saints; even of the children of Israel, a people near unto him.

They ought to sing best and most sweetly, because they are nearest to his heart. “Let the redeemed of the Lord say so.” If all other tongues are silent, let them praise the Lord.

[Psalms 148:14](#). *Praise ye the LORD.*

The Psalm ends, as it began, with Hallelujah! “Praise ye the Lord.”

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 148; and [Luke 1:5-35](#); [Luke 1:46-56](#).

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PSALM 149

Verses 1-9

[Psalms 149:1](#). *Praise ye the Lord.*

This is a Hallelujah Psalm; it begins with, “Praise ye the Lord,” and finishes in the same way. It is a complete circle of praise. The long streams of the Psalms end in glorious cascades of hallelujahs. One after another these jubilant notes roll out, as in Handel’s magnificent Hallelujah Chorus.

[Psalms 149:1](#). *Sing unto the LORD a new song, and his praise in the congregation of saints.*

There was an old song previous to this new one, — in the 148th Psalm, — the Psalm for sun and moon and stars, for deeps and dragons, for old men and maidens, and so on; but this is a Psalm for saints, so it is “a new song” for the new creation. Therefore, let all the new creatures of God sing it from their hearts.

[Psalms 149:2](#). *Let Israel rejoice in him that made him:*

This is the best and highest form of creation, — the making, not only of men, but of men of God, the making of Israels, the making of prevailing princes.

[Psalms 149:2](#). *Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.*

Let them rejoice that their Maker reigns, that he rules over them, and that he rules over all things: “Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.”

[Psalms 149:3](#). *Let them praise his name in the dance: let them sing praises unto him with the timbrel and harp.*

That is, let them repeat the joy of Israel at the Red Sea, when Miriam “took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances; and Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously.” So, O ye children of God, let the praises of your God and King ring out as with the music of the timbrel and harp.

[Psalms 149:4](#). *For the LORD taketh pleasure in his people:*

Then, should not they take pleasure in him? If he looks upon them with divine delight, should not they look up to him with adoring gratitude? What is there in us to give him any pleasure? But if his delights are with the sons of men, surely the sons of men should have their delights in him: “For the Lord taketh pleasure in his people.”

[Psalms 149:4-5](#). *He will beautify the meek with salvation. Let the saints be joyful in glory:*

Let them glory in God, and be joyful in him. Let their spirits seem to rise even beyond grace up to the anticipation of glory: “Let the saints be joyful in glory.”

[Psalms 149:5](#). *Let them sing aloud upon their beds.*

If they be sick, or if they lie awake at night, or if they have enjoyed sweet rest, let them not fail to praise God for it: “Let them sing aloud upon their beds.”

[Psalms 149:6](#). *Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand;*

But let it be a spiritual sword, that two-edged sword of God’s Word which will cut through coats of mail; and as they wield it, let them ever rest satisfied that victory shall surely be theirs. One of the poetical versions of this Psalm rightly renders this verse, —

“Ye saints of the Lord; as round him ye stand,
His two-edged sword, his word, in your hand,
To sound his high praises your voices employ!
To victory he raises, and crowns you with joy.”

[Psalms 149:7](#). *To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people;*

So they had to do in those old times: but we, happily, have not to do so now, except it be in a spiritual sense that, with the sword of God’s Word we are to cut down the idols of the heathen, and subdue the nations to our King.

[Psalms 149:8](#). *To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron;*

Reading the passage in a gospel sense, we lead men captives in the bonds of love that are stronger than fetters of iron. O soldiers of Christ, army of the living God, this is the battle you have to fight; be this your victory, too!

[Psalms 149:9](#). *To execute upon them the judgment written: this honour have all his saints. Praise ye the LORD.*

So the Psalm ends upon its key-note, — “Hallelujah.” “Praise ye the Lord.’ Now let us turn to the 5th chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew, and see what we have to rejoice in there.

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 149.; and [Matthew 5:1-12](#).

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PSALM 150

Verses 1-6

[Psalms 150:1](#). *Praise ye the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary:*

Notice how, in this last Psalm, it is praise, praise, praise, all the way through. I think we have the word “praise” some thirteen times in the six verses. It is all “praise him, praise him, praise him.” It is not enough to do it once, or twice, we should keep on praising the Lord till we should make the very heavens ring with the music of his praises. “Praise ye the Lord. Praise God in his sanctuary:” that is, in his holy place where he dwells. Begin, ye angels, cherubim, and seraphim, pour forth his praise.

[Psalms 150:1](#). *Praise him in the firmament of his power.*

Let every star shine forth his praises, and sun and moon cease not to extol him: “Praise him in the firmament of his power.”

[Psalms 150:2](#). *Praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness. There is a task for us; we shall never attain to that height. We sometimes sing,-“*

Wide as his vast dominion lies,
Make the Creator’s name be known;
Loud as his thunder shout his praise,
And sound it lofty as his throne;”

but who can compass such a feat as that?

[Psalms 150:3-4](#). *Praise him with the sound of the trumpet: praise him with the psaltery and harp. Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs.*

So that there were all kinds of music in those days praising God,-the wind and the stringed instruments, the timbrel and the pipe. Everything that can praise God should praise him. The spiritual significance of these verses is this, let men of different orders and different sorts praise the Lord,-men, women, children, those who are deeply taught and those who know but little, those who are great and those who are small. Let every heart regard itself as an instrument of praise, and use itself wholly for the Lord's praise. Having got so far, the psalmist recollected that there were discs of brass, which were struck together, and gave forth a sound to be heard at a great distance, so he said,-

[Psalms 150:5](#). *Praise him upon the loud cymbals:*

Crash!

[Psalms 150:5](#). *Praise him upon the high sounding cymbals.*

Then came another crash!

[Psalms 150:6](#). *Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD.*

A Jewish Rabbi once remarked to me that the name Jehovah was not made up of letters, but only of a series of breathings. (The preacher here uttered the three syllables of the sacred name, Jehovah, as though they were not composed of letters, but only a succession of breathings.) That is the nearest approach to the name of God, three breathings; therefore since all breath comes from him, and his very name can only be pronounced by breath, "Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord." Hallelujah! "THERE IS FORGIVENESS."

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CHAPTER 27

Verses 1-27

[Proverbs 27:1](#). *Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.*

Let us never boast of future days and years, or what we mean to do when we come to any age, or what shall be our position when we grow gray. Let us never boast of anything in the future, for we cannot tell what even a day may bring forth.

[Proverbs 27:2](#). *Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips.*

For he who praises himself writes himself down a fool in capital letters.

[Proverbs 27:3](#). *A stone is heavy, and the sand weighty; but a fool's wrath is heavier than them both.*

One might endure almost any sort of labour sooner than have to live with one who is perpetually and foolishly angry.

[Proverbs 27:4](#). *Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy?*

Envy is a snake in the grass. Christians, beware of envy. You will, perhaps, be tempted to have it in your heart when you see another Christian more useful than you are, or when some Christian brother seems to have more honour than you have. Ah, then! cry to God against it. Never let this venomous reptile be spared for a single moment. The best of men will find envy creeping over them at times; it may be envy of the wicked who are rich. We must seek to overcome that at once. And even envy of the best of men, what is it but covetousness and hatred, and a breach of two commandments? God save us from it!

[Proverbs 27:5](#). *Open rebuke is better than secret love.*

That I should love my fellow-man is a good thing; but to have love enough to be able openly to rebuke his faults, is a very high proof of affection, and far better than secret love that is silent when it ought to speak. And yet, how many persons there are who are very angry with you if you give them an open rebuke, and how many there are who are foolish enough to prefer secret love to open rebuke, though they have Solomon's wisdom to teach them better! Our Lord Jesus Christ has a secret love to his people, yet he never spares them the open rebuke when he knows that it will be good for them.

[Proverbs 27:6](#). *Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.*

Beware of the flattering world, believer; beware of the flattering devil, and of the cozening of the flesh. When things go smoothly with you, there may be the greatest danger. Whatever you do in times of storm, keep a good look-out when the sea is calm and the sky is clear.

[Proverbs 27:7](#). *The full soul loatheth an honeycomb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.*

“The full soul loatheth” (even that luscious thing) “an honeycomb.” No true preaching will go down with him who is full of himself, full of his own importance. Unless there shall be many of the flowers of rhetoric in the discourse, he will not listen to sound doctrine. “But to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.” Happy hunger is it when the soul hungereth and thirsteth after righteousness. Then there are no hyper-critical observations about the minister’s delivery, and no carping at words and phrases. It is spiritual food that the soul seeks, and if it can get that, though it may not be to its taste in every respect, there will be a sweetness in it that will make it like a honeycomb.

[Proverbs 27:8-9](#). *As a bird that wandereth from her nest, so is a man that wandereth from his place. Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so doth the sweetness of a man’s friend by hearty counsel.*

The Orientals were wont to smear their faces, and especially their hair with ointment and perfume, and those who came near them were pleased with the scent. When you can get a little conversation, especially upon points that help towards godliness, with those of a like frame of mind with you, when you can have sweet communion and fellowship with the people of God, then it is that your hearts are rejoiced as with ointments and perfumes.

[Proverbs 27:10](#). *Thine own friend, and thy father’s friend, forsake not;*

Have but few friends, but stick closely to them. Above all, cleave closely to that “Friend that sticketh closer than a brother.” If he be thine own Friend, and thy father’s Friend, never forsake HIM. Forsake all the world for him, but let not all the world induce thee to forsake him.

[Proverbs 27:10](#). *Neither go into thy brother’s house in the day of thy calamity: for better is a neighbour that is near than a brother far off.*

It is very sad that it should be so; but, sometimes, our nearest relatives are the farthest off, and those who ought to help us the most help us least.

Many a man has had kindness shown to him by his neighbour, who was but a stranger, when he has had little or no kindness from his own relatives. But there is one Brother into whose house we may always go. So near of kin he is to us, and so loving of heart, that he never thinketh a hard thought of us; but, the more we ask of him, the more delighted he is with us, and is only grieved with us because we stint ourselves in our prayers.

[Proverbs 27:11](#). *My son, be wise, and make my heart glad, that I may answer him that reproacheth me.*

A good son is his father's honour. If any say of such-and-such a man that he is a bad man, yet, if his children walk orderly, he can answer the slander without speaking a word. Would a bad man have brought up his children in that way? Would they be walking in the fear of God if he had not walked in that way himself? So the sons of God ought to seek, by their consistency, to keep the name of their Father clear of reproach. The consistency of our conduct should be the best answer to the accusations of the infidel.

[Proverbs 27:12-13](#). *A prudent man foreseeeth the evil, and hideth himself, but the simple pass on and are punished. Take his garment that is surety for a stranger,*

He that taketh surety is sure, but he that goeth surety for another, and especially for a stranger, will smart for it, perhaps to the day of his death.

[Proverbs 27:13-14](#). *And take a pledge of him for a strange woman. He that blesseth his friend with a loud voice, rising early in the morning, it shall be counted a curse to him.*

There are some men who always use such sweet words; they are so fond of you that they are up early in the morning to give you their praise, and they continue all day pouring out their flattering unction. Such blessings as these are a curse, and the wise man will loathe these parasitical people who will see no faults, or pretend that they do not see any, but will always be extolling mere trifles as though they were the sublimest virtues. A sensible man is not to be overcome by this flattery.

[Proverbs 27:15](#). *A continual dropping in a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike.*

When there is a little leak in the roof, and the rain keeps dropping through, it is very uncomfortable; but it is ten times more comfortable than it is to have to dwell with a contentious woman.

[Proverbs 27:16](#). *Whosoever hideth her hideth the wind, and the ointment of his right hand, which bewrayeth itself.*

That is to say, if a man put sweet ointment on his hand, the smell of it would soon be perceived; so, if a woman be of a contentious, angry, quarrelsome disposition, her contentiousness will be discovered, there is no hiding it.

[Proverbs 27:17](#). *Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.*

Hence the usefulness of Christian association, and hence also the evil of sinful company, for one sinner sharpens another to do mischief, just as one saint encourages another to righteousness.

[Proverbs 27:18-19](#). *Whoso keepeth the fig tree shall eat the fruit thereof: so he that waiteth on his master shall be honoured. As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man.*

If I look into water, I see the reflection of my own face, not another man's; and if I look into society, I shall probably see men like-minded with myself. How is it that a drunken man always finds out drunken men? How is it that lascivious men always have a bad opinion of the morality of other people? How is it that hypocrites always think other people hypocrites? Why, because they can see the reflection of their own faces. When a man tells me that there is no love in the Church of God, I know it is because he sees his own face, and knows that there is no love in it. You will generally find that men measure other people's corn with their own bushels. They are sure to mete out to others according to their own measure; and they thus unconsciously betray themselves.

[Proverbs 27:20-21](#). *Hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied. As the fining pot for silver, and the furnace for gold; so is a man to his praise.*

Many a man, who can bear adversity, cannot bear prosperity. The world's censures seldom do a Christian any harm, but it is the breath of applause that often gives us the scarlet fever of pride.

[Proverbs 27:22](#). *Though thou shouldst bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him.*

No troubles, no afflictions, can of themselves make a fool into a wise man. The sinner remains a sinner, after all providential chastisements, unless sovereign grace interposes.

[Proverbs 27:23](#). *Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds.*

Be not slothful in business; and, above all, let the Christian be diligent to know the state of his own heart.

[Proverbs 27:24-27](#). *For riches are not for ever: and doth the crown endure to every generation? The hay appeareth, and the tender grass showeth itself, and herbs of the mountains are gathered. The lambs are for thy clothing, and the goats are the price of the field. And thou shalt have goats' milk enough for thy food, for the food of thy household, and for the maintenance for thy maidens.*

Those who are diligent generally prosper, and they who are diligent in spiritual things shall have all that their souls need. They shall be clothed with the robe of righteousness, they shall be well fed, and shall be satisfied. May the wisdom of these proverbs be given to us in daily life, that we may be wise as serpents, and harmless as doves; but, above all, may heavenly wisdom be given to us in all spiritual things, to the praise of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ!

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CHAPTER 11

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[Ecclesiastes 11:1](#). *Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days.*

Hoard not thy bread; for if thou dost, it will mildew, it will be of no use to thee. Cast it on the waters; scatter it abroad; give it to the unworthy men if need be. Some here have seen an allusion to the casting of seed into the Nile when it overflowed its banks. When the waters subsided, the corn would grow, and be gathered in “after many days.”

[Ecclesiastes 11:2](#). *Give a portion to seven,*

And if that be a perfect number, give beyond it,

[Ecclesiastes 11:2](#). *And also to eight;*

Give to more than thou canst afford to give to. Help some who are doubtful, some who are outside of the perfect number, and give them a portion, a fair portion. Our Saviour went beyond Solomon; for he said, “Give to every man that asketh of thee.”

[Ecclesiastes 11:2](#). *For thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth.*

Thou knowest not what need there may be of thy help; nor what need may come to thee, and how thou thyself mayest be helped by those whom thou helpest now.

[Ecclesiastes 11:3](#). *If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth;*

The tree falls the way it is inclined; but when it has fallen, there it must be. God grant that you and I may fall the right way when the axe of death

hews us down! Which way are we inclined?

[Ecclesiastes 11:4-5](#). *He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap. As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child; even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all.*

There are great mysteries which we can never comprehend. God alone knows how the soul comes into the body, or even how the body is fashioned. This must remain with him. We do not know how sinners are regenerated. We know not how the Spirit of God works upon the mind of man, and transforms the sinner into a saint. We do not know. There are some who know too much already. I have not half the desire to know that I have to believe and to love. Oh, that we loved God more, and trusted God more! We might then get to heaven if we knew even less than we do.

[Ecclesiastes 11:6](#). *In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.*

You cannot make the gospel enter into men's hearts. You cannot tell how it does enter and change them. The Spirit of God does that; but your duty is to go on telling it out. Go on spreading abroad the knowledge of Christ; in the morning, and in the evening, and all day long, scatter the good seed of the kingdom. You have nothing to do with the result of your sowing; that remains with the Lord. That which you sow in the morning may prosper, or the seed that you scatter in the evening; possibly God will bless both. You are to keep on sowing, whether you reap or not.

[Ecclesiastes 11:7](#). *Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun: But if a man live many years, and rejoice in them all; yet let him remember the days of darkness; for they shall be many. All that cometh is vanity.*

Take Christ away, and this is a truthful estimate of human life. Put Christ into the question, and Solomon does not hit the mark at all. If we have Christ with us, whether the days are light or dark, we walk in the light, and our soul is happy and glad; but apart from Christ, the estimate of life which is given here is an exactly accurate one — a little brightness and long darkness, a flash and then midnight. God save you from living a merely natural life! May you rise to the supernatural! May you get out of the lower life of the mere animal into the higher life of the regenerated soul! If the life

of God be in you, then you shall go from strength to strength like the sun that shineth unto the perfect day.

[Ecclesiastes 11:9](#). *Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.*

Young man, will you dare, then, to follow your passions, and the devices of your own heart, with this ate the back, “God will bring thee into judgment?” Oh no, the advice of Solomon apparently so evil, is answered by warning at the end, which is also true, —

[Ecclesiastes 11:10](#). *Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh: for childhood and youth are vanity.*

“Remove sorrow,” or rather, anger, ambition, or anything else that would cause sorrow, “from thy heart; and put away evil from thy flesh.” Let not thy fleshly nature rule thee; thou art in the period when flesh is strong towards evil, when “vanity” is the ruin of many.

This exposition consisted of readings from Ecclesiastes 11-12

Verses 6-10

[Ecclesiastes 11:6](#). *In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.*

It is our business to sow the good seed of the kingdom, to sow it broadcast, to sow it at all times: “In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand.” The result of our sowing does not rest with us, but with the great Lord of the harvest. Some of the seed may fall by the wayside, some among thorns, some upon a rock, or upon rocky ground with only a thin layer of earth; but if God has called us to be sowers, and we really sow gospel seed, some of it will fall into good ground, and bring forth fruit, thirtyfold, sixtyfold, or even a hundredfold.

[Ecclesiastes 11:7](#). *Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun:*

And as it is so pleasant for the natural eyes to behold the natural sun, how much more pleasant is it for the spiritual eye to behold the Sun of righteousness! Sweet as the light of the sun is, the light of the Sun of righteousness is far sweeter.

[Ecclesiastes 11:8-9](#). *But if a man live many years, and rejoice in them all; yet let him remember the days of darkness; for they shall be many. All*

that cometh is vanity. Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.

Nobody in his sense supposes that Solomon exhorted young men to walk according to their own heart and according to the sight of their eyes. This is a common way of speaking; as we may say to a man who is going to excess in drink, “Well, drink your full, and be drunken; but you will have to suffer for it. It will certainly exact a penalty at your hands by-and-by.” Nobody would be so foolish as to say that we had exhorted the man to drunkenness. On the contrary, we did, as it were, warn him not to continue in his evil course by reminding him of the penalty which would assuredly follow. So, here, Solomon seems to say, “Do this if you will; do it if you dare; but remember that there is a judgment day coming, and that God will judge you for all these things, and according to these things will he measure out your doom.”

[Ecclesiastes 11:10](#). *Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh: for childhood and youth are vanity.*

There is no doubt that, if we were holy, we should be happy; so, if we advise men to put away sorrow from their heart, we must remind them that they cannot do it except by putting away sin. The roots of evil must be cleared right away; else, to cut down the shoots, and leave the roots, may be but to strengthen the evil in the long run. The removal of sorrow can only be effected by going deeper, and clearing the heart of sin; and this can only be accomplished by God’s grace.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Ecclesiastes 11:6-10](#); Ecclesiastes 12.

[ECCLESIASTES CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 12

Verses 1-14

[Ecclesiastes 12:1](#). *Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth:*

Now we get on solid ground. There is an irony in the advice, “Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes.”

There is no irony here; there is solid, sound advice: “Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.” May every young man take this advice, and carry it out!

[Ecclesiastes 12:1](#). *While the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them; While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain: In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble,*

These arms and hands of ours shake by reason of weakness.

[Ecclesiastes 12:3](#). *And the strong men shall bow themselves,*
These limbs, these legs of ours, begin to bend under the weight they have to support.

[Ecclesiastes 12:3](#). *And the grinders cease because they are few,*
The teeth are gone.

[Ecclesiastes 12:3](#). *And those that look out of the windows be darkened,*
The eyesight begins to fail.

[Ecclesiastes 12:4](#). *And the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of musick shall be brought low;*

The old man sleeps very lightly; anything awakens him. He hides away from public business. The doors are shut in the streets.

[Ecclesiastes 12:5](#). *Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way:*

There is none of the courage of youth. Daring is gone; prudence, not to say cowardice, sits on the throne.

[Ecclesiastes 12:5](#). *And the almond tree shall flourish,*
The hair is white and gray, like the early peach or almond tree in the beginning of the year.

[Ecclesiastes 12:5](#). *And the grasshopper shall be a burden,*
A little trouble weighs the old man down. He has no energy now. The grasshopper is a burden.

[Ecclesiastes 12:5](#). *And desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets; or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken,*

Before the spinal cord is broken, or the skull becomes emptied of the living inhabitants.

[Ecclesiastes 12:6](#). *Or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern.*

The circulation of the blood begins to fail, the heart grows weak, it will soon stop. The man's career is nearly over.

[Ecclesiastes 12:7](#). *Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.*

This will happen to us all, either to return to dust or else return to God. Whether we die, and return to dust, or live until the coming of Christ, our spirit shall return to God who gave it. May the return be a joyous one for each of us!

[Ecclesiastes 12:8](#). *Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all is vanity. And moreover, because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge;*

Yes, he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs. The preacher sought to find out acceptable words: and that which was written was upright, even words of truth. The words of the wise are as goads, They prick us onward, as the goad does the bullock, when he is trying to stop instead of ploughing in the furrow.

[Ecclesiastes 12:11](#). *And as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd.*

The words of the wise are driven home, like nails, and clinched. There is one Shepherd who, by means of his servants' words, leads his flock where he would have them go.

[Ecclesiastes 12:12](#). *And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh.*

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the duty of man. Or, "this is the whole of man." It makes a man of him when he fears God and keeps his commandments; he has that which makes him "the whole man."

[Ecclesiastes 12:14](#). *For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.*

Depend upon it that it will be so. At the last great day, there will be a revelation of everything, whether it be good, or whether it be evil. Nor need the righteous fear that revelation, for they will only magnify in that day the amazing grace of God which has put all their iniquities away; and then shall all men know how great the grace of God was in passing by iniquity, transgression, and sin.

This exposition consisted of readings from Ecclesiastes 11-12

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CHAPTER 1

Verses 1-9

[Isaiah 1:1-2](#). *The vision of Isaiah the son of Amos, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.*

The good and gracious God, having been treated ungenerously, makes his appeal not to men who themselves are guilty, but to the very heavens and each, calling on the silent stones of the field, and the trees of the wood, and the stars of heaven, to judge between him and his rebellious children. “I have nourished and brought up children “ — taken a nurse’s interest in them, shown a parent’s love to them, “and they have rebelled against me.”

[Isaiah 1:3-4](#). *The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward.*

More brutish than the brutes are men when they forget their God. The dog follows its master’s heels, but man will not be obedient to his Lord. The

ox knows his owner, and gives some sign of recognition when he sees him; but alas! the ungodly sons of men know not the God that made them, feeds them, keeps them alive. Where art thou, oh! backslider? Mingling once again with the people of God, let these words come home to you. There is a “Thus saith the Lord” in the prophets words to them; and thus saith the Lord to you. You have gone away backward, provoking the Holy One of Israel to anger.

[Isaiah 1:5](#). *Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.*

It was of no use chastising these people. They only sinned the worse for all the afflictions that were sent, and when the fire of affliction doth not melt the iron heart, what can do it? Why waste the fuel upon them? Ye will revolt more and more; the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. They had been smitten, they had been afflicted, till the whole nation through and through had been brought low. Their head and heart had been made faint. And, oh! there are some that have passed through many trials and are none the better. They have seen poverty, and yet they go again to the sin that first brought them to it. They feel in their very bones the result of their transgressions, and yet they hug in their bosoms the serpent that has stung them.

[Isaiah 1:6](#). *From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds and bruises, and putrefying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.*

The whole land of Israel was so destroyed through sin, it was like a body that is covered with sores that have not been touched by the surgeon’s hand. Yet they do not repent.

[Isaiah 1:7-8](#). *Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire: your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers. And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers,*

A mere shanty run up during the grape season, wherein the persons who took care of the vineyard found shelter from the rain.

[Isaiah 1:8](#). *As a besieged city.*

For the same purpose.

[Isaiah 1:9](#). *Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah.*

Yet, though they were reduced to this, they kept on with their sins. It really seems as if men would suffer anything for their sins rather than give them up. It is not always the pleasure of sin which seems to fascinate, but the very bitterness of sin seems sweet to some.

Verses 1-20

May we be instructed of the Holy Ghost while we read this inspired Scripture!

[Isaiah 1:1](#). *The vision of Isaiah the son of Amos, which he saw—*

Prophets were called seers, they saw what they were called to say; and every true preacher of Christ must first be a seer of Christ. He must see, that is, realize for himself; and then he must tell to others what he has seen. This Book is about “the vision of

Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw

[Isaiah 1:1-2](#). *Concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.*

It is an appeal of God to inanimate creation to bear witness to the ingratitude that he had received, as if it was of no use any longer to speak to men. The appeal is stated very solemnly and impressively, “Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth for the Lord bath spoken. I have nourished and brought up children,” cared for them, loved them, fed them, “and they have rebelled against me.” The ingratitude of a child is something shocking; and the ingratitude of man to God is of that character.

[Isaiah 1:3](#). *The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.*

Men are more brutish than the beasts that perish. The lower animals, as men contemptuously call them, acknowledge the hand that feeds them; but men receive the bounty of God through long years, and yet live as if there were no God at all, and feel no gratitude to him whatsoever. Israel was God’s peculiar people, highly favored, and greatly indulged, and this made it all the worse for the Lord to be able to contrast them and the brute creation: “The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.”

[Isaiah 1:4](#). *Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they*

have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward.

Thus the prophet spoke to the people of his day, and we may say much the same to the people of our own time. The professing church of God has gone away backward, forsaken the doctrines of truth, and turned aside from the purity of its life. God have mercy upon the world when the church itself becomes thus defiled!

[Isaiah 1:5](#). *Why should ye be stricken any more?*

What is the use of chastisement to such people? It is supposed that punishment is always healthful, and that we grow the better for it; but God says, “Why should ye be stricken any more?”

[Isaiah 1:5-6](#). *Ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.*

The nation had been so beaten that it was covered all over with bruises and sores. It seemed to be of no use to afflict Israel any more; and there are some persons in the world who have been chastened in every conceivable way, and yet they are none the better. There are graves in the cemetery where lie asleep those they love; the house that was their joy has long ago been sold, and they have not a roof to call their own; they have been themselves at death’s door by fever and by other diseases; and yet all that God’s rod has done for them has come to nothing. The old Roman lictors carried an axe bound up in a bundle of rods; and, when the rods had been tried, and had failed, then came the axe. And if the milder forms of chastisement do not bring men to repentance, sooner or later will come the axe of destruction. Thus the prophet says it was with sinful Israel:—

[Isaiah 1:7-8](#). *Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire: your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers. And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city.*

The land had been so harried and worried by invaders that it was little better than a poor shanty; the nation was comparable to a poor hut which the Arabs put up in the vineyard just to sleep in: “As a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city.” -

[Isaiah 1:9](#). *Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto*

Gomorrah.

And this is true of London as well as of Jerusalem. If there had not been a remnant of godly ones still left, “we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah.”

[Isaiah 1:10-11](#). *Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats.*

These people were a very religious people, although a very wicked people; and it is a strange thing that, when nations have become demoralized, and injustice reigns supreme at the same time, Ritualism and outward pomp and external religion come to the front. This is a wretched business, to give to God the husks when the kernel has long ago gone. What cares the Lord for “burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts . . . the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats,” when men have left off doing that which is right in his sight? The Lord may well say to those who bring offerings to him under such circumstances, “To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me?”

[Isaiah 1:12](#). *When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts?*

“Who invited you to come to my courts?” says God. “Who asked you to pretend to worship me, when you are living in sin, and your hearts are not reconciled to me?”

[Isaiah 1:13](#). *Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting.*

If you are hypocrites, if your hearts are not right with God, you may multiply your church-goings, and your chapel-goings, and your sacraments; but all these are only a provoking of God to anger. There is nothing in it all that he could possibly accept; he cannot endure it. He says, “It is iniquity, even the solemn meeting.”

[Isaiah 1:14-15](#). *Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.*

This is plain speaking; but God never sends velvet-tongued men as his messengers. They who are called to testify for God speak out boldly, and faithfully denounce the sins of the day in which they live. Blessed be God for Isaiah and for men like him! When men are committing crimes, when they are oppressing the poor, when they are living in the daily practice of injustice, when they indulge in secret drunkenness, when their whole life is a lie, they may do what they will, but God will not hear their prayers. While we keep sin in our hearts, it is in vain for us to stretch out our hands unto God. He is a holy God, and he seeks holy hearts and holy lives; and nothing short of these can be acceptable to him.

[Isaiah 1:16-17](#). *Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.*

This is what God asks for: “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.”

18—20. *Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.*

May the Holy Spirit make us to be willing and obedient, that we may “eat the good of the land”; and may none of us be found refusing God’s gracious invitation, and rebelling against his authority, lest we perish in our sins!

Verses 2-19

[Isaiah 1:2-3](#). *Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.*

Heaven and earth might well be called to witness such strange ingratitude as this of which the Lord had to complain.

[Isaiah 1:4](#). *Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward.*

What a terrible indictment, and every word of it was true!

[Isaiah 1:5-9](#). *Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment. Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire: your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers. And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city. Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah.*

As the prophet's vision proceeds, the true state of the people is seen.

[Isaiah 1:10-15](#). *Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.*

They were horribly wicked people, they could hardly have been worse; so bad that even their prayers were not fit for God to hear; yet he says, —

[Isaiah 1:16-19](#). *Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land:*

What blessed words of mercy! Oh, that every one of us may prove them true in our own case, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

This exposition consisted of readings from [2 Chronicles 33:1-20](#); And [Isaiah 1:2-19](#).

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2

Verses 1-22

Isaiah 2:1-2. *The word that Isaiah the son of Amos saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.*

What grand hopes are kindled in our bosoms by words like these. The church has always been as a city set on a hill that cannot be hid, but still she has not been known in all parts of the world, and she has never been known with that universal eminence which attaches to the things of this world — the things of pomp and show. But the day shall come when she shall be the highest of the high. Her mountain shall be established “on the tops of the mountains,” — when she shall be best known of all the known, and shall become what she was always meant to be — the metropolis of the whole world, the center to which all kindreds shall flow. Not the Jews alone shall then possess the oracles of God, but all nations shall flow unto it.

Isaiah 2:3. *And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.*

In these happy days which have, in a measure, begun, but which in their fullness have not yet dawned upon us, the Spirit of the Lord will work in the hearts of multitudes of men a desire after God. They will be willing to worship him: they will say, “Let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah”: they will be anxious to learn what he would teach. This shall be the reason why they go, — “He will teach us of his ways.” They shall not only wish to learn, but be quick to practice: “and we will walk in his paths.” Sometimes we have to complain of the masses of mankind forsaking the worship of God altogether; and too often those that together with some inferior motive, — not that they may be taught of God; and even some that are, in a manner, taught, are slow to obey. The Lord teaches them by his ministers but they do not walk in his paths. Blessed days when all this shall be reversed, and the multitudes shall flock to the church and to the Christ!

[Isaiah 2:4](#). *And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.*

They shall not save their weapons for future use, or believe in the theory that the best way to preserve peace is to be prepared for war; but they shall beat their swords into ploughshares and turn their spears into pruninghooks. The spirit which created war shall be conquered. “Whence wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence even of your lusts?” When lust and envy and hatred shall be dethroned and the spirit of Christ shall be dominant over the world, then shall they learn war no more. “O happy day! O long-expected day begin!” Let each one of us labour mightily according as the Spirit worketh in us to bring about a consummation so devoutly to be wished.

[Isaiah 2:5](#). *O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the LORD.*

The Jew shall come. Long rejecting the Messiah, yet shall he with the Gentile, and walk in the light of Jehovah. Now the theme changes. We are led to see why it is that a happy state of things does not obtain at this moment, and did not obtain in the land of Judah. Sin — sin is the cause of the mischief — idolatry — the setting up of something in the place of God.

[Isaiah 2:6](#). *Therefore thou hast forsaken thy people the house of Jacob, because they be replenished from the east, and are soothsayers like the Philistines, and they please themselves in the children of strangers.*

The nations then had their soothsayers and fortune-tellers, and the people of God ought not so to have degraded themselves, but they did, and therefore they provoked him, and they sought out foreigners and entered into league with them, whereas the Lord had bidden them be a people separate unto himself. It always goes ill with those who profess to be God’s people when they forget their separated character and join with the world.

[Isaiah 2:7-8](#). *Their land also is full of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their treasures; their land is also full of horses, neither is there any end of their chariots: Their land also is full of idols;*

How these things generally go together. If a nation prospers and gets wealthy, it is so apt to seek for itself external worship of a gaudy kind. It must then have its ritualism and its idols, for if men have their gold and

have their chariots, the simple worship of the unseen God seems to be beneath the dignity of their taste.

[Isaiah 2:8-9](#). *They worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made: And the mean man boweth down, and the great man humbleth himself: therefore forgive them not.*

Mark the indignant spirit of the prophet, as if he had been an Elias, or had the mind of a John Knox of later days. It seemed as if he could not ask God to forgive such a stupendous folly as the setting up visible objects of worship, and the turning away from the true invisible God. O idolatry, what an accursed sin thou art, and how rampant art thou in this land at this day!

[Isaiah 2:10-12](#). *Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty. The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. For the day of the LORD of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low:*

Whatever God does or does not do, there is one role of his procedure from which he never deviates, namely, to cast down the proud and those who boast themselves, from their high places. He condescends to the humble, and he hath a tender eye to the contrite, but wherever man, the creature, dares to think himself great, God will bare his arm to overthrow him, or puff at him — for a puff will do it — and he shall pass away.

[Isaiah 2:13-16](#). *And upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan, And upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills that are lifted up, And upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall, And upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures.*

No matter what it is that man sets up, however good or great, if he dares to bring it into competition with God, God's hand is against him, and he will break it in pieces. Whenever God comes out of his secret place this is always the end of it. He came against Babylon and against Nineveh. Ay, ask the traveler who has wonderingly descended into those vast mounds, "Where are those mighty monarchies now?" Where is the power of Sennacherib and where the might of Nebuchadnezzar? They have gone. The dust is their sole monument. Turn ye, in later days to the great power of Rome, and as one walks through Some, that vast mausoleum of an empire, where one treads, at every step, upon an empire's dust — what think ye but

that God has broken the iron kingdom, and made what seemed to be an omnipotent power to pass away from off the face of the earth?

Woe unto all that is great and all that is high and all that exalts itself above God. Whether a temporal power, or a spiritual, it shall pass away like a dream of the night, or a vision of the air, for the Lord is, and all else is nothing.

[Isaiah 2:17-20](#). *And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. And the idols he shall utterly abolish. And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth. In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats;*

The worshipper of idols shall be ashamed of them. The precious metal shall not save them — the work of art for which so many plead. “It is true the thing is defiling and idolatrous,” say come, “but look at the skill, the taste, the handicraft, the precious metal.” When God makes bare his arm, they shall fling even gold and silver to the moles and to the bats.

[Isaiah 2:21-22](#). *To go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth. Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of?”*

What a rebuke this is to kingcraft and to priestcraft especially. “Wherein is he to be accounted of?” Ye may lay what hands ye will on him, and ye may gird him with what robes ye please, and ye may pour upon him your anointing oil and your sacred chrisms; but what is he, after all, but a man whose breath is in his nostrils? Cease ye from him, “for wherein is he to be accounted of?”

Verses 6-22

[Isaiah 2:6](#). *Therefore thou hast forsaken thy people the house of Jacob, because they be replenished from the east, and are soothsayers like the Philistines, and they please themselves in the children of strangers.*

It was God’s command that they should keep themselves separate, and worship him only; but, in the reign of this man Ahaz, they began to practice all the foul arts of the nations round about them. They had “soothsayers like the Philistines,” — men who pretended to divine future events from the

flights of birds, or from the entrails of victims, and a thousand other things; they went into witchcraft, and the unhallowed arts of the heathen.

[Isaiah 2:7-9](#). *Their land also is full of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their treasures; their land is also full of horses, neither is there any end of their chariots: Their land also is full of idols; they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made: And the mean man boweth down, and the great man humbleth himself: therefore forgive them not.*

The poor men worshipped these idols, and the rich did the same. All over the country the people were bowing before some symbol or other, instead of worshipping the unseen God in spirit and in truth. Therefore the prophet foretold that something terrible would happen to them: -

[Isaiah 2:10-16](#). *Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty. The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. For the day of the LORD of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low: And upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up, And upon all the oaks of Bashan, And upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills that are lifted up, and upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall, and upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures.*

These people were wealthy through the natural riches of their land, and through commerce with other nations; they were the veterans of art according to the fashion of the times: and now God declares that, because they were proud, all their treasures should be destroyed and the things wherein they boasted should be taken away from them.

[Isaiah 2:17-18](#). *And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. And the idols he shall utterly abolish.*

They set them up at every street corner, they put them even before the house of God itself. On every green hill, and in every grove, they worshipped with filthy rites that can scarcely be thought of without a blush; but God declared that he would sweep them all away, and so he did when he visited the land in his fierce anger.

[Isaiah 2:19-22](#). *And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty,*

when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth. In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats; To go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth. Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?

Extracted from an exposition covering [2 Chronicles 28:1-5](#); [2 Chronicles 28:16-27](#) and [Isaiah 2:6-22](#).

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Isaiah Chapter 3

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

Isaiah Chapter 4

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER 5

Verses 1-7

[Isaiah 5:1](#). *Now will I sing to my wellbeloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill:*

You and I, dear friends, are placed in a position where we have very choice opportunities of glorifying our God, we are like “a vineyard in a very fruitful hill,” most favourably placed for fruitfulness. The Well-beloved had a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: —

[Isaiah 5:2](#). *And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes.*

Is that my case? Is it your case, dear friend? Has even our religion been a false thing? Has it been like wild grapes or poisonous berries? Have we been at times right only by accident, and have we never carefully and sedulously sought to serve our Lord, or to bring forth fruit to his praise? O Lord, thou knowest!

[Isaiah 5:3-6](#). *And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: and I will lay it waste:*

There is no destruction like that which comes when God destroys the fruitless vineyard. When a human enemy or the wild boar out of the wood lays it waste, it may be restored again, but if, in righteous wrath, the Divine Owner of the vineyard himself lays it waste, what hope remains for it? “It shall be trodden down; and I will lay it waste:” —

[Isaiah 5:6-7](#). *It shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briars and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.*

This passage has a special reference to God’s ancient people, and one cannot read it without noting how literally this terrible threatening has been fulfilled.

This exposition consisted of readings from SOLOMON’S [Song of Solomon 8:11-14](#); [Isaiah 5:1-7](#); and [Luke 13:6-9](#).

Verses 1-19

[Isaiah 5:1](#). *Now will I sing to my well-beloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My Well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill:*

The Song of the Vineyard is by no means a joyful song. It is, indeed quite the reverse. It is pitched in the minor key and has a painful theme. This suffices to prove that all our hymns need not consist, as some affirm, of direct praise to God. Such a notion is not according to Scripture, for many of the Psalms are not of that character. There are songs that can be sung to the edification of one another, and that is, in part, the design of

sacred song. We speak to ourselves, as well as to God, in Psalm and hymns and spiritual songs. "My well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill." The members of the Church of God are placed in a position where they have very choice opportunities of glorifying God; they are like a vineyard in a very fruitful hill, most favourably placed for fruitfulness.

[Isaiah 5:2](#). *And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes.*

The vineyard was well chosen as to situation, the vine was carefully selected. Everything was done, by walling it, to protect it from intruders. Every preparation was made for the gathering in of the fruits. The winepress was there; yet, when the time came for grapes sweet and luscious, it brought forth wild grapes. You know what that means. Has it been so with us? Have we rewarded the Wellbeloved thus ungratefully for all his pains? Have we given him hardness of heart, instead of repentance, unbelief, instead of faith; indifference, instead of love; idleness, instead of holy industry; impurity, instead of holiness? Is that my case? Is it your case, dear friends? Has even our religion been a false thing? Has it been like wild grapes or poisonous berries? Have we been at times right only by accident, and have we never carefully and sedulously sought to serve our Lord, or to bring forth fruit to his praise? O Lord, thou knowest! Let us judge ourselves in this matter that we be not judged.

[Isaiah 5:3-4](#). *And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?*

O you that profess to be his people, what more could Christ have done for you? What more could the Holy Spirit have done? What richer promises, what wiser precepts, what kinder providences, what more gracious patience? "Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?" Whence came this? The stock was good, the husbandry was wise. Whence came these wild grapes?

[Isaiah 5:5-6](#). *And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: and I will lay it*

waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briars and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.

“I will tell you what I will do.” He does not wait till the men of Judah have given their verdict. There was no need of any. The case was all too sadly clear. “I will take away the hedge thereof. and break down the wall thereof.” Those providences which guard men from sin shall be removed. You shall be allowed to sin if you like — and as you like. Your will shall have its freedom to the full. “And it shall be trodden down: and I will lay it waste.” There is no destruction like that which comes when God destroys the fruitless vineyard. When a human enemy or the wild boar out of the wood lays it waste, it may be restored again, but if in righteous wrath, the Divine Owner of the vineyard himself lays it waste, what hope remains for it? What fearful words, “It shall be trodden down: and I will lay it waste.” “It shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briars and thorns.” Nothing happens worse to a church or to a man than to be altogether without affliction, — no pruning, no digging, no restraints, no prickings of conscience, no smitings with rod. “I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.” That is the worst of all!

[Isaiah 5:7](#). *For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.*

Oh, when those who profess to be God’s people live ungodly, dishonest, unchaste, ungracious lives, God is greatly grieved. His anger burns against such a church and against such a people. And well it may. “He looked for judgment,” for they professed to be taught of God; “but behold oppression.” He looked “for righteousness,” for they said they were righteous; “but behold a cry.” The passage has a special reference to God’s ancient people, and one cannot read it without noting how literally this terrible threatening has been fulfilled.

[Isaiah 5:8-10](#). *Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth!*

In mine ears said the LORD of hosts, Of a truth many houses shall be desolate, even great and fair, without inhabitant. Yea, ten acres of vineyard shall yield one bath, and the seed of an homer shall yield an ephah. When men are covetous after the things of this world, God has a way of making them to be filled with disappointment and with bitterness. Woe unto any

man who has any god but the living God, or who lives for any object but to glorify the Creator. Upon such a man woes shall come innumerable.

[Isaiah 5:11-12](#). *Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them! And the harp, and the viol, the tabret, and pipe, and wine, are in their feasts: but they regard not the work of the LORD, neither consider the operation of his hands.*

The covetous man was intoxicated with greed. Here is a man intoxicated with strong drink. It is never too early, it is never too late, for men to drink who once are carried away with this passion. They rise up early; they continue until night; and then, when they are inflamed with lust, all sorts of evil pleasures are sought after, and Satan leads them captive at his will. Woe unto such! Now, it was because there were covetous men who were idolaters, because there were luxuriously living men who were drunkards, who had crept into Jerusalem and lived there, and spread evils among the people — it was for this that God declared that he would lay his vineyard waste. Are there none such in the Church of God today? Ah, me! I fear there are professors who do not let it be known openly, but who in secret follow after these things.

[Isaiah 5:13-14](#). *Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge: and their honourable men are famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst. Therefore hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure: and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it.*

What a wonderful description that is of the Church of God when it goes wrong, when there is evil in it. Then evil multiplies itself greatly in the earth, and hell has to be made bigger, as it were. As one old preacher said, “They go to hell in droves.” There is none to stay them. When the Church itself goes wrong, then the world is like that herd of swine that ran violently down a steep place to perish in the waters. Down, down they go! Oh, dreadful sight! Oh, terrible doom that falls upon the ungodly! Would God the Church were well awake to see the danger of mankind, and that she so lived that God could bless her to the salvation of men.

[Isaiah 5:15-16](#). *And the mean man shall be brought down, and the mighty man shall be humbled, and the eyes of the lofty shall be humbled: But the LORD of host shall be exalted in judgment, and God that is holy shall be sanctified in righteousness.*

For whoever may stain himself with sin, God will not. We may think lightly of sin, but he never does. We may be so foolish as to tolerate iniquity in ourselves and wink at it in others, but God will not do so. Even when sin was laid on Christ he smote him to the death. Though he was not guilty of any sin, yet, when our sin lay there, God turned away his face from his Son, and he died; and, if he spared not sin in his Son, think you he will spare it in us? Ah, no! He is a just God, and he will clear his hands of any complicity with iniquity. The sixteenth verse is the song of Hannah, that greatest of ancient poetesses. It is the song of Mary, who copied it from Hannah, "He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away."

[Isaiah 5:17](#). *Then shall the lambs feed after their manner, and the waste places of the fat ones shall strangers eat.*

It is ever so. There is always room for the tender, and the gentle, and the weak, when God smites the haughty and the strong.

[Isaiah 5:18](#). *Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart rope:*

"Woe unto them." When we get a woe in this Book of Blessings it is sent as a warning, that we may escape from woe. God's woes are better than the devil's welcomes. God always means man's good, and only sets ill before him that he may turn from the dangers of a mistaken way, and so may escape the ill which lies at the end of it. Mayhap "Woe, woe, woe," though it should sound with a dreadful din in our ear, may be the means of leading us to seek and find our Saviour, and then throughout eternity no woe shall ever come near to us. "That draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart rope." This is a very singular passage. It is not very easy to understand it at first sight. Here are some who are said to draw sin "with cords of vanity," which are slender enough, and yet they also draw it "as with a cart rope," which is thick enough. They are harnessed to sin, and the traces appear to be fragile, insignificant, and soon broken. You can hardly touch them, for they are a mere sham, a fiction — vanity. What can be thinner and weaker than cobweb-cords of vanity? Yet when you attempt to break or remove them, they turn out to be cart ropes or wagon traces, fitted to bear the pull of horse or bullock. Motives which have no logical forge, and would not bind a reasonable man for a moment, are, nevertheless, quite sufficient to hold the most of men in bondage. Such a

slave is man to iniquity, that unworthy motives and indefensible reasons which appear no stronger than little cords nevertheless hold him as with bonds of steel, and he is fastened to the loaded wagon of his iniquity as a horse is fastened by a cart rope.

[Isaiah 5:19](#). *That say, Let him make speed, and hasten his work, that we may see it: and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh and come, that we may know it!*

Blaspheming God, and rushing on the bosses of his buckler, defying him to smite them. And all this came from dallying with sin, from drawing iniquity with cords of vanity Beware of the eggs of the cockatrice. Remember how drops wear stones, and little strokes fell great oaks. Do not play with a cobra, even if it be but a foot long. Keep from the edge of the precipice. Fly from the lion ere he springs upon you. Do not forge for yourself a net of iron, nor become the builder of your own prison-house. May the Holy Ghost deliver you. May you touch the Cross, and find in it the power which will loose you and let you go.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Isaiah 5:1-19](#), and [Psalms 121:1-7](#).

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CHAPTER 6

Verses 1-13

[Isaiah 6:1](#). *In the year that King Uzziah died*

You remember him, that leprous king, that king who had thrust himself into the priests' office, and was smitten of leprosy, and shut up in a separate house during the rest of his life. In the year that he died Isaiah saw a greater King, whom no defilement can ever touch, a King that reigneth and lives for ever, though Uzziah dies.

[Isaiah 6:1](#). *I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.*

Whenever you read in the Old Testament that any man saw the Lord, understand it of the Second Person of the Divine Trinity, the Lord Jesus Christ. He makes himself as we have said, visible to men, and God in him.

[Isaiah 6:2](#). *Above it stood the seraphims: each on had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with*

twain he did fly.

There are the spirits that dwell in the presence of God, nearest to him, and as he is a consuming fire they come to be like him, for the seraphims are burning ones, consumers, burning and shining lights, who wait upon God, who is light of life. Notice how humble they are in that presence; they cover themselves before that Infinite Majesty.

[Isaiah 6:3-4](#). *And one cried upon another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.*

And if even the voice of a seraph moved the very foundations of the temple, what will the voice of God do when he shall speak once more? According to that word, he shall shake not only earth, but also heaven. What awe and trembling should be upon us when we wait upon God, if even the posts of the door move! “Then said I, woe is me!” All God’s saints do this when they get a view of him. There was never a boastful thought in any man’s mind in the presence of God. They that talk of their own purity have not known God, neither seen him. How could they! This is the cry of all the purified when they come into the presence of God “Woe is me, for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips.” What made him think of lips, but the voice of the seraphim as responsively they cried to one another, “Holy, holy, holy”? Then he thought of his own lips. Oh! brothers and sisters, what impurity comes out of our lips, perhaps more there than anywhere else is the impurity of the heart discovered in our idle words, our evil words.

[Isaiah 6:5-7](#). *Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.*

Just where he felt the impurity, there he felt the expiation. His lips were unclean, and now a touch of the altar coal, a communication from the great Sacrifice, hath taken all his iniquity away, and his sin is buried.

[Isaiah 6:8](#). *Also I heard the voice of the lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I, send me.*

Observe the unity and the plurality, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Upon what theory, but that of the doctrine of the Trinity can we explain so singular a change from the singular to the plural “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I. send me.” This man, so lowly now, so purified with the vision of God, just seen by him, how cheerfully does he spring forward at the word of invitation. “Here am I, send me.” Now see what a sorrowful mission God, in these next verses, assured Isaiah that his ministry so far as the conversion of the Jews were concerned, would be altogether fruitless; they would not receive his testimony.

[Isaiah 6:9-10](#). *And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.*

What a ministry, dark with insufferable light! So bright, so clear, that men should have willfully to harden their hearts, and shut their eyes if they did not understand and receive it.

[Isaiah 6:11-12](#). *Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate, And the LORD have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land.*

So it happened, as you know, the people were carried away captive; they still refused, they would not believe even, till Christ came, and then the destruction of Jerusalem, and the sweeping clear of their country was the final stroke of God. “But yet in it shall be a tenth.” There is always a gleam of light from God’s grace in the thickest darkness of his justice. God hath his tithes.

[Isaiah 6:13](#). *But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return, and shall be eaten: as a teil tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them, when they cast their leaves: so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof.*

And, therefore, the Jewish nation is not destroyed, but still exists, and the Church of God is not destroyed, despite all that happens to it. There is a substance in it, according to the election of grace, for which may God be praised.

This exposition consisted of readings from [John 12:37-50](#); Isaiah 6. [John 12:37-50](#).

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CHAPTER 7

Verses 1-16

Isaiah 7:1-2. *And it came to pass in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, that Rezin the king of Syria, and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up toward Jerusalem to war against it, but could not prevail against it. And it was told the house of David, saying, Syria is confederate with Ephraim. And his heart was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind.*

They were tossed to and fro, bent, thrown down, as the trees of a forest in a tornado. They had already felt the power of these two confederate kings, and they were terribly afraid. David himself would have had confidence in God; but “the house of David” had gone far astray. Ahaz had cast off the fear of God, and he had therefore great fear of men.

Isaiah 7:3. *Then said the LORD unto Isaiah, Go forth now to meet Ahaz, thou, and Shear-jashub thy son,*

Shear-jashub was but a child; and why Isaiah was to take his son with him does not appear, except that his name signifies, “The remnant shall return,” and it was part of the prophet’s message that the remnant, the people who had been carried away captive, should return.

Isaiah 7:3. *At the end of the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller’s field;*

God knows the exact spot where his servants shall meet with the men to whom he sends them. There is a corner where the fuller’s field just juts upon the upper pool; there Isaiah will meet king Ahaz, and there he is to speak to him. Is there any spot just by the Elephant and Castle” where God means to meet with some soul tonight? I pray that it may be so.

Isaiah 7:4. *And say unto him,*

The prophet is told the word he is to speak as well as the place where he is to deliver the message. Isaiah knew that he was soon to go and deal with men of hard, heart and deaf ear. The other day we read the sixth chapter of this prophecy; and we noted the hard task that Isaiah had to perform. Now he is beginning his work with the man whom the Bible calls, “That king

Ahaz,” as if it could not say anything bad enough of him, but had merely to mention his name, and everybody would know who was meant.

[Isaiah 7:4](#). *Take heed, and be quiet; fear not, neither be fainthearted for the two tails of these smoking firebrands, for the fierce anger of Rezin with Syria, and of the son of Remaliah.*

Their kingdoms were dying out. They were like burnt-out firebrands; they made a little smoke, but within a very short time there would be nothing left of them, and Ahaz need not be afraid of them.

[Isaiah 7:5-9](#). *Because Syria, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah, have taken evil counsel against thee, saying, Let us go up against Judah, and vex it, and let us make a breach therein for us, and set a king in the midst of it, even the son of Tabeal: thus saith the Lord GOD, It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass. For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin; and within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be broken, that it be not a people. And the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is Remaliah's son.*

God did not intend it to grow any bigger. These two little kingdoms of Syria and Ephraim were to keep as they were until they were destroyed.

[Isaiah 7:9-12](#). *If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established. Moreover the LORD spake again unto Ahaz, saying, Ask thee a sign of the LORD thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the LORD.*

He put his refusal very prettily, as men often do when they want to say an evil thing. He refused to accept a sign from the Lord, under the idle pretense that it would be tempting God. We never tempt God when we do what he bids us. There is no presumption in obedience. It was an idle compliment, to conceal the impudence of his heart. The Lord invited him to acknowledge Jehovah as his God: “Ask thee a sign of Jehovah thy God.” But Ahaz said, “I will not ask, neither will I tempt Jehovah.” He did not say, “Jehovah, my God”; and his silence meant dissent.

[Isaiah 7:13](#). *And he said, Hear ye now, O house of David;*

Observe, the prophet does not say, “Hear now, O Ahaz as if God would not deal with Ahaz on his own account, but only because he was of the “house of David.” The Lord remembered his covenant with David. God sometimes blesses men for the sake of their fathers. He might not hear a word that they had to say; but he remembers their fathers, and the amity and comity which there was between himself and their fathers.

[Isaiah 7:13-14](#). *Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also?*

Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, A wonderful sign this!

[Isaiah 7:14-15](#). *And shall call his name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good.*

Whereupon a wise commentator says that, before children are able to learn, their parents should look upon the very feeding of them as a means of making them to know the difference between good and evil.

[Isaiah 7:16](#). *For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings.*

This was the sign-manual. Judah could not be destroyed, for our Lord was to spring out of Judah; and this was the sign that Judah must stand, because Immanuel must be born of that nation, and the time for this great event was fixed by the Lord. Until a child is some few years of age, he does not distinguish between good and evil; but in a shorter time than it would take a child to come to years of responsibility, God meant to cut off both those kings, and he did so. This was a very wonderful prophecy, and ought to have filled Ahaz with great delight, and with confidence in God; but it did nothing of the kind.

Now we are going to read more of the story of this king Ahaz.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Isaiah 7:1-16](#), and [2 Chronicles 28:1-16](#).

[ISAIAH CONTENTS](#)

Isaiah Chapter 8

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER 9

Verses 1-7

The last verses of the eighth chapter picture a horrible state of wretchedness and despair: “And they shall pass through it, hardly bestead

and hungry: and it shall come to pass, that when they shall be hungry, they shall fret themselves, and curse their king and their God, and look upward. And they shall look unto the earth, and behold trouble and darkness dimness of anguish; and they shall be driven to darkness. But see what a change awaits them !

Isaiah 9:1. *Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vacation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations.*

Read the fine translation of the Revised Version: “But there shall be no gloom to her that was in anguish.” What a marvelous light from the midst of a dreadful darkness! It is an astounding change, such as only God with us could work. Many of you know nothing about the miseries described in those verses, but there are some who have traversed that terrible wilderness; and I am going to speak to them. I know where you are: you are being driven as captives into the land of despair, and for the last few months you have been tramping along a painful road, “hardly bestead and hungry.” You are surely put to it, and your soul finds no food of comfort, but is ready to faint and die. You fret yourself: your heart is wearing away with care, and grief, and hopelessness. In the bitterness of your soul you are ready to curse the day of your birth. The captive Israelites cursed their king who had led them into their defeat and bondage; in the fury of their agony, they even cursed God and longed to die. It may be that your heart is in such a ferment of grief that you know not what you think, but are like a man at his wit’s end. For such as you there shines this star of the first magnitude. Jesus has appeared to save, and he is God and man in one person: man that he may feel our woes, God that he may help us out of them. No minister can save you, no priest can save you — you know this right well; but here is one who is able to save to the uttermost, for he is God as well as man. The great God is good at a dead lift; when everything else has failed, the lever of omnipotence can lift a world of sin. Jesus is almighty to save! That which in itself is impossibility is possible with God. Sin which nothing else can remove is blotted out by the blood of Immanuel. Immanuel, our Saviour, is God with us; and God with us means difficulty removed, and a perfect work accomplished.

Isaiah 9:2. *The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light*

shined.

Jesus came to Galilee of the Gentiles, and made that country glorious, which had been brought into contempt. That corner of Palestine had very often borne the brunt of invasion, and had felt more than any other region the edge of the keen Assyrian sword. They were at first troubled when the Assyrian was bought off with a thousand talent of silver; but they were more heavily afflicted when Tiglath-pileser carried them all away to Assyria, for which see the fifteenth chapter of the second book of the kings. It was a wretched land, with a mixed population, despised by the purer race of Jews; but that very country became glorious with the presence of the incarnate God. Even so, at this day his gracious presence is the day-dawn of our joy.

Isaiah 9:3. *Thou hast multiplied the nation, and not increased the joy: they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil.*

The Revised Version reads, “Thou hast increased their joy.” If Christ comes to you, my dear hearer, as God with us, then shall your joy be great; for you shall joy as with the joy of harvest, and as those rejoice that divide the spoil. Is it not so? Many of us can bear our witness that there is no joy like that which Jesus brings.

Isaiah 9:4. *For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian.*

Your enemy shall be defeated, “as in the day of Midian.” Gideon was, in his dream, likened to a barley-cake, which struck the tent of Midian, so that it lay along. He and his few heroes, with their pitchers and their trumpets, stood and shouted, “The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!” and Midian melted away before them. So shall it be with our sins, and doubts, and fears, if we believe in Jesus, the incarnate God; they shall vanish like the mists of the morning. The Lord Jesus will break the yoke of our burden, and the rod of our oppressor, as in the day of Midian. Be of good courage, ye that are in bondage to fierce and cruel adversaries; for in the name of Jesus, who is God with us, you shall destroy them.

Isaiah 9:5. *For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire.*

When Jesus comes, you shall have eternal peace, for his battle is the end of battles. “All the armor of the armed man in the tumult, and the garments rolled in blood, shall even be for burning, for fuel of fire.” This is the

rendering of the Revision; and it is good. The Prince of peace wars against war, and destroys it. What a glorious day is that in which the Lord breaketh the bow and cutteth the spear in sunder, and burneth the chariot in the fire! I think I see it now. My sins, which were the weapons of my foes, the Lord pile in heaps. What mountains of prey! But see! He brings the fire-brand of his love from the altar of his sacrifice, and he sets fire to the gigantic pile. See how they blaze! They are utterly consumed for ever.

Isaiah 9:6. *For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.*

How is it that the Lord Jesus becomes glorious in our eyes; And he whose name is Immanuel is now crowned in our heart with many crowns, and honoured with many titles. What a list of glories we have here! What a burst of song it makes when we sing of the Messiah: “His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace”! Each word sounds like a salvo of artillery. It is all very well to hear players on instruments and sweet singers rehearse these words but to believe them, and realize them in your own soul, is better far. When every fear and every hope, and every power and every passion of our nature fill the orchestra of our heart, and all unite in one inward song unto the glorious Immanuel, what music it is!

Isaiah 9:7. *Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever.*

The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this. If Christ is your Saviour he must be your King.

“But know, nor of the terms complain,
Where Jesus comes he comes to reign:
To reign, and with no partial sway;
Lusts must be slain that disobey.”

The moment we really believe in Jesus as our salvation we fall before him, and call him Master and Lord. We serve when he saves. He has redeemed us unto himself, and we own that we are his. A generous man once bought a slave-girl. She was put upon the brook for auction, and he pitied her and purchased her; but when he had bought her he said to her, “I have bought you to set you free. There are your papers, you are a free

woman.” The grateful creature fell at his feet and cried, “I will never leave you; if you have made me free I will be your servant as long as you live, and serve you better than any slave could do.” This is how we feel towards Jesus. He sets us free from the dominion of Satan, and then, as we need a ruler, we say, “And the government shall be upon his shoulder.” We are glad to be ruled by “Immanuel, God with us.” This also is a door of hope to us That Jesus shall be the monarch of our hearts is our exceeding joy. To us he shall be always “Wonderful.” When we think of him, or speak about him, it shall be with reverent awe. When we need advice and comfort, we will fly to him, for he shall be our Counselor. When we need strength, we will look to him as our Mighty God. Born again by his Spirit, we will be his children, and he shall be the everlasting Father. Full of joy and rest, we will call him Prince of Peace. Are you willing to have Christ to govern you? Will you spend your lives in praising him? You are willing to have Christ to pardon you, but we cannot divide him, and therefore you must also have him to sanctify you. You must not take the crown from his head; but accept him as the monarch of your soul. If you would have his hand to help you, you must obey the scepter which it grasps. Blessed Immanuel, we are right glad to obey thee I In thee our darkness ends, and from the shadow of death we rise to the light of life. It is salvation to be obedient to thee. It is the end of gloom to her that was in anguish to bow herself before thee. May God the Holy Spirit tell of the things of Christ and show them unto us, and then we shall all cry —

“Go worship at Immanuel’s feet!

See in his face what wonders meet!

Earth is too narrow to express His worth, his grace, his righteousness.”

[ISAIAH CONTENTS](#)

Isaiah Chapter 10

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

Isaiah Chapter 11

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

Isaiah Chapter 12

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Isaiah Chapter 13

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER 14

Verses 1-32

[Isaiah 14:1](#). *For the LORD will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land: and the strangers shall be joined with them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob.*

This promise had a measure of fulfillment when Israel was brought back from Babylon; and still is it true that, when God's people come to their worst, there is always something better before them. On the other hand, it is equally sure that, when sinners come to their best, there is always something terrible awaiting them. The apostle Paul wrote to the Romans, "God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew;" and his declaration agrees with this prophecy, "The Lord will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land." I believe that there will be a far grander fulfillment of this prophecy in that day when God shall bring back his chosen people to their own country, and then shall be the fullness of blessing to the Gentiles also: "The strangers shall be joined with them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob."

[Isaiah 14:2](#). *And the people shall take them, and bring them to their place: and the house of Israel shall possess them in the land of the LORD for servants and handmaids: and they shall take them captives, whose captives they were; and they shall rule over their oppressors.*

The chosen people have the worst of it now in many parts of the world, but they shall have the best of it by-and-by; they shall not always be

trampled on, their time of uplifting shall come at the last, sad there is nothing after the last; that which is last, lasts for ever.

[Isaiah 14:3-4](#). *And it shall come to pass in the day that the LORD shall give thee rest from thy sorrow, and from thy fear, and from the hard bondage wherein thou wast made to serve, that thou shalt take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say, How hath the oppressor ceased! the golden city ceased!*

O child of God, thou shalt by-and-by have a glorious season of rest! Today is thy time of labour; thou art now under hard bondage; but thou shalt yet come forth into the fullness of thy liberty in Christ Jesus. In that day, Jehovah himself shall give thee rest from all thy grief' and fears; thou shalt obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. This was a great prophecy for Isaiah to utter, for, in his day, there was no power on earth equal to that of Babylon. That great city abounded in palaces and extraordinary wealth, and its power was such that no kingdom could stand against it. For a while, it broke in pieces all those who fought against it; yet God broke Babylon in his own time; and here is a song of rejoicing in anticipation of its overthrow, "How hath the oppressor ceased! the golden city ceased!"

[Isaiah 14:5](#). *LORD hath broken the staff of the wicked, and the scepter of the rulers.*

No power can ever be permanently strong that is founded upon wickedness; sooner or later, it will have to come to an end. A falsehood may array itself in the garments of wisdom and strength, and go forth to fight hopefully for victory; but, in the end, it must die. The stone of truth will find out the giant's brow, and lay him headlong in death.

[Isaiah 14:6-7](#). *He who smote the people in wrath with a continual stroke, he that ruled the nations in anger, is persecuted, and none hindereth. The whole earth is at rest, and is quiet: they break forth into singing.*

The Babylon, that none could resist, becomes herself destroyed and there is no one to come up to her assistance. Go at this day, and see where the owl dwells, and mark the habitation of the dragons, and say to yourself, "This is Babylon, the great city that was the queen over all nations; but she did evil in the sight of the Lord, and spake extremely proudly; and, behold, Jehovah hath crumbled her in the dust; and, now that Babylon is gone, 'the whole earth is at rest, and is quiet: they breath forth into singing.'"

[Isaiah 14:8](#). *Yea, the fir trees rejoice at thee, and the cedars of Lebanon, saying, Since thou art laid down, no feller is come up against us.*

For the cruel kings of Babylon cut down the nations as the woodman with his axe fells the trees of the forest; but when the power of Babylon was broken, peace and quietness reigned everywhere, O brethren, what a blissful day it will be when the modern Babylon is taken away also, for to this hoar she is the troubler among the nations! Wherever the blight of Popery comes, there is evil, there is oppression, there is bondage; and only when Romanism shall be utterly swept away, and cast like a millstone into the flood, will it be said, “The whole earth is at rest, and is quiet: they break forth into singing.” Here is a very wonderful picture of the king of Babylon going down to the grave.

[Isaiah 14:9-10](#). *Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming: it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. All they shall speak and say unto thee, Art thou also become weak as we? art thou become like unto us?*

It is a fine pictorial representation of the spirits of departed kings lifting themselves up from their beds of dust, and saying, “Art thou, king of Babylon, that slew us, also come here? The mighty conqueror, art thou thyself conquered, and brought to the grave?”

[Isaiah 14:11-15](#), *Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, and the noise of thy viols: the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee. How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.*

God hates pride with a perfect hatred. He drives his sword through the very heart of it, and cuts it in pieces. None can be great and mighty, and boast of what they are able to do, without provoking the King of kings to put forth against them some of his great power. Oh, let none of us talk about climbing to heaven by our good works, or getting there by our merits, lest it should happen to us also that we should “be brought down to Hades, to the sides of the pit.”

[Isaiah 14:16-18](#). *They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms; That made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof; that opened not the house of his prisoners? All the kings of the nations, even all of them, lie in glory, every one in his own house.*

That is, they lie in state, each one in the mausoleum of his family. They went down to death, and they were buried with all the honour and glory that were supposed to be due to their high position.

[Isaiah 14:19](#). *But thou art cast out of thy grave like an abominable branch, and as the raiment of those that are slain, thrust through with a sword, that go down to the stones of the pit; as a carcase trodden under feet.*

So total, so terrible, so disgraceful, was the destruction of Babylon, that no honour or glory remained to it.

[Isaiah 14:20-22](#). *Thou shalt not be joined with them in burial, because thou hast destroyed thy land, and slain thy people: the seed of evildoers shall never be renowned. Prepare slaughter for his children for the iniquity of their fathers; that they do not rise, nor possess the land, nor fill the face of the world with cities. For I will rise up against them, saith the LORD of hosts,—*

And he has done it. It seemed the most unlikely thing to happen; but the Lord spake, and it was done; and all the glory of Babylon was swept away. “I will rise up against them, saith the Lord of hosts,” —

[Isaiah 14:22-27](#). *And cut off from Babylon the name, and remnant, and son, and nephew, saith the LORD. I will also make it a possession for the bittern, and pools of water: and I will sweep it with the broom of destruction, saith the LORD of hosts. The LORD of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand: that I will break the Assyrian in my land, and upon my mountains tread him under foot: then shall his yoke depart from off them, and his burden depart from off their shoulders. This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth: and this is the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations. For the LORD of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?*

And God did this to the Assyrians in the day when Sennacherib invaded the land, and the angel of destruction slew the whole host in one night. What a striking simile the Lord uses here! “This is the hand that is stretched

out upon all the nations. For the Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?" Conceive in your mind the picture here drawn,— Jehovah himself puts out the hand of his almightiness, and challenges the nations to stand up in opposition to it.

[Isaiah 14:28](#). *In the year that king Ahaz died was this burden.*

About this time, the Philistines had plucked up courage, and had invaded Judah.

[Isaiah 14:29](#). *Rejoice not thou, whole Palestina, because the rod of him that smote thee is broken: for out of the serpent's root shall come forth a cockatrice, and his fruit shall be a fiery flying serpent.*

Ahaz was defeated, but Hezekiah was raised up to be the leader of the LORD's people.

[Isaiah 14:30](#). *And the firstborn of the poor shall feed, and the needy shall lie down in safety: and I will kill thy root with famine, and he shall slay thy remnant.*

If God's enemies have a bright day or two, it shall soon be showery weather with them. They may for the moment exult over God's people, but he knows that their day of reckoning is coming.

[Isaiah 14:31](#). *Howl, O gate; cry, O city; thou, whose Palestina, art dissolved: for there shall come from the north a smoke, and none shall be alone in his appointed times.*

That is the way the Babylonians would come running down from the north. No one would be able to hide himself from them, not a single person would find a shelter, or escape from their terrible adversaries.

[Isaiah 14:32](#). *What shall one then answer the messengers of the nation? That the LORD hath founded Zion, and the poor of his people shall trust in it.*

Though the passage seems dark at first, yet it is full of consolation to the people of God, and is of similar import to that other gracious promise: "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn."

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Isaiah Chapter 15

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

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CHAPTER 26

Verses 1-14

[Isaiah 26:1](#). *In that day* —

Or, rather, as we may read it now, “In this day” —

[Isaiah 26:1-3](#). *Shall this song be sung in the land of Judah; We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks. Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in. Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.*

Here is the song which we are to sing in this gospel day. The theme of it is God, and the city which he has builded, and which he has given to us to be our heritage for ever. “We have a strong city;” yes, beloved, a very strong one, for, although the devil has exercised all his ingenuity for these thousands of years, he has not been able to destroy it. He has thrown in the bombshell of persecution; he has tried to undermine it with his subtlety and cunning of false doctrine; but he has not been able to do anything effectually against the strong city yet. “We have a strong city;” and she is just as strong now, after all the desperate attacks that have been made upon her walls, as ever she was. Against her, the gates of hell cannot prevail. The Church of Christ is never in danger. “We have a strong city; salvation will

God appoint for walls and bulwarks? After noticing the security of the city, the prophet bids us “open the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in.” It is the gospel minister’s business to seek to open the gates; it is the Christian’s business, in some sense, to open the gates; yea, we should all of us be endeavoring, if possible, to “open the gates, that the righteous nation “ —that is, the righteous people “may enter” into the Church. But, after all, the Lord Jesus Christ is the great Opener of the gates; he opens the gates to let his people in. And, mark you, they do not all come in at one gate. The command is, “Open ye the gates.” Some come in by means of one doctrine, and some by means of another. We are not all converted by the same agency. Some come in at the Sunday-school gate; others come in at the gate which is kept by pious parents; many come in at the gate of the preached Word; but all the gates should be open: “Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in.” The prophet next describes the peaceableness of this city. The gates are open, but no enemy ever enters in: for he says to the Lord, “Thou wilt keep him in peace, — peace,” as the original has it, in double peace. “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee.” There is nothing like staying the mind on God. If you stay the mind on anything else, you cannot have perfect peace, for that something else may fail you. If you trust in horses and in chariots, horses may tire, and the wheels of the chariots may break; but he who trusteth in the Lord shall dwell “in perfect peace.” Let the earth be all in arms abroad, the believer dwells “in perfect peace,” “because he trusteth in thee.”

[Isaiah 26:4-5](#). *Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength: for he bringeth down them that dwell on high;*

Some of you dwell so much “on high” that you do not believe the doctrine of original depravity; you are very good by nature, according to your own ideas. Well, remember this declaration of the prophet: “He bringeth down them that dwell on high.” Others of you boast of your free-will capacity, and you think you have power to do anything without the assistance of the Holy Spirit. Ah! but “He bringeth down them that dwell on high.” Others of you do not know what a doubt or a fear is, but you wrap yourselves up complacently in your self-sufficiency, and say, “We are secure,” Ah! but “He bringeth down them that dwell on high.”

[Isaiah 26:5](#). *The lofty city, he layeth it low;*

No one can lay God’s city low, but God can lay the lofty city low.

[Isaiah 26:5-7](#). *He layeth it low, even to the ground; he bringeth it even to the dust. The foot shall tread it down, even the feet of the poor, and the steps of the needy. The way of the just is uprightness: thou, most upright, dost weigh the path of the just.*

God “weighs the path of the just” in scales. We read elsewhere that God weighs the spirits, and weighs our actions; here we are told that he “weighs the path of the just.” Those words, which were used by the prophet when he went to Hezekiah and said, “What have they seen in thine house?” would serve for a very striking text. But it is still more important to consider what God has seen in our house and in our hearts, for God weighs our actions; he weighs our private thoughts and our public deeds; he “weighs the path of the just.” But, according to the prophet, “the way of the just is uprightness,” even after it is weighed. Notwithstanding all the sin that is mixed with it, in the main it is “uprightness” ascending towards God.

[Isaiah 26:8-9](#). *Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O LORD, have we waited for thee; the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee. With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.*

Alas! it is often the case that, when God’s “judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness” for a little while, and then forget it. All too often, they are like the child who merely learns his lesson by rote, and repeats it under the fear of the rod, and then forgets all about it on the morrow. They “learn righteousness,” but, soon, the effect of the warning is all gone, and then God sends fresh judgments upon the earth to teach the inhabitants further lessons.

[Isaiah 26:10-12](#). *Let favour be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the LORD. LORD, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see: but they shall see, and be ashamed for their envy at the people; yea, the fire of thine enemies shall devour them. LORD, thou wilt ordain peace for us: for thou also hast wrought all our works in us.*

Troubled saint, what a precious passage this is for thee! Poor, tempest-tossed soul, what a glorious utterance! “Lord, thou wilt ordain peace for us.” There shall come an ordinance from God, that his people shall have peace: “Thou wilt ordain peace for us: for thou also hast wrought all our

works in us;” so they must be good works, but those works which God did not work in us are bad ones.

[Isaiah 26:13-14](#). *O LORD our God, other lords beside thee have had dominion over us: but by thee only will we make mention of thy name. They are dead, they shall not live; they are deceased, they shall not rise:*

Many of us can look back to the time when we made idols of business and of worldly things; but now these lords are dead, and they shall not live again; they are buried out of our sight, and they shall not rise from their graves.

[Isaiah 26:14](#). *Therefore hast thou visited and destroyed them, and made all their memory to perish.*

And a blessed thing it is when the memory of our sins does perish, and we have no desire to be enslaved by them again.

Verses 1-21

[Isaiah 26:1](#). *In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah; We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks.*

God is the great source of song; he “giveth songs in the night.” He can make the saddest heart to break forth into praise. One part of the prophecy concerning Christ’s coming was, “Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing.” The Lord might have caused us to utter nothing but groans if he had pleased; but, instead of doing so, he delights to fill our mouths with joyous songs. Let us from our heart sing this ancient song: “We have a strong city.” The Church of God is a city which has a heavenly citizenship, and other unique privileges; and it is wondrously protected, for the promise in this passage is now fulfilled: “salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks.”

[Isaiah 26:2](#). *Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in.*

The city is not closed against the righteous; and if we know and love the truth, and especially-, if we know and love him who is the Truth, the gates are always open to us, and we may enter the city, enjoy its privileges, and share its protection.

[Isaiah 26:3](#). *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace,—*

“Peace, peace,”—that is the form of the Hebrew, and it means a double peace, the perfection of peace,—a great depth of peace, the reality of peace, peace upon peace belongs to the man who trusts in the Lord. Are you vexed, and worried, and perplexed, dear friend? Are you tossed to and fro

as upon a stormy sea? This verse shows you the way in which you may obtain perfect peace: “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace,” —

[Isaiah 26:3-4](#). *Whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength:*

Nothing can be too hard for him, for he has “everlasting strength.” Nothing can ever happen in the future to overthrow him, for his is not decaying strength, but “everlasting strength.” Hold on to that strength, ye children of God; you may even suck honey out of this “Rock of Ages” (see margin); for there is indescribable sweetness in it: “Trust ye in the Lord for ever:” —not only sometimes, but always; —“for ever,” because there is strength in God for ever.

[Isaiah 26:5-6](#). *For he bringeth down them that dwell on high; the lofty city, he layeth it low; he layeth it low, even to the ground; he bringeth it even to the dust. The foot shall tread it down, even the feet of the poor, and the steps of the needy.*

You see, there is one city which God builds, and another city which he pulls down. Observe this solemn truth:” For he bringeth down them that dwell on high; the lofty city, he layeth it low;” —that city which is perched on the hill of self-righteousness, and lifted, as it were, almost to heaven by the pride of man,—God will pull it down. It is part of God’s glory to lift up that which is down, and to cast down that which is up; for when men exalt themselves, they shall be abased; and when they humble themselves, they shall be exalted. “He bringeth it even to the dust. The foot shall tread it down.” Oh, if there is anyone here who is trusting in himself, depending upon his own good doings, and reckoning that he will be saved by his own merits, you will have to come down from that high place, my friend; that fine castle of yours will be; left without one stone upon another, and the poorest child of God in all the world shall set his foot upon the loftiest pinnacle of your grand palace. God will bring it down so that “the feet of the poor, and the steps of the needy,” shall tread on it.

[Isaiah 26:7](#). *The way of the just is uprightness:*

Or, as it might be better rendered, “The way of the just is an even path.” The righteous shall steadily and safely stand in it, while others find themselves sometimes up and sometimes down, and their path shall be slippery and perilous.

[Isaiah 26:7](#). *Thou, most upright, dost weigh the path of the just.*

God judges us by weight, not by appearance; not by what we seem to be, but by what we are in the balances of the sanctuary.

[Isaiah 26:8-9](#). *Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O LORD, have we waited for thee; the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee. With my soul have I desired thee in the night;*

Some poor darkened spirit will, I trust, be able to join in this utterance of the prophet. It is night-time with you now; you are not enjoying the light of God's countenance; but be very thankful that you can say, "With my soul have I desired thee in the night." If you are not a child of God, you will be able to do without God; but the fact that some of you cannot be happy except you are living in the light of God's love, proves that you belong to him. A child can be content without a stranger's smile, but if the one who is looking at him is his father, just because he is his father's child he must have the assurance of that father's love, or else he cannot be happy.

[Isaiah 26:9-10](#). *Yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. Let favour be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the LORD.*

There are none so blind as those who will not see, and there are plenty of such people about. They say that they cannot see this, and they cannot see that; but the truth is that they willfully shut their eyes, and disregard the everlasting light.

[Isaiah 26:11](#). *LORD, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see: but they shall see, and be ashamed for their envy at the people; yea, the fire of thine enemies shall devour them.*

You know what our Lord Jesus said concerning the rich man, "In hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom." He would not look at Lazarus while he was lying at his gates, but now he is obliged to look at Lazarus lying in Abraham's bosom. He would not relieve him, nor give him even a crumb from his table, but now he begs that Lazarus may be sent, to dip the tip of his finger in water, to cool his parched tongue. "They will not see" now; no, "but they shall, see, and be ashamed for their envy towards the people of the Lord.

[Isaiah 26:12](#). *LORD, thou wilt ordain peace for us:*

We may be attacked and assailed for a little while, we may be tossed to and fro; but "Thou wilt ordain peace for us:"

[Isaiah 26:12](#). *For thou also hast wrought all our works in us.*

We have no works in which we can glory; for even if we have an abundance of good works, they are all God's work in us, and we give him all the praise for them; and because he has thus wrought in us, we expect that he will give us peace.

[Isaiah 26:13-15](#). *O LORD our God, other lords beside thee have had dominion over us: but by thee only will we make mention of thy name. They are dead, they shall not live; they are deceased, they shall not rise: therefore hast thou visited and destroyed them, and made all their memory to perish. Thou hast increased the nation, O LORD, thou, hast increased the nation: thou art glorified: thou hadst removed it far unto all the ends of the earth.*

The Jews were scattered and diminished. When they sinned against God, they were exiled; but when the Lord returned to them in favor, he multiplied them, and brought them home again.

[Isaiah 26:16](#). *Lord, in trouble have they visited thee, they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them.*

And it was well for them that they did so. God's true child does not get angry against his Father when he whips him; but, being chastened, he begins to pray; and blessed is that chastening that drives us to our knees: "They poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them."

[Isaiah 26:17-18](#). *Like as a woman with child, that draweth near the time of her delivery, is in pain, and crieth out in her pangs; so have we been in thy sight, O LORD. We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have as it were brought forth wind; we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth; neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen.*

Here is the poor Church of God in sore trouble; she says she has been disappointed, her bitterest pangs have not brought her what she expected. What shall happen then? God will interpose.

[Isaiah 26:19](#). *Thy dead men shall live,—*

We shall rise with all that belong to Christ at the first and blessed resurrection, and all our dead hopes and our dead expectations shall rise too.

[Isaiah 26:19](#). *Together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.*

As the soft showers cause the buried bulbs to spring up, so will God's gentle grace fall on men's hearts, and they shall arise, though they seemed to be dead before; and at the last great day, the sound of the archangel's trumpet shall be like a soft vernal shower which brings up the flowers of the earth, and—

“From beds of dust, and silent clay,
To realms of everlasting day,”—

the bodies of the saints shall rise. O blessed hope! let us look for its fulfillment. Let us make this a part of our song. There is a city that hath foundations, and there is a resurrection which will enable us to enter into that city, to dwell there for ever. Oh, come let us sing of the New Jerusalem, and of the white-robed multitudes that shall dwell therein.

[Isaiah 26:20](#). *Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee:*

Enter into the secret Chambers of communion with your Lord, where you shall be shut out from the world. Enter into the chambers of defense, where God will guard you. Enter into the chambers of devotion, where God shall meet with you.

[Isaiah 26:20-21](#). *Hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the LORD cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.*

Verse 20-21

We will read a short passage in the Book of the prophet Isaiah, commencing with the twenty-sixth chapter, and the twentieth verse.

[Isaiah 26:20](#). *Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast.*

There is never a flood for the wicked without an ark for the righteous. Never shall a storm sweep over the earth till God hath prepared a great rock wherein his people may be hidden.

[Isaiah 26:21](#). *For, behold, the LORD cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.*

The earth has often covered up the evidences of human guilt. Blood shed in battle has soaked into the soil, and men have forgotten the violence

of tyrants and conquerors, but the earth shall disclose her blood. Sin, though it be sown in the earth, shall spring up like wheat, but to a terrible harvest. “Be sure your sin will find you out.”

This exposition consisted of readings from [Isaiah 26:20-21](#); and [Isaiah 27:1-9](#).

[ISAIAH CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 27

Verses 1-9

[Isaiah 27:1](#). *In that day the LORD with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, That is to say, he will punish those who are like leviathan; the proudest, the greatest, and the most powerful sinners shall not escape divine justice.*

God’s laws are not, like cobwebs, meant to catch the little flies while the great ones break through, but he will strike leviathan, he will surely punish the mightiest sinners of the earth.

[Isaiah 27:1](#). *Even leviathan that crooked serpent;*

Hard to come at, difficult to find, he shall not escape the sword of the Lord.

[Isaiah 27:1](#). *And he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea.*

If men should try to hide from God in hell itself, yet would he find them out; there is no possibility that any offender shall escape his all-seeing eye.

[Isaiah 27:2-3](#). *In that day sing ye unto her, A vineyard of red wine. I the LORD do keep it; I will water it every moment lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.*

Thus the Lord reveals the tenderness of his love to his Church. Then follows a remarkable passage in which, it seems to me, we have the plan of salvation plainly set out. First, here is man at enmity with his Maker.

[Isaiah 27:4](#). *Fury is not in me: who would set the briers and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together.*

Men who are at enmity with God little know how terrific is the force of his strength. They are like dry thorns when the fire catches them, and nothing burns more readily. The bush upon the common, when some wild youth sets light to it, suddenly blazes up, crackles, and is gone; so will it be

with the ungodly. God has but to go through them, and they shall be destroyed. But now comes a message of mercy.

[Isaiah 27:5](#). *Or let him take hold of my strength,*

This is what the repenting and believing sinner does, he lays hold of Christ, he takes the strength of God to be his defense, and then the strong God, instead of being a terror, becomes a comfort to him.

[Isaiah 27:5-6](#). *That he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me. He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root:*

Taking root should be well looked after by the Christian. Some professors have no root; they are all leaf and flower, but they have no root, and consequently they soon wither and die. Happy is that man who is rooted and grounded in the faith!

[Isaiah 27:6-7](#). *Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit. Hath he smitten him, as he smote those that smote him?*

No; God smites his people, but he never smites them as he does their enemies. He smites his people, as old Trapp says, with the palm of his hand, as a man may smite his child; but he smites his enemies with his fist, as one would dash his foe to the ground. There is a great difference between the chastisements of God's people and the righteous judgments that fall upon the wicked.

[Isaiah 27:7-8](#). *Or is he slain according to the slaughter of them that are slain by him? In measure, when it shooteth forth, thou wilt debate with it:*

God always chasteneth his people in measure; he makes a debate about it; he weighs their troubles in scales, and their sorrows in balances.

[Isaiah 27:8](#). *He stayeth his rough wind in the day of the east wind.*

He never sends too many troubles at a time; if the east wind is blowing, he does not send his rough wind. We have much to thank God for, that he times our troubles, had they come an hour before, they might have been too much for us; had they been kept back a week longer, they might have overthrown us. God knoweth when to chasten his people, and he will always chasten them at the right time.

[Isaiah 27:9](#). *By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged; and this is all the fruit to take away his sin;*

When one of the old Puritans was afflicted with a very painful disease, — perhaps the most painful to which flesh is heir, — he kept crying out, “The use, Lord? The use, Lord? Show me the use of it.” This should be the point at which the Christian should always aim.

[Isaiah 27:9](#). *When he maketh all the stones of the altar as chalkstones that are beaten in sunder, the groves and images shall not stand up.*

You see, the Israelites had piled up stones, and held them in veneration, but when God brought them back to himself, they counted those stones to be but as common chalkstones of the valley. It is a good thing for us when our sins bring us no pleasure, when they are only like common stones of the street. When we break our images, and dash down our idol-gods, we show that we prize them no longer. The Lord make this to be the issue of all our trials! Then will we bless him for our troubles so for our chief mercies.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Isaiah 26:20-21](#); and [Isaiah 27:1-9](#).

[ISAIAH CONTENTS](#)

Isaiah Chapter 28

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

Isaiah Chapter 29

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

Isaiah Chapter 30

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Isaiah Chapter 31

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Isaiah Chapter 32

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Isaiah Chapter 33

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Isaiah Chapter 34

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER 35

Verses 1-10

Isaiah 35:1. *The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them;*

They shall be so glad that they shall inspire gladness where all was desolation, and brooding, melancholy batwing, and dragon's howl. "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them."

Isaiah 35:1. *And the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.*

God's people are a happy-making people. They are a blessing in themselves, and they shall be a blessing to others, till all shall say, "These are the seed that the Lord hath blessed." "The desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose."

Isaiah 35:2. *It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the LORD and the excellency of our God.*

A wonderful sight to see, for there is one of the most lovely sights in the world when the glory and excellency of God are to be seen in the works of his grace in his own people. It is such a sight that it makes men first rejoice in their hearts, and then rejoice with their tongues. They shall "rejoice with joy and singing," which is the double rejoicing of the heart and of the lip. Well, these must be a favored people who, wherever they go, can make others glad after this fashion. Brethren, they must be full or they could not

overflow! They must be themselves alive, or else they could not quicken the desert places. They must themselves be in flower, blooming like the rose, or they could not make the wilderness so full of verdure. The Lord grant that we may be in that state that we may be able to go into the wilderness. There are some of God's people that cannot trust themselves to go where they are wanted, because they have not grace enough. They are so weak that they are like the weak man standing on the river's brink, who cannot leap in to pull out a drowning man for fear they should be pulled in themselves. But, oh! they are blest indeed who dare go into wildernesses and into the solitary places, and carry the transforming benediction of heaven with them till the wilderness changes its dress, and the brown of the sand gives place to the ruddiness of the rose, because God has come there with his people.

Isaiah 35:3. *Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees.*

Are there such here tonight? No doubt there are — weak at work, and weak at praying. The two things go together — weak hands and feeble knees. May they both be strengthened.

Isaiah 35:4. *Say to them that are of a fearful heart, be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; he will come and save you.*

It is very singular how salvation and vengeance are so often associated together in Scripture. It is the day of salvation," and the day of vengeance of our God to comfort all that mourn." Vengeance upon the false is the best consolation to the true. When God smites the sham, even to the heart, then does he bless that in which the truth is found. "He will come and save you."

Isaiah 35:5-6. *Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.*

See what the presence of Christ does. See what the presence of Christ's people will do when he comes in them and with them. They make the wilderness rejoice. But, besides that, the dwellers that are found in the wilderness — these lame and deaf people — get the blessing. Oh! may God make us to be a desert to others of this sort.

Isaiah 35:7. *And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes.*

The greenest spots your eye ever rested upon are just there where the grass is so rooted in the morass that it is always green with a delicate tinge, and the reeds and rushes spring up abundantly. O God, make poor parched hearts to become like this! You barren ones, you desolate ones, he can give you the best verdure that is possible. Your hearts shall be as green and fresh as the spots where there is grass with reeds and rushes.

Isaiah 35:8. *And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.*

Oh! what a blessing that is to us poor fools! We should err anywhere. To err is human, and we seem to have come in for a double share of it. The more we look at our lives the more we see the folly of our hearts. What a mercy it is that when we walk in the way of faith, in the way of Christ, fools as we are, we shall not err!

Isaiah 35:9-10. *No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there: And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.*

Like frightened things. They kept us company part of our road, but, when the Lord appeared they took to themselves wings and fled away. We could not tell where they were gone to. We were surprised to find that they had quite vanished. Oh! for the appearing of the Lord tonight to his mourning people who may be here.

This exposition consisted of readings from Isaiah 35. Hebrews 12:1-6.

[ISAIAH CONTENTS](#)

Isaiah Chapter 36

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

Isaiah Chapter 37

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Isaiah Chapter 38

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Isaiah Chapter 39

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER 40

Verses 1-17

[Isaiah 40:1-2](#). *Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath receiveth of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins.*

God would have his people happy. He knows that we are not in strong, vigorous state, neither do we honour his name while we are lacking in holy joy. Let the sinners be uncomfortable. Let them be “like the troubled sea that cannot rest”; but as for God’s people, it is his great joy that they should be happy. He bids his servants again and again to comfort them. Sometimes we are in a condition of warfare, and we are under the chastising rod but now the Lord appears graciously to his servants, and he says, “Your warfare is over: your chastisement is ended.” Now the Lord returns in mercy, and he grants a sense of forgiven sin.

[Isaiah 40:3](#). *The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.*

You know this was John the Baptist coming to proclaim the Saviour. That was the best comfort God’s people could have — the coming of the Lord. So it is now. The joy of the Church is the coming of the Lord, and to each one of us the greatest source of joy is the drawing near to us of our Lord. If he appears to us, our winter is over, our summer’s sun has come. If Christ be with us, the time of the singing of birds has come, and our heart is glad.

[Isaiah 40:4-5](#). *Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.*

Wherever Christ comes, it is so. All things are right at his appearing, and if the Lord do but manifest himself to us tonight, each one, we shall find the crooked things made straight. We shall see the mountains of difficulty leveled, and the deep depressions will all be filled up and there will be a causeway along which the Lord triumphantly shall ride to display the greatness of his power. There is nothing that shall hinder the coming of the Lord to us, and when he comes, there is nothing that shall stand against him

[Isaiah 40:6-8](#). *The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field: The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.*

Now that is a cry that we all need to hear — the death-cry of all creature-confidence for man at his very best is only like grass in the flower. It will be mown down in due time, but if the scythe comes not near it, yet will it fade in its season, for it is a transient thing, and every hope and confidence which is based upon that which is seen must be temporal and must pass away. All the joy that you have tonight — all the hope and all the confidence you have which is based upon an earthly thing — must by degrees all disappear. Nothing is eternal but that which springs out of the eternal. Unless our hope be in the Lord alone, that hope will at some time or other fail us; and this is a cry we need to hear because, until we are sick of the creature, we shall not turn to the Creator. Till we have done with false confidences, we shall not make God our trust.

[Isaiah 40:9](#). *O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Juda, Behold your God!*

Look away from these fading things and behold your God. Look away from the brightest joy you have, though it be, like the meadow, all besprent, with many coloured flowers, and look to your God, and to your God alone. “Behold your God” — your God in Christ; your God who has come through

the wilderness, making a highway for himself, that he may come to you, Rejoice in Christ your Saviour, and you shall have a joy that never shall be taken from you.

[Isaiah 40:10-11](#). *Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd:*

Do you belong to the flock tonight? Then let this comfort you. Never mind about the fading flowers. “He shall feed his flock like a shepherd.” He has brought you into the pasture tonight. Depend upon it, he has not led you by a wrong way. And now, though your soul be hungry and thirsty, you shall not lack, for “he shall feed his flock like a shepherd.”

[Isaiah 40:11](#). *He shall gather the lambs with his arm,*

The feeblest, first. The most care, for those that want most care. “He shall gather the lambs with his arm.”

[Isaiah 40:11](#). *And carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.*

Your sorrow is to come, It is to yourself alone known. None can sympathize with you. He will gently lead you. There is no overdriving with Christ. Sometimes his ministers in order to get God’s people right one way, overdrive them another, and it is possible while rebuking the hypocrite, to cause grief to the sincere believer, but our Lord is a better shepherd than the under shepherds are at their very best. “He shall gather the lambs with his arm, carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.” Oh! what a blessed helper we have! Let us rest in him.

[Isaiah 40:12-17](#). *Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? Who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD, or being his counsellor hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding? Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering. All nations before him are as nothing, and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity.*

Who would not trust such a God as this — this only God? How well may we be content to turn away from the fading creatures to this eternal Lord and put our trust in him! Indeed, the wonder is that we do trust the creature, and the wonder still is that we do not trust the mighty Creator.

Faith, which seems so difficult, after all, is nothing better than sanctified common-sense. It is the most common-sense thing in all the world to trust in Omnipotence — in infinite, unchanging love — in infallible truth. To trust anywhere else needs a great deal of justification, but to trust in God needs no apology. He well deserves it. O my soul, trust thou in him.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Isaiah 40:1-17](#); Isaiah 25-31. [John 1:29-42](#).

Verses 1-31

[Isaiah 40:1](#). *Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.*

“They need it, and they shall have it. Mind, O my servants, that you give it to them: Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.”

[Isaiah 40:2](#). *Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD’S hand double for all her sins.*

The first meaning of these words was that, as Jerusalem had passed through a time of great tribulation, she should have a season of rest, but the grand gospel meaning to you and to me is, that our Lord Jesus has fought our battle, and won the victory for us, that he has paid our debt and given to divine justice the double for all our sins, and therefore, our iniquity is pardoned. This is enough to make anyone happy, one would think. It is the best thing that even Isaiah could say, or that God himself could say by the mouth of Isaiah, when his object was to comfort the Lord’s tried people.

[Isaiah 40:3-4](#). *The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain:*

When God means to come to men, nothing can stop him or block up his road. He will level mountains, and fill up valleys, but he will come to his people, somehow or other. And when he comes to them, if he finds many crooked things about them, he will make the crooked straight, and the rough places he will make plain.

[Isaiah 40:5](#). *And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.*

And, since he has spoken it, it must come to pass. “Hath he said, and shall he not do it? “With him, to say anything is to will its accomplishment.

[Isaiah 40:6-8](#). *The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever. Yes, the dearest ones that we have are but flesh, so they wither, and pass away like the green herb. Have you been bereaved, my believing friend?*

Well, you may still say to your Lord, in the words of our hymn, “How can I bereaved be, Since I cannot part from thee?” The mower with the sharp scythe cuts down the grass, but he cannot touch the secret source of our hope, and joy, and confidence in God, and, above all, he cannot touch the God in whom we confide.

[Isaiah 40:9](#). *O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!*

If the chief, the best, the holiest city has found her God, if Jerusalem has been thus favored, let her sing the gladsome tidings, over the hilltops, to the most distant cities of the land, and say to them, “Behold your God “If you have seen your Lord, beloved, proclaim the good news to those who have well nigh forgotten that there is a God, say to them, “Behold your God. He is still to be seen, by the eye of faith, working graciously in the midst of the earth.”

[Isaiah 40:10-11](#). *Behold, the lord GOD will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.*

He knows their weakness, their weariness, their pain, and how incapable they are of speedy and long traveling; he is very tender and pitiful, and he will gently lead them.

[Isaiah 40:12-14](#). *Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance. Who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD, or being his*

counsellor hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding?

And yet, beloved, we sometimes act as if we were God's teachers, as if we had to instruct him what he should do, and because we cannot see our way, we almost dream that he cannot, and because we are puzzled, we conceive that infinite wisdom must be at a nonplus; but it is not so. He was full of wisdom when there was no one with whom he could take counsel, and he is still wise in the highest degree.

[Isaiah 40:15](#). *Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket,*

Not a bucketful, but just a drop that remains in the bucket after you thought it had been completely emptied.

[Isaiah 40:15](#). *And are counted as the small dust of the balance:*

Remember that this is said of "the nations." China, India, Europe, Africa, with all their teeming multitudes, are only like the small dust of the balance that is blown away by the slightest puff of wind.

[Isaiah 40:15-16](#). *Behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon*

With all its forests of cedar: "Lebanon" —

[Isaiah 40:16](#). *Is not sufficient to burn,*

Think of all the cedars of Lebanon as being on a blaze, like some great forest fire, yet not being sufficient to supply the wood for God's altars.

[Isaiah 40:16](#). *Nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering.*

Whether it be the wild or the tame beasts that are on that mountain range, they are not sufficient for a burnt offering unto the Most High.

[Isaiah 40:17](#). *All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity.*

As if they were the mere shadow of something, and had no more influence over him than as if they did not exist.

[Isaiah 40:18](#). *To whom then will ye liken God?*

This is a strong argument against idolatry, against the worship of God under any visible form whatsoever: "To whom then will ye liken God?"

[Isaiah 40:18](#). *Or what likeness will ye compare unto him?*

The heathen did make these supposed likenesses of God. Here is a description of the process by which they manufactured their idol gods.

[Isaiah 40:19](#). *The workman melteth a graven image, and the goldsmith spreadeth it over with gold,*

The rough metal is cast in a certain fashion, and then the goldsmith puts on it his thin plates of gold,

[Isaiah 40:19](#). *And casteth silver chains.*

To adorn it.

[Isaiah 40:20](#). *He that is so impoverished that he hath no oblation —*

The poor man, who cannot manage to make a god of gold,

[Isaiah 40:20](#). *Chooseth a tree that will not rot;*

A good piece of heart of oak or enduring elm.

[Isaiah 40:20](#). *He seeketh unto him a cunning workman to prepare a graven image, that shall not be moved.*

Fix it firmly, drive the post down far into the earth, so that it may be an immovable god.

[Isaiah 40:21-26](#). *Have ye not known? have ye not heard? hath it not been told you from the beginning? have ye not understood from the foundations or the earth? It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in: That bringeth the princess to nothing; he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity. Yea, they shall not be planted; yea, they shall not be sown: yea, their stock shall not take root in the earth: and he shall also blow upon them, and they shall wither, and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble. To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high,*

Suppose it to be night time: “Lift up your eyes on high,” —

[Isaiah 40:26](#). *And behold who hath created these things,*

These wondrous worlds, these stars that bespangle the firmament.

[Isaiah 40:26](#). *That bringeth out their host by number:*

For God knows the number of them all, and the name of every separate world that moves in the vast expanse of space.

[Isaiah 40:26](#). *He calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might for that he is strong in power; not one faileth.*

They are not propped up with pillars, nor hung upon some mighty ropes, yet they continue to occupy the spheres appointed to them by God. He hangeth the world upon nothing, and keeps it in its place by the perpetual out-going of his power.

[Isaiah 40:27](#). *Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the LORD, and my judgment is passed over from my God?*

What! when he has not forgotten one of all those mighty hosts of stars, and when not a sparrow falleth to the ground without his notice, how can you dream that he has forgotten you, or that your way is hidden from him?

[Isaiah 40:28-31](#). *Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.*

Verses 9-11

40:9-11. *O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God! Behold, the Lord God will come with a strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.*

This office of Christ makes glad the hearts of those who have to preach it. To lift up our voice and to proclaim to others the good tidings is grateful service. It is the joy of the church that Jesus, the Lord God Almighty, is strong for the defense of his people, and at the same time tender towards their infirmities. Let us rejoice and be glad in him. Now let us hear what our Shepherd saith by the mouth of the prophet Ezekiel. After he has been complaining of the hireling shepherds — the false ones who sought the fleece and not the flock, who did not feed the sheep nor care for them, nor had any tenderness toward them; he goes on to show what he will do for his own.

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 23, [Isaiah 40:9-11](#), [Ezekiel 34:11-25](#).

Verses 25-31

[Isaiah 40:25-26](#). *To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by*

names by the greatness of his might; for that he is strong in power; not one faileth.

There is no other power that hangs yon lamps of heaven in their places, and keeps them ever burning, except the power of his Word. This whole round earth of ours hangs on nothing but the bidding of the Most High. I remember how Luther used to console himself in troublous times by saying, “Look at yonder arch of blue. There is not a pillar to hold it up, and yet whoever saw the skies fall?” Nothing but the power of God keeps them up. My soul, if all the worlds were made by his word, canst not thou hang on that word? If all things do exist but by the will and word of thy Father, can he not support thee, and canst thou not trust him? Oh! this confidence in the invisible and eternal ought to be natural to us as God’s children. But alas! here is our great sin — that we frequently trust in an arm of flesh and forget our God.

[Isaiah 40:27](#). *Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the LORD, and my judgment is passed over from my God?*

He forgets no star amongst the myriads, no creature amongst the multitudes. He has marked in his book the track of every single atom of air, and every particle of dust, and every drop of spray, and how canst thou be forgotten?

[Isaiah 40:28-29](#). *Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint:*

He loves to pour out into empty vessels. He does not give his power to the strong, but “he giveth power to the faint,” and the more faint thou art, the more room for his strength. Trust thou in him. If thou art burdened that thou canst not stand, lean on him. The more thou dost lean, the better will he love thee. He delights to help his people. “He giveth power to the faint.”

[Isaiah 40:29-30](#). *And to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall:*

We sometimes wish that we were as young as some, and that we had all their overflowing spirit — all the effervescence of their juvenile ardor. Ah, well! we need not wish for it, for mere mortal power shall droop and die, and earthly vigor cease, while such as trust the Lord shall find their strength

increased. “Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall.”

[Isaiah 40:31](#). *But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles;*

That is very much when they begin. They are all for flying; and God gives them a glorious flight, and they are so happy and so delighted. But they will do better than that.

[Isaiah 40:31](#). *They shall run, and not be weary;*

Is that better than flying? Yes it is — a better pace to keep up, but God enables his servants at length to keep along the road of duty and to run in it. But there is a better pace than that.

[Isaiah 40:31](#). *And they shall walk, and not faint.*

It is a good, steady pace. It is the pace that Enoch kept when he walked with God. Sometimes it is easier to take a running spurt than it is to keep on day by day walk, walk, walk, in the sobriety of Christian conversation.

Many under excitement can run a race, but it is the best of all to be able steadily to walk on, walking with God the Lord. The Lord bring us to that pace. “They shall walk and not faint.”

This exposition consisted of readings from [Isaiah 40:1-17](#); Isaiah 25-31. [John 1:29-42](#).

[ISAIAH CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 41

Verses 1-18

God enters into a controversy with those who had fallen into the worship of idols.

[Isaiah 41:1](#). *Keep silence before me, O islands; and let the people renew their strength: let them come near; then let them speak: let us come near together to judgment.*

He challenges them to a debate. He gives them breathing time — bids them prepare themselves, and come with the best arguments that their minds could find.

[Isaiah 41:2-3](#). *Who raised up the righteous man from the east, called him to his foot, gave the nations before him, and made him rule over kings? He gave them as the dust to his sword, and as driven stubble to his bow. He*

pursued them, and passed safely; even by the way that he had not gone with his feet.

Who was it that raised up Cyrus, and who made him strong to defeat the foe? Did the false gods do it? Could they claim any share therein? He puts it to them.

[Isaiah 41:4](#). *Who hath wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning? I the LORD, the first, and with the last; I am he.*

Long before Cyrus was born, God thus spoke of him. It is declared what work he should do. What better proof could there be that God is God? Do the false gods foretell the future? Are their oracles to be depended upon? Yet the Lord's word is true and standeth fast for ever. "I Jehovah, first, and with the last, I am he."

[Isaiah 41:5-6](#). *The isles saw it, and feared; the ends of the earth were afraid, drew near, and came. They helped every one his neighbour; and every one said to his brother, Be of good courage.*

When men fight against God, they get united. What a very sad thing it is that God's children should ever fall out. There is one sin that I never heard charged upon the devils namely, the sin of disunity. Of all the evil things we have heard, I have never heard that among the principalities of the pit there has ever been any division into sects and parties. Oh! sad that in this respect we should fall short of them. The enemies of God helped everyone, his neighbour, "and everyone said to his brother, Be of good courage."

[Isaiah 41:7](#). *So the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith, and he that smootheth with the hammer him that smote the anvil, saying, It is ready for the soldering: and he fastened it with nails, that it should not be moved.*

What a sarcastic description of god-making this is! There is the carpenter, and then the goldsmith to spread the plates of gold over the wood, and then it is soldered, and it has to be fastened with nails. The simple facts about the making of gods are sufficient to pour ridicule upon idolatry. God deliver us from idolatry of any form or shape, whether it comes from Rome or Canterbury. May we have no symbol — no visible object of worship whatever, but get rid of all that, and before the great invisible Spirit let us bow, worshipping him in spirit and in truth. For the least touch of the symbolical soon leadeth on to the idolatrous, and what at the first seemed harmless soon cometh to be harmful so that well doth the law say, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image for I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God." Oh! to keep clear of this great and heinous sin!

[Isaiah 41:8-9](#). *But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend. Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, Thou art my servant; I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away.*

The people of Israel were reserved by God that they might worship him. While other nations went to their idols, the Israelites were to be his servants, chaste in heart towards himself. It is so with the Lord's believing people. Ye are elected and selected, chosen and ordained, and set apart. You may fear the Lord, and not give your hearts to any other. May God grant that we may be true to this our sacred trust. Notice how very sweetly in this text the Lord alludes to his friendship to Abraham, "The seed of Abraham, my friend." When the Lord makes a friend of a man, he means it, and he keeps up that friendship to his children and his children's children. Happy are they who have a father who is a friend of God. Just as David did good to Mephibosheth for the sake of Jonathan, so, doubtless, many blessings come to the children for the sake of their parents. The Lord keepeth mercy to the third and fourth generation, yea, and throughout all generations to them that keep his covenant.

[Isaiah 41:10](#). *Fear thou not; for I am with thee:*

What cause for fear now? If I am with thee, thou needest not fear all the men on earth, nor all the demons of the pit. Fear thou not, for I am with thee."

[Isaiah 41:10](#). *Be not dismayed; for I am thy God:*

"Thy God." Lay the stress there if you will, or "thy God, therefore thine all-sufficient helper — thine immutable, faithful, everlasting friend."

[Isaiah 41:10-12](#). *I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. Behold all they that were incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded: they shall be as nothing; and they that strive with thee shall perish. Thou shalt seek them, and shalt not find them, even them that contended with thee: they that war against thee shall be as nothing, and as a thing of nought.*

Go on, then, child of God. All thy foes that resist thy salvation shall disappear before thy onward march. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." Advance to meet thy cares, and God shall take thy cares away. Only be thou strong and of a good courage, and rest in the everlasting arm, and thou shalt be more than a conqueror.

[Isaiah 41:13-14](#). *For I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee. Fear not, thou worm Jacob,*

Poor worm! How can it take care of itself? Even a bird can destroy it. “Fear not, thou worm Jacob.” You know what a worm does for its defense. It is all that it can do: it hides itself in the earth. Hide thyself in thy God. Get thee into the rock, and there be hidden till the danger be overpast. “Fear not, thou worm Jacob.”

[Isaiah 41:14](#). *And ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.*

How many times the Lord puts it, “I will help thee”! How again and again, he saith, “Fear not”! For despondency is deeply graven in some spirits. There are some minds that seem to gravitate that way again and again, and again; and even the divine assurances have to be given repeatedly before they feel comfort. have any of you been troubled because your children do not learn the first time you teach them? See how you are towards your heavenly Father! how many times he has to teach you, line upon line, precept upon precept — here a little, and there a little; and if he hath patience with our infirmities, we may very readily have patience with the infirmities of our little ones.

[Isaiah 41:15](#). *Behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth:*

He will make poor feeble worms to be like that great corn-drag which they were accustomed to draw over the straw to bruise out the wheat.

[Isaiah 41:15-16](#). *Thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff. Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them: and thou shalt rejoice in the LORD, and shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel.*

Truly, when mountains are beaten into chaff, and blown away with the winnowing fan, there is room for rejoicing and magnifying God. If there were no difficulties, there would be no victories. If we had no trials, we should have no tests of Jehovah’s strength; but out of our afflictions we get our joys. The deeper our sorrows, the higher our exultations when God helps us through them.

[Isaiah 41:17](#) *When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the LORD will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.*

What a blessed promise that is! God thinks of poor and needy men. When they are in their greatest extremity, with nothing to quench their thirst, and they are ready to die, then he is pleased to make the rocks run with rivers, in order that they may be supplied.

[Isaiah 41:18](#). *I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water.*

Verses 1-20

[Isaiah 41:1](#). *Keep silence before me, O islands; and let the people renew their strength: let them come near; then let them speak: let us come near together to judgment.*

God invites people to argue with him. He bids them first “listen” to him, and then speak to him. They had been worshipping idols, so the Lord shows them that the idols are nothing, and that all worship paid to them is a lie. He begins by asking a question:?

[Isaiah 41:2](#). *Who raised up the righteous man from the east, called him to his east, gave the nations before him, and made him rule over kings? he gave them as the dust to his sword, and as driven stubble to his bow. He pursued them, and passed safely; even by the way that he had not gone with his feet.*

These words are supposed to allude to Cyrus, who came “from the east”, and conquered “the nations”, and then did good to the house of Israel. It was God who spoke of Cyrus long before he was born. What idol god has been able to utter any prophecy? Only the Most High who lives in heaven can foretell things to come. One of the best proofs of our holy religion is to be found in the prophecies which have been fulfilled to the letter in various countries, and at different periods. Now, when they dig up old stones, that have been hidden for hundreds of years from the eyes of men, they see the proofs of how God saw into the future, and bade his prophets foretell the things that should be hereafter.

[Isaiah 41:4](#). *Who hath wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning? I the LORD, the first, and with the last; I am he. The isles saw it, and feared; the ends of the earth were afraid, drew near, and came.*

They helped every one his neighbour; and ever one said to his brother, Be of good courage. So the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith, and he that

smootheth with the hammer him that smote the anvil, saying, It is ready for the soldering: and he fastened it with nails, that it should not be moved.

A very graphic picture of the making of an idol. The people were afraid of Cyrus, so they began to appeal to their gods. A pretty god it must have been that had to be made by a carpenter! Then the wood had to be covered with gold plates by the goldsmith, and the god would not be complete without the help of a man smoothing with a hammer and a smith smiting upon an anvil. When it was made, they had to solder it to keep it together; and they had to get nails to fasten it in its place lest, like Dagon, it should fall down and be broken. This is nothing but literal truth; yet what sarcasm it is upon idolatry! What good can come of idols that are made by men, idols that cannot move, and must be fixed in their places with soldering irons?

[Isaiah 41:8](#). *But thou, Israel, art my servant,*

You do not worship idols; you worship Jehovah, the living and true God.

[Isaiah 41:8](#). *Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend.*

What a title for God to give to a man, "Abraham my friend"! Could not we also endeavor to get into God's friendship, where Abraham was; to trust and love God much; to talk with him much, and enjoy high and holy fellowship with him?

[Isaiah 41:9](#). *Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, Thou art my servant; I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away.*

To many here this verse will come home very sweetly. God is your God. and you are God's servants. he has chosen you; he will never repent of his choice; his election is never changed. "I have Chosen thee, and not cast thee away;" and you have chosen him, and you will not cast him away. By his grace, you will never leave your God, nor forsake the ways of Christ. May his mercy keep you faithful, even to the end!

[Isaiah 41:10](#). *Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God:*

Where God is, there is no cause for fear: "Fear thou not; for I am with thee." That is a grand argument. "Be not dismayed; for I am thy God." Everything we need lies within the compass of those words.

[Isaiah 41:10](#). *I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.*

Beloved believer, are you weak tonight? Claim this precious promise, “I will strengthen thee.” Have you something to do that is quite beyond your strength? Take hold of this comforting word, “I will help thee.” Are you ready to slip? Do you feel as if you must fall? Lean on this gracious message, “I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.” Do not let these precious pearls lie at your feet to be trodden on; pick them up, and wear them, and beautify the neck of your faith with them.

[Isaiah 41:11](#). *Behold, all they that are incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded: they shall be as nothing; and they that strive with thee shall perish.*

Your sins, your temptations, everything that would keep you out of heaven, and drive you away from God, the Lord will overcome all these enemies of yours, and deliver you.

[Isaiah 41:12-13](#). *Thou shalt seek them, and shalt not find them, even them that contended with thee: they that war against thee shall be as nothing, and as a thing of nought. For I the LORD thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee.*

That is the second time that we have had that precious promise to forbid our fear; first in verse 10, and now in verse 13, “I will help thee.”

[Isaiah 41:14](#). *Fear not, thou worm Jacob,*

You are earthly, groveling, weak, like a worm; yet even you need not fear:

“Fear not, thou worm Jacob.”

[Isaiah 41:14](#). *And ye men of Israel; I will help thee,*

That is the third time that we have had that promise, “I will help thee.” “Ring that silver bell again,” says the Holy Spirit to Isaiah, “let it comfort my tired ones.” “I will help thee.”

[Isaiah 41:14](#). *Saith the LORD, and thy redeemer, the Holy one of Israel.*

I was wonderstruck, as I looked at this verse, to find it put “Thou worm Jacob, I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy God,” that is the Hebrew word which is translated “Redeemer”, “Thy next of kin.” Is the next of kin to a worm the Almighty God? Does he undertake to be our Brother, to pay the redemption price for us, because he is our Kinsman? So the text says. Let us drink in the comfort of it: “Thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.” In order to become our Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel himself became “a worm, and no man.”

[Isaiah 41:15](#). *Behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth: thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat them small. and shalt make the hills as chaff.*

The Easterns drag a wooden machine over the corn to fetch out the grain from the ear. This is called a corn-drag, and they put teeth in it, similar to the teeth of a harrow. God said that he would turn his Church, his people, into a new corn-drag, with teeth sharp and tearing, and that they should go against their difficulties, which were like mountains, and against their trials, which were like hills, and they should thresh them small, and make them to be like chaff.

[Isaiah 41:16](#). *Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them: and thou shalt rejoice in the LORD, and shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel.*

All difficulty is gone, torn to pieces small as chaff, and then winnowed away, as the chaff is blown from among the heap on the threshing floor. What a promise this is! You who fear God, believe it, go and practice it, and see if God does not make your greatest difficulties utterly to disappear. Now come two sweet verses:?

[Isaiah 41:17](#). *When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water.*

See what God can do. Men are thirsty, they have no water; and lo! of a sudden, behold rivers, fountains, springs, pools, floods; for God does nothing in halves. He is an all-sufficient, overflowing God. When he gives, he gives like a king. He does not measure his gifts of water by the pint and by the gallon; but here you have pools, and springs, and rivers. When he has given waters, he will give trees to grow by the waters. When God gives blessing, he makes other blessings to spring out of it.

[Isaiah 41:19](#). *I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah tree, and the myrtle, and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the fir tree, and the pine, and the box tree together:*

Making a paradise of streams of water and lovely trees, evergreen trees of the most comely aspect, and of great variety. See what God can do. Where there is a wilderness, where there were hills and valleys, and all was dry and parched, he makes woods and forests, rivers and fountains. He can

do all things. Oh, that we had faith in him! But we forget him: we turn not to him; we look everywhere but to God; we try every method except that of trusting in the living God. Have we a God? If so, why do we act as we sometimes do? Martin Luther was a very cheerful man, as a rule; but he had terrible fits of depression. he was at one time so depressed that his friends recommended him to go away for a change of air, to see if he could get relief. he went away; but he came home as miserable as ever; and when he went into the sitting-room, his wise wife Kate, Catherine von Bora, was sitting there, dressed in black, and her children round about her, all in black. "Oh, oh!" said Luther, "who is dead?" "Why," said she, "doctor, have not you heard that God is dead? My husband, Martin Luther, would never be in such a state of mind if he had a living God to trust to." Then he burst into a hearty laugh, and said, "Kate, thou art a wise woman. I have been acting as if God were dead, and I will do so no more. Go and take off thy black." If God be alive, why are we discouraged? If we have a God to look to, why are we cast down? Let us rejoice and be glad together; for God will do all that he has promised, for this reason:?

[Isaiah 41:20](#). *That they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the LORD hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it.*

God wants you to know that he is at work on your behalf. he wants you so to trust him as to see how his promises can be applied to your case, and what his right hand can accomplish even for you. Let us trust him tonight with all our hearts.

Verses 8-20

[Isaiah 41:8](#). *But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend.*

Let us, for the time being, forget the people to whom this message was addressed, and see whether it might not be spoken to ourselves. Come, my friend, art thou truly God's servant? Dost thou delight to do his will, and to walk in his ways? If so, then thou art God's chosen; for, wherever there is the true spirit of obedience to the Lord, it is the result of his grace, and grace never comes except from the well-head of electing love. If thou art God's servant, thou art God's chosen. Then, see to it that thou dost walk and live as one of the seed of Abraham, whom God calls, "my friend." It was very touching, the other day, to notice how the Queen spoke of one who was her servant, but who had gained the friendship of his royal mistress. So

the Lord Jesus Christ said to his disciples, “Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth: but I have called you friends.” May we so faithfully serve him that it will be fitting for the Lord to speak of us in all three of these terms: “Thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend.”

[Isaiah 41:9](#). *Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, Thou art my servant; I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away.*

May the Lord just now say that to each one of you who are his servants! Especially, may he say the latter part of it, “I have not cast thee away”! Many times, he might have done so if he had dealt with us according to our deserts. “Dismiss me not thy service, Lord,” is a prayer we ought often to put up, for, in that service, we are far from perfect. I think I speak for all sane Christians; — I do not undertake to speak for certain insane ones that abound at this time, — but I believe that all sane servants of the Lord confess that they are such poor servants that their wonder is that they have not been dismissed from his service. Yet it is sweet to hear him say, “I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away.”

[Isaiah 41:10](#). *Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God:*

Oh, the riches of that word, “I am thy God”! That is more than “Thy Friend, thy Helper.” “I am thy God.”

[Isaiah 41:10](#). *I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; —*

First, “I will give thee strength, and then I will use my own strength on thy behalf: ‘I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee;’” —

[Isaiah 41:10](#). *Yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.*

The poor child of God seems to cry, “Lord, thou sayest, ‘I will help thee,’ but I can hardly stand; I am such a babe, I have not yet learned to stand alone.” “Well, then,” says God, “I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.” Are any of you afraid that you will slip with your feet? Are you put in very perplexing positions, so that you hardly know which way to turn? Then rest on this sweet promise, “Yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.”

[Isaiah 41:11](#). *Behold, all they that were incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded: they shall be as nothing; and they that strive with thee shall perish.*

The Lord Jesus Christ will put to rout all the enemies of his people. Their sins and their sorrows, their foes and their woes, shall alike be scattered to the wind.

[Isaiah 41:12](#). *Thou shalt seek them, and shalt not find them, even them that contended with thee: they that war against thee shall be as nothing, and as a thing of nought.*

You know how it happened to Pharaoh and all his hosts; the Israelites could not find them after the Lord had overthrown them in the Red Sea. The psalmist sang, long afterwards, concerning the Egyptians who were drowned, "There was not one of them left." So shall it be with all those whom you now fear and dread; God shall appear, and work such a deliverance for you that you shall wonder where your trouble is. It shall be drowned, utterly washed away, like the Egyptians whom the children of Israel saw no more.

[Isaiah 41:13-14](#). *For I the LORD thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee. Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the LORD, and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.*

You must not miss those charming words, dear friends. Let me read them again. Some of you will want them, so do not miss them. There is some medicine here that you will need, may be, before long: "Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel."

[Isaiah 41:15](#). *Behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth: thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff.*

You know the corn-drag was made rough at the bottom, as though it had sharp teeth, and when it was drawn over the wheat after it was spread out on the threshing-floor, the grain was separated from the chaff. So God tells his people, if they trust him, that he will make them into a threshing instrument having teeth, and they shall thresh, not ordinary harvests, but shall thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and make the hills as chaff. No task is too hard for God's people to accomplish when God is with them; difficulties vanish, and their fears are driven before the wind, when God strengthens them.

[Isaiah 41:16](#). *Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them: and thou shalt rejoice in the LORD,*

and shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel.

Come, ye that are drooping in spirit, here is God's promise to you that you shall overcome all your difficulties, and then shall rejoice in God. "Oh!" say you, "I could rejoice in God if he enabled me to do that. Put the "if" away, and believe that he is about to help you, and anticipate the victory he is going to give you by singing the song of faith.

[Isaiah 41:17](#). *When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, —*

They have come to such a state that they cannot even tell their wants; they do not know how to speak to others about their grief, or even to describe it to themselves. "Their tongue faileth for thirst." What then?

[Isaiah 41:17](#). *I the LORD will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.*

"But, Lord, they could not speak. Didst thou not say, 'Their tongue faileth'? Yet thou sayest, 'I the Lord will hear them.'" It shows, dear friends, that a groan is a prayer, a sigh is a prayer, and that, even if we cannot get as far as to sigh or groan, our very hunger and thirst make up a prayer before God: "I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them."

[Isaiah 41:18](#). *I will open rivers in high places,-*

That is an unusual place to find rivers; but God does strange things when he shows mercy to the poor and needy: "I will open rivers in high places,"

[Isaiah 41:18](#). *And fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water.*

There shall be enough and to spare; there shall be an abundance of the water of which before they could not find a single drop. When God is gracious to a soul, he is gracious. When his mercy is made to enter a man's heart, then he pours floods upon him. No little grace will God bestow, but endless grace, and boundless grace, "and crown that grace with glory, too."

[Isaiah 41:19-20](#). *I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah tree, and the myrtle, and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the fir tree, and the pine, and the box tree together: That they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the LORD hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it.*

May these gracious promises be fulfilled in you and me, that we may praise our faithful covenant-keeping God for ever and ever! Amen.

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 42

Verses 1-6

Isaiah 42:1. *Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.*

Verily this prophecy is concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. Observe the title which he takes. He is called the servant of God. The Father calls him his servant. Above all others is Christ the servant of the Highest deigning to become the servant of servants, though he is the King of kings. “Whom I uphold” — which may be read two ways. According to some renderings it should be, “Whom I lean upon” — as if God leant the full weight of his glory upon Christ, and gave over the work of grace into his hands, that is, if the passage be read passively. If actively, it runs as in our text, “Whom I uphold.” And both are true. God leans upon Christ. Christ draws his strength from God. They co-work, and mutual is the glory. “Mine elect.” That is first. “My choice one,” for there is none so choice as Christ. “My elected one,” for Christ is the head of election. We are chosen in him from before the foundation of the world so that specially does God call him “Mine elect.” “In whom my soul delighteth.” The delight of the Father in the Son is infinite. He delighted in his person. Now he delights in the work which he has accomplished. The delight of the Father is in Christ, and he delights in us because we are in him. If, indeed, we are members of Christ, he is well pleased with us for Christ’s sake. “In whom my soul delighteth.” “I have put my Spirit upon him.” That was publicly done when he was baptized in the Jordan. The Spirit without measure rests and abides on him, our covenant head. “He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.” Rejoice then, ye Gentiles. You are no longer excluded. At first the word came to the Jews only, but he has given the man, Christ Jesus, who has brought forth judgment to the Gentiles.

Isaiah 42:2-3. *He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth.*

Jesus was gentle, retiring, meek, quiet. His testimony was a very powerful one, but not a noisy one. He sought no honour among men. He frequently forbade the healed ones to tell of his miracles. He rather retired than came into public notice. He was not contentious. He did not seek to put out the Pharisees, who were like smoking flax. He was never hard towards the tender ones, but always gentle as a nurse among her children. Now it is very often found that, where there is quietness and meekness, there is, nevertheless, great firmness of purpose. Noise and weakness go together, but quietness and strength are frequently combined. So read the next verse.

[Isaiah 42:4](#). *He shall not fail He shall not faint.*

So it may be.

[Isaiah 42:4](#). *Nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law.*

This quiet, gentle Christ goes on pushing on his empire and extending his dominion till these far-off islands of the sea already know his power and the day comes when the whole round earth shall be obedient to his sway. O blessed Christ, how glad we are to think that, when we are discouraged, thou art not, and, when we fail and faint, thou dost not. Thou holdest on for ever, like the sun who cometh forth from his chamber in the morning, and stayeth not till he has run his race.

[Isaiah 42:5-6](#). *Thus saith God the LORD, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein: I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles;*

Thus the great God commissions Christ. Thus he declares that the eternal power and Godhead will back him up till the Gentiles shall perceive his light, and the people shall be brought into covenant with God.

Verses 1-17

This book might well be called “the gospel according to Isaiah,” for it is full of evangelical truth.

[Isaiah 42:1](#). *Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.*

Of whom speaketh the prophet this, but of the Messiah — Jesus of Nazareth? He was upheld by the mighty power of God. He was the Lord’s

chosen. The Spirit of God rested upon him, and this day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears, for he hath brought forth righteousness to the Gentiles.

[Isaiah 42:2](#). *He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street.*

He shall be no clamorous seeker after applause. He shall not shout as those that seek for the mastery. Now the Saviour was quiet, gentle, meek, humble. When he lifted up his voice, it was for God and for the sons of men — not for himself. He was meek and lowly of heart.

[Isaiah 42:3](#). *A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth.*

How exactly these words describe the Lord Jesus! He was so gentle that he did not break or break off the bruised reeds. We read that he did not answer the Scribes and Pharisees. They were so powerless — such bruised reeds in his esteem — such worthless, smoking flaxes — that he let them alone until bye-and-bye he came to bring forth judgment unto victory. And now the weak, the feeble, the gentle the poor in spirit, shall never find Christ deal hardly with them. “The bruised reed he will not break: the smoking flax he will not quench.”

[Isaiah 42:4](#). *He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth; and the isles shall wait for his law.*

Oh! what a blessed thing it is that we have a Saviour to trust, who will not fail, and he is one who will never be discouraged. He will carry out the salvation of his people, and never give it up as a hopeless case. Poor sinner, if he begins with you, he will not fail nor be discouraged; nor will he even with the whole earth. He will not take back his hand till surely all flesh shall see the glory of the Lord. He who has undertaken man’s redemption is not feeble of spirit and easily baffled. He shall not fail or be discouraged.

[Isaiah 42:5-6](#). *Thus saith God the LORD, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein: I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles;*

See what God has made his Son, Jesus Christ. If you want to get to Christ in the covenant of grace, you have only to lay hold on Christ, for fist is given as a covenant to the people. He is the embodiment of the covenant

— the sum and substance of it — the seal of it — the surety of it. He is, indeed, the covenant itself. And if you want light, you have only to get Christ. He is the light of the world, and here we are told that God has given him for a light to the Gentiles.

[Isaiah 42:7](#). *To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.*

Hear this, you melancholy ones, you that are desponding, you that cannot get out of the prison of bad habits, or shake off the chains of sin. Behold a liberator has come — one whose very business it is to open the fast closed cells of sin, and set the captives of Satan free.

[Isaiah 42:8-9](#). *I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images. Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before their spring forth I tell you of them.*

One great proof of the truth of the deity of Jehovah is that he can foresee and foretell, so that long ere events happen he makes them known. Now Isaiah, by God's Spirit, told the Israelites concerning Christ hundreds of years before Christ came; and yet the terms are so express that one might almost think that they were written after the event. But doth not God know; and is not he God who sees through the mists of ages, and looks upon the things that are to be as though they were? Verily he is God.

[Isaiah 42:10-11](#). *Sing unto the LORD a new song, and his praise from the end of the earth, ye that go down to the sea, and all that is therein; the isles, and the inhabitants thereof. Let the wilderness and the cities thereof lift up their voice, the villages that Kedar doth inhabit: let the inhabitants of the rock sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains.*

For the coming of Christ is the coming of music into the world. When he did hang upon the cross, there were lighted up new stars to cheer earth's night. Nay, what if I say that the sun itself had risen then to chase away the darkness once for all? O Lamb of God. Creation made the angels sing; but redemption makes us fallen men to sing, for it lifts us up to sit among the angels, through thy meet precious blood.

[Isaiah 42:12](#). *Let them give glory unto the LORD, and declare his praise in the islands.*

Now for his enemies. While God is thus graciously dealing with men, he determines to make an end of the powers of evil.

[Isaiah 42:13](#). *The LORD shall go forth as a mighty man, he shall stir up jealousy like a man of war: he shall cry, yea, roar; he shall prevail against his enemies.*

Do not imagine that the gods of the heathen will always sit on their thrones that the powers of and-Christ will always darken the earth. Ah! no. God will bestir himself ere long.

[Isaiah 42:14](#). *I have a long time holden my peace; I have been still, and refrained myself: now will I cry like a travailing woman; I will destroy and devour at once.*

Oh! what a time will that be when God comes forth in the splendor of his power to put down all the hosts of evil.

[Isaiah 42:15](#). *I will make waste mountains and hills, and dry up all their herbs; and I will make the rivers islands, and I will dry up the pools.*

What a terrible God he is! When he once puts forth his hand for deeds of justice and of vengeance, who can stand before him, but yet how his mercy walks arm-in-arm with his justice?

[Isaiah 42:16](#). *And I will bring the blind by way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them.*

Oh! the condescension of God that even when his right arm is bared for war, and thunder girds his cloudy ear, yet still he stoops out of the chariot of wrath to look after poor, blind, helpless souls, and lead them in the way of peace and mercy. But as for his enemies: —

[Isaiah 42:17](#). *They shall be turned back, they shall be greatly ashamed, that trust in graven images, that say to the molten images, Ye are our gods.*

This exposition consisted of readings from [Isaiah 42:1-17](#); [Isaiah 43:18-25](#); [Romans 10:1-19](#).

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CHAPTER 43

Verses 1-7

In this chapter the Lord comforts his people. By his divine foresight he perceives that there are great and varied trials a little way ahead, and therefore he prepares them for the ordeal. They are to go through rushing

waters and flaming fires; and he kindly bids them not to be afraid. How often in God's word do we read those tender, gracious words, "Fear not!" Should not the trembling ones listen to the voice of their God, and obey it when he saith to them "Fear not"? It is not right for you who fear God to fear anything else. Once brought to know the Lord, who can harm you? Abiding under the shadow of the Almighty, what danger need you dread? Nay, rather, be of good comfort, and press forward with peaceful confidence, though floods and flames await you. To encourage his people to rise superior to their fears, the gracious God goes on to issue matchless promises: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee." Present good- "I will be with thee" absent danger- "they shall not overflow thee." God stays his people's hearts by his own promises. In proportion to their faith those promises must lift them up. If you do not believe the promise, you shall not be established by it; but if, with childlike confidence, you accept every word of God as true, then his word shall be to you the joy of your heart, and the delight of your spirit, and you shall be a stranger to fear. The Lord proceeds, after giving those promises, to set before them what he himself is, and what he has done for them, and what they are to him. He is speaking, of course, to Israel; and he says of Israel, his chosen nation, "I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee." What cause for fear now remains? All believers are of the true Israel. Abraham was the father of the faithful. The faithful, or the believing, are therefore Abraham's seed, according to the promise. The seed was not after the flesh, else would the children of Ishmael have been the heirs of the covenant; but the true seed was born according to promise, and in the power of God; for Isaac was born when his parents were old, by faith in the power of God. Isaac was not the child of flesh, but he was born according to promise, so that we who are not born of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God, by his Spirit, and according to the divine promise, are the true children of Abraham. We are the spiritual Israel. Though after the flesh Abraham be ignorant of us, and Sarah acknowledge us not, yet are we the true seed of him who was the father of believers. The literal Israel was the type of those chosen and favored ones who by faith are born again according to promise. To these heirs according to promise the Lord saith, "I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee." Let us now meditate on this passage verse by verse.

[Isaiah 43:1](#). *But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine.*

“Fear not,” is a command of God, and is a command which brings its own power of performance with it. God, who created and formed us, says to us, “Fear not,” and a secret whisper is heard in the heart by which that heart is so comforted that fear is driven away. Observe the tender ties that bind our God to his people;-creation, the formation of them for his praise, redemption, the purchase of them for himself, and the calling of them by their name. The Lord remembers the bonds which unite us to himself even when we forget them; he recollects his eternal love, and all the deeds of mercy that have flowed from it. Though our memory is treacherous, and our faith is feeble, “yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself;” blessed be his holy name!

[Isaiah 43:2](#). *When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.*

“When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee.” The godly have the best company in the worst places in which their lot is cast God’s presence is all that we need even in the deepest floods of tribulation; this he has promised to us. He does not say what he will do for us, but he does tell us that he will be with us, and that is more than enough to meet all our necessities. “When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.” That is a wonderful picture of a man walking through the fire, and yet not being burned; but there was a greater wonder, that was seen by Moses, which may well comfort us. He saw a bush that burned with fire, and yet was not consumed. Now a bush, in the desert, is usually so dry that, at the first application of fire, it flames, and glows, and is speedily gone: yet you and I, who are, spiritually, just as dry and combustible as that bush was naturally, may burn, and burn, and burn, and yet we shall not be consumed, because the God, who was in the bush, is also with us, and in us. “Neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.” Thou shalt come out of the furnace as the three holy children did, with not so much as the smell of fire upon thee; for, where God is, all is safe.

[Isaiah 43:3](#). *For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee.*

“For I am the Lord thy God.” This is the grandest possible reason for not fearing. Fall back upon this when you have nothing else upon which to rely. If you have no goods, you have a God. If thy gourd is withered, thy God is still the same as he ever was: “For I am Jehovah, thy God.” “I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee.” And he has given infinitely more than that for us who are his people now, for he gave his only begotten Son that he might redeem us with his precious blood. Now that we have cost him so much, is it likely that he will ever forsake us? It is not possible.

[Isaiah 43:4](#). *Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life.*

How sweetly this verse comes home to those whose characters have been disreputable! As soon as they are truly converted to Christ, they become “honourable.” “Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable.” God does not call his people by their old names of dishonour, but he gives them the title of “Right Honourable,” and makes them the nobility of his Court. “Unto you that believe he is an honour;” and you have honour in him and from him.

[Isaiah 43:5-7](#). *Fear not: for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth; Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.*

“Fear not: for I am with thee.” This is the second time that the blessed words, “Fear not,” ring out like the notes of the silver trumpet proclaiming the jubilee to poor trembling hearts: “Fear not, for I am with thee.” The Lord seems to say to each troubled believer, “My honour is pledged to secure thy safety, all my attributes are engaged on thy behalf right to the end, yea, I am myself with thee, therefore, fear not.” “I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, my daughter from the ends of the earth; every one that is called by my name.” Whatever happens, God will be with his Church. His own chosen people shall all be gathered in. There shall be no frustration of the divine purpose. From east or west, north or south, all his sons and daughters shall come unto him, even every one that is called by his name. “For I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.” And God will be glorified in his people; the object of their creation is the glory of their God,

and that end shall, somehow or other, be answered in the Lord's good time. The Lord seems to dwell upon that note of the creation of his children for his own glory. This accounts for many of our troubles, and for all our deliverances; it is that God may be glorified by bringing his children through the fires and through the floods. A life that was never tested by trial and trouble would not be a life out of which God would get much glory, but they that do business in the great waters see the works of God, and his wonders in the deep, and they give him praise; and, besides, when they come to their desired haven, then they praise the Lord for his goodness, and God is thereby glorified.

Verses 1-19

[Isaiah 43:1](#). *But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel,*

The Lord reminds us that he first created us, and that he afterwards molded us; we are like Jacob by nature, but he has made us Israel by grace.

[Isaiah 43:1](#). *Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine.*

Redemption is a deep well of comfort. If the Lord has indeed bought us with his blood, he will not think lightly of us; and if he has called us by name, and declared that we belong to him, we may rest assured that he will not lose his own property, but that he will preserve it to the end.

[Isaiah 43:2](#). *When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.*

The Lord does not promise us immunity from trial and trouble; we shall have to go through waters and rivers, and shall have to pass through fires and flames; it is through much tribulation that we must enter the kingdom of God; but he does promise that no harm shall come to us from it all. "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God;" — that waters, rivers, fires, and flames bring us benefits and blessings, and that they shall none of them bring a curse upon us.

[Isaiah 43:3-4](#). *For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee. Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable,*

God puts honour upon his beloved ones; they were in themselves dishonourable, for they had nothing of goodness about them until the Lord

imparted it to them.

[Isaiah 43:4](#). *And I have loved thee:*

God loved his ancient people Israel; he has always loved his Church; and he loves believers still.

[Isaiah 43:4-5](#). *Therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life. Fear not: for I am with thee:-*

It is enough for a child that his mother is near him, or that his father is with him; then is it not enough for you, O child of God, that God is with you? Israel was scattered when Isaiah wrote this prophecy, and would be afterwards scattered far and wide over the face of the earth; so God gave this comforting assurance, “fear not: for I am with thee:” —

[Isaiah 43:5-6](#). *I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth;*

God’s chosen ones have wandered very far away from him, but the great Shepherd of the sheep, who bought them with his blood, will gather them, and there shall be one flock and one Shepherd.

[Isaiah 43:7](#). *Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.*

Three expressions are here used concerning the man who is called by God’s name. First, “I have created him,” — made him out of nothing. Then, “I have formed him” — fashioned him, made him into his proper shape. The last sentence may be read, “Yea, I have completed him.” When God begins his work in us, we are in the rough; as he goes on working in us, we gradually take the form of his dear Son; and by-and-by he will complete us, and then we shall wake up in his likeness. Blessed be his name for this!

[Isaiah 43:8](#). *Bring forth the blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that have ears.*

Some think that the Lord refers here to those who were once blind, but to whom he has given eyes; and to those who were deaf, to whom he has given ears. Many of us are of that order. One thing I know is that, whereas I was once spiritually blind, now I can see; and another thing I know is that, whereas I was once spiritually deaf, now I can hear the voice of God.

[Isaiah 43:9](#). *Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled:-*

As though there was to be a great debate as to who God is, and what God is, he first summons all his people whose blind eyes and deaf ears he

has opened, and then he calls for all the nations to be gathered together, and gives them this challenge: —

[Isaiah 43:9](#). *Who among them can declare this, and shew us former things? let them bring forth their witnesses, that they may be justified: or let them hear, and say, It is truth.*

Where else have we any true knowledge of God except in his Word and among his people? The myths and mysteries of the heathen, how dark how indistinct and shadowy they are! What true prophecy did their oracles ever give? Ask Greece and Rome, the most polished of the ancient nations, what did their so-called gods ever foretell? Let them bring any holy book of theirs which reveals the future, and which is true.

[Isaiah 43:10](#). *Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD,-*

The chosen people of God have become witnesses for Jehovah that he, and he alone, is the true God; that he, and he alone has truly foretold the future. Let the heathen prove that their gods have done the same if they can; we know that they cannot. “Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, —

[Isaiah 43:10](#). *And my servant whom I have chosen:*

That great Servant of God, you know his name, even Christ Jesus the faithful and true Witness, bears better witness for God than the whole nation of the Jews, or the Lord’s chosen people in all ages, can bear.

[Isaiah 43:10-11](#). *That ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am the LORD and beside me there is no saviour.*

Look the whole world over, and see where there is any Saviour for sinners except Jesus Christ. Does any other religion even profess to have a Saviour? Destroyers they have, but where is their Saviour?

[Isaiah 43:12](#). *I have declared, and have saved,*

“I said that I would save, and I have saved.”

[Isaiah 43:12](#). *And I have shewed, when there was no strange god among you: therefore ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, that I am God.*

When, in Hezekiah’s day, the idols had been destroyed, God told Hezekiah that he would deliver him from Sennacherib, and he did so.

[Isaiah 43:13](#). *Yea, before the day was I am he;*

When there was no day, there was the Ancient of days.

[Isaiah 43:13](#). *And there is none that can deliver out of my hand: I will work, and who shall let it?*

(who shall hinder it?)

“When he makes bare his arm,
What shall his work withstand?
When he his people’s cause defends,
Who, who shall stay his hand?”

14. Thus saith the LORD, your redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; For your sake I have sent to Babylon, and have brought down all their nobles, and the Chaldeans, whose cry is in the ships.

Up the broad river Euphrates, and down to the Persian Gulf, Babylon and Chaldea gloried in their greatness, but God sent the Medo-Persian power to break them in pieces for the sake of his people, that Cyrus might let them go free.

[Isaiah 43:15-17](#). I am the LORD, your Holy One, the creator of Israel, your King. Thus saith the LORD, which maketh a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters; which bringeth forth the chariot and horse, the army and the power; they shall lie down together, they shall not rise: they are extinct, they are quenched as tow.

Like the wick of a lamp, soon put out. Here is, probably, an illusion to the overthrowing of Egypt at the Red Sea; they came out with their horses and chariots, but they were made to lie down together in the sea. God overcame his people’s enemies then, and he can and will do the same to the end of the chapter.

[Isaiah 43:18](#). Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old.

Do not look merely upon what God has done; but look to the future, and remember that he is able to do the same again.

[Isaiah 43:19](#). Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert.

O dear child of God, have you got into the wilderness, and have you no comfort there? Are all your wells dried up? God will work a new miracle for you, you shall have a new manifestation of his gracious power.

Verses 1-25

[Isaiah 43:1](#). But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine.

I cannot pause to comment upon each of the precious sentences here, but every word is full of marrow and fatness. Ask the Lord to enable you to

feed upon each sentence as it passes before your mind.

[Isaiah 43:2-5](#). *When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee. Since thou was precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life. Fear not: for I am with thee:*

That always seems to me to be the master-consolation: “I am with thee.” What more does the most troubled heart need than God’s presence?

[Isaiah 43:5](#). *I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west;*

O Church of God, thine elect members shall all, in due time, be fetched in, however far they may have wandered!

[Isaiah 43:6-7](#). *I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth; Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.*

And that in a double sense, for God’s people are twice made; — made first in creation, but marred by the fall; and then new-made as “new creatures in Christ Jesus.”

[Isaiah 43:8](#). *Bring forth the blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that have ears.*

There are plenty of them, for our proverb is true, “There are none so blind as those that will not see, and none so deaf as those that will not hear.” But even to such people as these God makes his appeal.

[Isaiah 43:9](#). *Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled: who among them can declare this, and shew us former things? let them bring forth their witnesses, that they may be justified: or let them hear, and say, It is truth.*

God challenges all the false gods and their worshippers to produce a single fulfilled prophecy, — to show one instance in which they have truly and correctly foretold any event or a chain of event; but all Jehovah’s prophecies have been fulfilled, or will be, in due season.

[Isaiah 43:10-13](#). *Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that*

I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am the LORD and beside me there is no saviour. I have declared, and have saved, and I have shewed, when there was no strange god among you: therefore ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, that I am God. Yea, before the day was I am he; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand: I will work, and who shall let it?

It is a great blessing to know that the Lord is God; and not merely to know that as a matter of fact, but to feel it, to realize it, and to trust in God and act towards him conscious that he, and he alone, is the living and true God.

[Isaiah 43:14-17](#). *Thus saith the LORD, your redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; For your sake I have sent to Babylon, and have brought down all their nobles, and the Chaldeans, whose cry is in the ships. I am the LORD, your Holy One, the creator of Israel, your King. Thus saith the LORD, which maketh a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters; Which bringeth forth the chariot and horse, the army and the power; they shall lie down together, they shall not rise: they are extinct, they are quenched as tow.*

You know what happened to the army of Sennacherib when it came against Jerusalem. Horses and chariots were there in vast numbers, and all the pomp and pageantry of a vast host of armed men; but they slept their last sleep, from which they never rose again, when the angel of the Lord flew through their ranks. So was it with Babylon itself. When the set time came, that long-established empire, with its colossal power, was swept away like a vision of the night. It blazed like tow, and then was quenched for ever. What cannot God do for his people when he uplifts his almighty arm?

[Isaiah 43:18](#). *Remember ye not the former thing, neither consider the things of old..*

For something better is going to be done in the future than all that God has done in the past. He will eclipse all his previous achievements, and outdo the mightiest of his own miracles.

[Isaiah 43:19-20](#). *Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it. I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert. The beast of the field shall honour me,*

As it slakes its thirst at an unwonted spring, —

[Isaiah 43:20](#). *The dragons and the owls:*

Alarmed and startled, as God's people pass by on their way to the land which God would give them, —

[Isaiah 43:20-22](#). *Because I give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen. This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise. But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; —*

Have any of you restrained prayer of late? Has your path to the mercy-seat been but little trodden? Then, listen to God's gentle rebuke: "Thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob;" —

[Isaiah 43:22](#). *But thou hast been weary of me, O Israel.*

Weary of God! Have any of us grown weary of fellowship with him, weary of his truth, weary of his day, weary of his service? Oh, what strange ingratitude this is on our part!

[Isaiah 43:23](#). *Thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt offerings; neither hast thou honoured me with thy sacrifices.*

There are some of God's people, at any rate, who forget to offer their sacrifices unto God. If they do love Christ at all, their love is not practical, not self-sacrificing; it does not lead them to bring love-gifts unto him.

[Isaiah 43:23](#). *I have not caused thee to serve with an offering, nor wearied thee with incense.*

"I have made no irksome tax of it. I have not demanded anything of you. I have left it to your own free will to give according as your love suggests."

[Isaiah 43:24](#). *Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices: but —*

Alas! instead of good, there has been evil.

[Isaiah 43:24](#). *Thou hast made me to serve with thy sins,*

What! made God our servant, when we ought to have served him? Alas! I fear it is often so even with some of his own people.

[Isaiah 43:24](#). *Thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities.*

O sirs, how sad it is when God's people are weary of him and he is weary of them! What shall we read after this? Surely the next sentence will be a thunder-clap, and a lightning flash will blaze out of the sacred page! Listen, and be amazed at the mercy of the Lord.

[Isaiah 43:25](#). *I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.*

What a blessed God to deal so graciously with his ungrateful erring people!

Verses 14-28

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

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

[Isaiah 43:17](#). *Which bringeth forth the chariot and horse, the army and the power; they shall lie down together, they shall not rise: they are extinct, they are quenched as tow.*

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

[Isaiah 43:18-19](#). *Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the thing of old. Behold I will do a new thing;*

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

[Isaiah 43:19-20](#). *Now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert. The beast of the field shall honour me, the dragons and the owls: because I give waters, in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen.*

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

[Isaiah 43:21](#). *This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise.*

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

prevent it.

[Isaiah 43:22-24](#). *But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel. Thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt offerings; neither hast thou honoured me with thy sacrifices. I have not caused thee to serve with an offering, nor wearied thee with incense. Thou hast brought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices: but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities.*

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

[Isaiah 43:25-26](#). *I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for my own sake, and will not remember thy sins. Put me in remembrance. Let us plead together: declare thou, that thou mayest be justified.*

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

[Isaiah 43:27-28](#). *Thy first father hath sinned, and thy teachers have transgressed against me. Therefore I have profaned the princes of the sanctuary, and have given Jacob to the curse, and Israel to reproaches.*

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

This exposition consisted of readings from [Isaiah 43:14-28](#); and [Isaiah 44:1-8](#).

Verses 18-25

[Isaiah 43:18-19](#). *Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing: now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert.*

Do not imagine that what God has done in the past will never be repeated. It will be excelled: he will do yet greater things. Of all the mercy and love which God has shown, we may say that these are only prophecies of what he yet will reveal. There are now things yet to come wherein the splendor of his mercy shall be yet more clearly seen than in all the former things.

[Isaiah 43:20-21](#). *The beast of the field shall honour me, the dragons and the owls: because I give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert,*

to give drink to my people, my chosen. This people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise.

However barren may your soul be, and however all your surroundings may seem to be stamped with death, God can come and make you happy and blessed, and surround you with delights, and he will do it in order that in you, whom he has formed for himself, his praise may be seen.

[Isaiah 43:22](#). *But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob.*

Prayer has been neglected: praise has been suspended. There has been an ungracious negligence in the service of God. “Thou has not called upon me, O Jacob.”

[Isaiah 43:22](#). *But thou hast been weary of me, O Israel.*

“You thought the service long — thought the time for prayer came round too soon — refused to give to my cause, and said it was a tax. Thou hast been weary of me, O Israel.”

[Isaiah 43:23](#). *Thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt offerings; neither hast thou honoured me with thy sacrifices. I have not caused thee to serve with an offering, nor wearied thee with incense.*

“I have not taxed thee. I have not drawn upon thy resources heavily.”

[Isaiah 43:24](#). *Thou has bought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices:*

“I left thee to give or not to give, that thy free will might be seen in all thy deeds of love, but nothing has come of it. On the contrary.”

[Isaiah 43:24](#). *But thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities.*

A solemn charge this, which God lays against his people. Now see the next verse and read it with wondering eyes.

[Isaiah 43:25](#). *I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.*

He has pointed out the fault: he has shown that he is not forgetful of it; and then he pronounces absolution. The transgression is put away. Blessed be his name! Now let us turn to the New Testament, and read in the Epistle to the Romans, the 10th chapter, and we shall there see the way in which pardon is brought home to the soul.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Isaiah 42:1-17](#); [Isaiah 43:18-25](#); [Romans 10:1-19](#).

Verses 18-28

[Isaiah 43:18-19](#). *Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing;*

It is a very profitable thing to remember the things of old; it is greatly beneficial to us to study what God did in years and ages long gone by; yet God intends to do for us something in the future that shall eclipse all the past. Especially was this true in Isaiah's day, for the coming of Christ, which was then in the future, was to be such a sun-rising of mercy that all the stars of blessing, that had shone before, would seem to be lost in the brightness of his appearing. Dear friends, do not always dwell on the past. You who are getting gray are very apt to say that the former things and former times were better than now. Do not say so, but believe this promise of Jehovah, "Behold, I will do a new thing."

[Isaiah 43:19-20](#). *Now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert. The beast of the field shall honour me, the dragons and the owls.*

I have sometimes laid hold of this text, and have been comforted by it concerning the conversion of the very worst of men. Some people say, "What is the good of going among blasphemers and profane persons with the Word of God?" Well, if the beast of the field, and the dragons, and the owls, shall honour him, we need never think of leaving any of the sons of men to perish. It is not what they are, but what God is, that should give us confidence concerning them. Even if they were worse than they are, the omnipotent grace of God would still be able to reach them, and to convert them; let us have no doubt about this matter.

[Isaiah 43:20](#). *Because I give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen.*

Oh, the wonders of the love of God! Wherever he has a chosen people, there every mercy shall certainly come. If they are in the wilderness, waters shall come to them; if they are in the desert, rivers shall flow to them; but drink they shall have till they come where they can drink to the full at the living fountains of water at God's right hand.

[Isaiah 43:21](#). *This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise.*

Here is this same note again. Yet mark what kind of people they had been,-a people whom God had greatly loved, but who had backslidden from him. They had wandered very far away from God, yet still his purpose of love did not change: "This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew

forth my praise.” What a blessed “shall” that is, uttered by One who knows how to make it good by deeds of mighty grace!

[Isaiah 43:22](#). *But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel.*

They were not much like Jacob, for he prayed at Jabbok, and became Israel, who wrestled till he prevailed, saying to the angel, “I will not let thee go except thou bless me.” Yet here are people who hear the same name,-“Jacob” and “Israel “, yet God has to say to them, “Thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob. Thou hast been weary of me, O Israel.”

[Isaiah 43:23](#). *Thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt offerings; neither hast thou honoured me with thy sacrifices.*

Is that true of any of you? Have you restrained prayer, and have you also stunted God in your offering? Whereas he gave his Son for you, have you refused the small cattle of your burnt offerings?

[Isaiah 43:23](#). *I have not caused thee to serve with an offering, nor wearied thee with incense.*

“I have laid no tax upon you; I have not demanded so much of your income as the condition of your being members of my Church. I have left it to your love and gratitude to bring your freewill offerings unto me.”

[Isaiah 43:24](#). *Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money,*

No calamus or incense that should sweeten the temple of God,-

[Isaiah 43:24](#). *Neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices:*
but

Oh, this “but-but”!

[Isaiah 43:24](#). *Thou hast made me to serve with thy sins,*

You have made a servant of your Master,-treated your Redeemer as if he were your slave!

[Isaiah 43:24](#). *Thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities.*

Oh, what a terrible verse this is about a people whom God had formed for himself, and who shall yet show forth his praise! Alas! this is how they sometimes are still,-indifferent, ungrateful, presenting him no tokens of love; but, on the contrary, disobedient, grieving him, and vexing his Holy Spirit. What will he do with them now? “Cut them off, and reject them,” says one. Yes, that is how men would do; but that is not what God will do.

Listen

[Isaiah 43:25](#). *I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.*

You have forgotten his mercies; but he will forget your sins. You have grieved him, but he still has a tender heart towards you. He will blot out your sins. Oh, how this ought to melt us! How this ought to encourage us to begin again in better style, and to be much in prayer, and much in holy service, and much in self sacrifice!

[Isaiah 43:26-28](#). *Put me in remembrance: let us plead together: declare thou, that thou mayest be justified. Thy first father hath sinned, and thy teachers have transgressed against me. Therefore I have profaned the princes of the sanctuary, and have given Jacob to the curse, and Israel to reproaches.*

This exposition consisted of readings from [Isaiah 43:1-7](#); [Isaiah 43:18-28](#); and [Isaiah 44:1-2](#).

Verses 21-28

[Isaiah 43:21](#). *This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise.*

But A sorrowful “but”; and the strain sinks from a triumphant shout to a doleful lamentation: “But “ —

[Isaiah 43:22](#). *But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel.*

How sad it is that those who have been loved so much, should make such a shameful return for it all!

[Isaiah 43:23](#). *Thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt offerings;-*

No kids of the goats, or lambs from the fold, —

[Isaiah 43:23](#). *Neither hast thou honoured me with thy sacrifices. I have not caused thee to serve with an offering, nor wearied thee with incense.*

“I have not been a cruel taskmaster, or tyrant, demanding of thee more than thou couldst give.”

[Isaiah 43:24](#). *Thou hast brought me no sweet cane with money, —*

“No calamus has sent forth its perfume from mine altar,” —

[Isaiah 43:24](#). *Neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices: but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities.*

These are the people whom God had loved so long and so well, those upon whom he had set his unchanging affection; yet they acted thus shamefully. What will follow upon such conduct as this? their swift destruction? No. Listen to the Lord’s gracious message, —

[Isaiah 43:25](#). *I, even if, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.*

Here is a great wave of mercy washing away everything that could bear witness against the people of God.

[Isaiah 43:26-28](#). *Put me in remembrance: let us plead together: declare thou, that thou mayest be justified. Thy first father hath sinned, and thy teachers have transgressed against me. Therefore I have profaned the princes of the sanctuary, and have given Jacob to the curse, and Israel to reproaches.*

This exposition consisted of readings from [ISAIAH 43. 1-7](#); 21-28; And 44. 1-5.

[ISAIAH CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 44

Verse 1-2

[Isaiah 44:1-2](#). *Yet now hear, O Jacob my servant; and Israel, whom I have chose: Thus saith the LORD that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, which will help thee; Fear not, O Jacob, my servant; and thou, Jesurun, whom I have chosen.*

He comes back to that point again, you see: “Israel whom I have chosen, Thus saith the Lord that made thee.” See the deep argument for infinite love. God will not forsake the work of his own hands. “I have formed thee, and chosen thee; therefore, fear thou not, but come to me anew, and serve me henceforth with all thine heart.”

This exposition consisted of readings from [Isaiah 43:1-7](#); [Isaiah 43:18-28](#); and [Isaiah 44:1-2](#).

Verses 1-5

[Isaiah 44:1-5](#). *Yet now hear, O Jacob my servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen: Thus saith the Lord that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, which will help thee; Fear not, O Jacob, my servant; and thou, Jesurun, whom I have chosen. For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring: And they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses. One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall*

subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel.

There are different ways of making the same profession of attachment to the Lord. All do not acknowledge in the same way their faith in God, but it is a great blessing when our offspring do acknowledge it. Let us end our reading with that sweet blessing upon our children: “I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring. May it come to pass in all our families, for our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

This exposition consisted of readings from [ISAIAH 43. 1-7](#); 21-28; And 44. 1-5.

Verses 1-8

[Isaiah 44:1-3](#). *Yet now hear, O Jacob my servant and Israel, whom I have chosen. Thus saith the LORD, that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, which will help thee; Fear not, O Jacob, my servant; and thou, Jesurun, whom I have chosen. For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring:*

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

[Isaiah 44:4-5](#). *And they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses. One shall say, I am the LORD’S, and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the LORD, and, surname himself by the name of Israel.*

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

[Isaiah 44:6](#). *Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God.*

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

[Isaiah 44:7](#). *And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order fore, since I appointed the ancient people? and the things that are coming, and shall come, let them shew unto them.*

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

[Isaiah 44:8](#). *Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? ye are even my witnesses, is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any.*

This exposition consisted of readings from [Isaiah 43:14-28](#); and [Isaiah 44:1-8](#).

Verses 1-22

[Isaiah 44:1-2](#). *Yet now hear, O Jacob my servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen: Thus saith the LORD that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, which will help thee; Fear not, O Jacob, my Servant; and thou, Jesurum, whom I have chosen.*

God cannot bear his people to be sad, he delights to drive away fear, trembling, and mistrust. He loves faith, for faith brings confidence, hope, rest. So he says to us, "Fear not, fear not, be not afraid." It is God himself, who made us, and who chose us, who says to us, "Do not fear." Come, dear hearts, lay aside your disquietude, if God bids you cast away fear, will you not do it? Nothing hushes a babe to sleep like its mother's voice. Let God's voice hush you into sweet and blessed calm whenever you are troubled and full of fear.

[Isaiah 44:3](#). *For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground:*

God will never do anything by halves. He will not only send rain, but the waters shall pour down from the sky. He will not merely moisten the surface of the dry ground; he will send floods to saturate it. God is great in giving his grace. When once you reach the region of grace, you have entered the region of plenty, even the riches of God's unspeakable grace. If, dear friends, you have at this time no spiritual power, and unction, and favor, and love, you may have it, for here is the Lord's own promise, "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground."

[Isaiah 44:3](#). *I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring:*

Is that your great burden,--trouble about your boy? Does your dear girl grieve you? Well, he who blesses the father and the mother will bless the children; the God of Abraham is the God of Isaac. Pray that this promise may be fulfilled to you, that your need may get a share of that spirit of grace which has been given to you.

[Isaiah 44:4](#). *And they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses.*

You can track a stream by the willows; standing on a hill, and looking down the valley, you can tell where the little brook winds, for there are the willows. So shall it be with your children; they shall spring up by the waters of grace, and be a joy and a blessing.

[Isaiah 44:5](#). *One shall say, I am the Lord's*

That is the brave son who comes out boldly, and avows his faith: "One shall say, I am the Lord's."

[Isaiah 44:5](#). *And another shall call himself by the name of Jacob;*

That is the one who goes and joins the church, and does not say much about it; but he has united himself with the Lord's people: "and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob."

[Isaiah 44:5](#). *And another shall subscribe with his hand unto the LORD, and surname himself by the name of Israel.*

He cannot speak much, but he can write; he is not so bold as the others, perhaps, but he is quite as true: "Another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord." It does not so much matter how our children are converted so long as they really are converted, and as to the particular way in which they join the church, we have only to bid them seek the guidance of God's Word and his Spirit, and follow wheresoever they lead. Pray earnestly, dear friends, that the Lord will bless your children. I thank God that most of the members of the church, known to me, have their children saved; there are many families that are altogether in the church. There are others which have not that privilege yet, but, dear friends, you may have it; ask believingly, act faithfully, watch hopefully, and you shall see it joyfully ere long.

[Isaiah 44:6-7](#). *Thus saith the Lord the King of Israel, and his redeemer the Lord of hosts, I am the first, and I am the last, and beside me there is no God. And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since I appointed the ancient people and the things that are coming, and shall come, let them show unto them.*

Jehovah challenges the idol gods to utter a prophecy. Let them tell the future if they can; but they cannot. Prophecy is ever the mark of the one living and true God.

[Isaiah 44:8-11](#). *Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any. They that make a graven*

image are all of them vanity, and their delectable things shall not profit, and they are their own witnesses, they see not, nor know; that they may be ashamed. Who hath formed a god, or molten a graven image that is profitable for nothing? Behold, all his fellows shall be ashamed: and the workmen, they are of men: let them all be gathered together, let them stand up; yet they shall fear, and they shall be ashamed together.

Well they may. Men who pretend to make a god, ought to be ashamed.

[Isaiah 44:12](#). *The smith with the tongs both worketh in the coals, and fashioneth it with hammers, and worketh it with the strength of his arms:*

What irony! God-making, with hammers and bellows!

[Isaiah 44:12](#). *Yea, he is hungry,*

This god-maker is hungry!

[Isaiah 44:12](#). *And his strength faileth: he drinketh no water, and is faint.*

The god-maker is getting faint. There is a sarcasm about this description which ought to convince the most blind devotees of an idol.

[Isaiah 44:13](#). *The carpenter stretcheth out his rule, he marketh it out with a line; he fitteth it with planes, and he marketh it out with the compass, and maketh it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man; that it may remain in the house.*

A god in the house! A god shut up in a room! A god that has been made with compasses and planes! How ridiculous it seems!

[Isaiah 44:14](#). *He heweth him down cedars, and taketh the cypress and the oak, which he strengtheneth for himself among the trees of the forest: he planteth an ash, and the rain doth nourish it.*

The raw material for a god is an ash, a watery tree: “The rain doth nourish it.”

[Isaiah 44:15-17](#). *Then shall it be for a man to burn: for he will take thereof, and warm himself; yea, he kindleth it, and baketh bread, yea, he maketh a god, and worshippeth it, he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto. He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied: yea, he warmeth himself, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire: and the residue thereof he maketh a god,*

Oh, the folly of idolatry! Perhaps you do not see your own folly, you who are worshipping yourselves. A man who worships his belly is a worse idolater than the one who worships a god of wood. A man who worships gold and silver, if that gold and silver should take the shape of sovereigns

and shillings, is not a bit more justified in his idolatry than if he had made it into the shape of a calf, and had bowed before it in idolatrous homage and reverence.

[Isaiah 44:17-20](#). *Even his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth it, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou art my god. They have not known nor understood: for he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see; and their hearts, that they cannot understand. And none considereth in his heart, neither is there knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire; yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh, and eaten it: and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree? He feedeth on ashes:*

Mad people have been known to do even that, they have thrust cinders into their mouths; and this is what everybody does who is not trusting in the living God: “He feedeth on ashes.”

[Isaiah 44:20-21](#). *A deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand? Remember these, O Jacob and Israel;*

Think of these false gods, and be ashamed of them.

[Isaiah 44:21-22](#). *For thou art my servant: I have formed thee; thou art my servant: O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me. I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sin: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee.*

These wooden gods have done nothing of the sort. Come back to the true God, and worship him, and be happy in his love.

Verses 1-23

[Isaiah 44:1-2](#). *Yet now hear, O Jacob my servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen: Thus saith the LORD that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, which will help thee; Fear not, O Jacob, my servant; and thou, Jesurun, whom I have chosen.*

You see, the Lord goes on to show his people that, if they were in trouble, they had brought it upon themselves. If the sanctuary had been degraded, it was because both themselves and their teachers had transgressed against God. But, after he has justified his wrath, he still goes on to talk of mercy; and, oh with what plenteousness of love does he address these wandering people of his!

[Isaiah 44:3](#). *For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring:*

Here, O ye needy souls, ye who thirst after mercy is a rich promise for you! How plenteously does God bestow it! “I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground.” Your needs cannot be so great as the divine supply. All the Lord asks is that you should be willing to receive his mercy, willing that your emptiness should be filled out of his fullness.

[Isaiah 44:4](#). *And they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses.*

They shall spring up where there were none before, and grow very quickly. These are our young converts, I trust that we shall have many such springing up “as willows by the water courses”?

[Isaiah 44:5-6](#). *One shall say, I am the LORD’S, and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the LORD, and surname himself by the name of Israel. Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God.*

That is a great truth, always to be kept in mind, that there is no God beside Jehovah. Let us beware of ever attempting to set up, in our own hearts, any god save the one living and true God.

[Isaiah 44:7-12](#). *And who, as I, shall call and shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since I appointed the ancient people? and the things that are coming, and shall come, let them shew unto them. Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any. They that make a graven image are all of them vanity; and their delectable things shall not profit; and they are their own witnesses; they see not, nor know; that they may be ashamed. Who hath formed a god, or molten a graven image that is profitable for nothing? Behold, all his fellows shall be ashamed: and the workmen, they are of men: let them all be gathered together, let them stand up; yet they shall fear, and they shall be ashamed together. The smith —*

Note how the Lord holds up to mockery and scorn the makers of idol gods. He shows the process of god-making, the making of idol gods but his words may be equally well applied to the making of Virgin Mary and the

various saints, crucifixes, and all other lumber of this kind in the idolatry that galls itself Christian: “The smith” —

[Isaiah 44:12](#). *With the tongs both worketh in the coals, and fashioneth it with hammers, and worketh it with the strength of his arms: yea, he is hungry, and his strength faileth: he drinketh no water, and is faint.*

That is one of these god-makers, you see; a man who makes an idol god, yet who himself gets thirsty by reason of the heat of the coals in his forge. A fine god it must be that he makes! Next comes the carpenter.

[Isaiah 44:13-14](#). *The carpenter stretcheth out his rule; he marketh it out with a line; he fitteth it with planes, and he marketh it out with the compass, and maketh it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man; that it may remain in the house. He heweth him down cedars, and taketh the cypress and the oak, which he strengtheneth for himself among the trees of the forest: he planteth an ash, and the rain doth nourish it.*

They like some choice wood out of which to make their gods. So we see that these idol gods grow in the woods first, and then, afterwards, they need a carpenter’s rule, and line, and compass, and plane in order to shape them according to his taste, or the order of his customers.

[Isaiah 44:15-17](#). *Then shall it be for a man to burn: for he will take thereof, and warm himself, yea, he kindleth it, and baketh bread, yea, he maketh a god and worshippeth it; he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto. He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied: yea, he warmeth himself, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire: And the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth it, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou art my god.*

Did ever sarcasm — truthful and proper sarcasm — go further than this? Idolaters in various lands have frequently been convinced of the absurdity of their worship as they have read this very remarkable piece of inspired writing.

[Isaiah 44:18-19](#). *They have not known nor understood: for he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see; and their hearts, that they cannot understand. And none considereth in his heart, neither is there knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire; yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh, and eaten it: and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree?*

Shall I, an intelligent being, worship gold, silver, wood, or brass, however excellent may be the workmanship of it? Shall I, an immortal being, cast myself down before a piece of bread, and worship that, as some do who first worship, and then eat their god. Oh, what strange infatuation!

[Isaiah 44:20](#). *He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand!*

The prophet concludes that madness must have laid hold upon the minds of men, or they never could have fallen into the debasing superstitions which degrade them all over the world. Yet, even in this present century old superstitions have come back to our country; it is strange that here, where so many martyrs were burnt, the sons of these martyrs should actually be willing to go back again to the beggarly elements and superstitions of the olden times. The Lord have mercy upon this land, and deliver it from all forms of idol worship!

[Isaiah 44:21-22](#). *Remember these, O Jacob and Israel; for thou art my servant: I have formed thee, thou art my servant: O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me. I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee.*

Out of all the world, God had a chosen people, his own Israel, to whom he revealed himself, but they also turned aside unto idols, yet here he bids them return to him. Even to this day, they bear their protest against idols bravely. I would to God that they also knew the Christ of God, and worshipped him. All believers are the true Israel after the spirit, and are to maintain for ever the glory of the one only living and true God.

[Isaiah 44:23](#). *Sing, O ye heavens; for the LORD hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree the therein: for the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel.*

This exposition consisted of readings from [Isaiah 43:21-28](#); and [Isaiah 44:1-23](#).

Verses 1-28

In this chapter, God encourages his Church by a promise of the visitation of his Spirit. Oh, that it may be fulfilled to us also!

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

Jesurun, whom I have chosen. For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring:

That is exactly what we need. Oh, that God would thus revive his Church! A little while ago, you saw the earth become dry and brown and bare, the very pastures were chapped and parched, and opened their mouths to cry for rain. What could we have done if the clouds had still withheld their nourishment? But at last down came the refreshing showers, and all the face of nature was revived. What we have had upon our fields, we need upon our churches; nothing will do for our souls but a visitation of the Spirit. Let us pray for it. Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly rain, pour out thy life-giving treasures upon thirsty souls even as the floods have been poured out upon the dry ground. Here is a divine promise, let us plead it: "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring."

[Isaiah 44:4](#). *And they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses.*

You must often have noticed how you can trace the course of a brook by the willow trees that grow upon its banks. When you cannot see the brook from a distance, you can see the willows. So, wherever the Spirit of God comes, young people are converted, we see our children growing up in God's fear, and we know that this is the result of the Spirit's working.

[Isaiah 44:5-6](#). *One shall say, I am the LORD'S and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the LORD, and surname himself by the name of Israel. Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God.*

This is spoken in the Lord's usual majestic style; does it not remind you of the words of our Lord Jesus as recorded in the Book of the Revelation? "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty." How can he be less than divine who rightly adopts the same style which Jehovah uses in the Prophets: "I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God"?

[Isaiah 44:7](#). *And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since I appointed the ancient people? and the things that are coming, and shall come, let them shew unto them.*

The great God challenges all pretended gods to compete with him, and to show that they have ever prophesied or foretold the future. One of the greatest proofs of the inspiration of Scripture, and that our God is the only living and true God, is that the prophecies hitherto have been literally fulfilled. Go to Bashan, or to Edom, or to Sidon, or to Egypt, and wherever you go, you will see that whatsoever the Lord said concerning the ancient nations and peoples and cities has been carried out to the very letter.

[Isaiah 44:8](#). *Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God, I know not any.*

“There is no God” in the world but Jehovah, the one living and true God whom we adore.

Now follows that very wonderful passage descriptive of the making of idols, which we have often read. If there are any of you who worship crosses, and crucifixes, or any other visible objects, please to recollect that God’s command is spoken as much to you as to any other idolaters. We may not worship anything that can be seen or handled, for this is the law laid down by God himself: “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them.” Here, then, is God’s description of idol gods

[Isaiah 44:9](#). *They that make a graven image are all of them vanity;*

They must be very empty-headed and foolish people, or they would not worship a thing which they have graven with their own hands.

[Isaiah 44:9](#). *And their delectable things shall not profit; and they are their own witnesses; they see not, nor know; that they may be ashamed.*

Idolaters are just as wooden and doltish as their idols, or else they would know better than to worship them.

[Isaiah 44:10-12](#). *Who hath formed a god, or molten a graven image that is profitable for nothing? Behold, all his fellows shall be ashamed: and the workmen, they are of men: let them all be gathered together, let them stand up; yet they shall fear, and they shall be ashamed together. The smith with the tongs both worketh in the coals, and fashioneth it with hammers and worketh it with the strength of his arms: yea, he is hungry, and his strength faileth: he drinketh no water, and is faint.*

Here is a god-maker, with his tongs, and his coals, and his hammers; yet this god-maker gets hungry and faint! Here comes another.

[Isaiah 44:13](#). *The carpenter stretcheth out his rule; he marketh it out with a line; he fitteth it with planes, and he marketh it out with the compass, and maketh it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man; that it may remain in the house.*

Fancy a god-maker with his rule and his line, his planes and his compasses! What fine irony there is here.

[Isaiah 44:14](#). *He heweth him down cedars, and taketh the cypress and the oak, which he strengtheneth for himself among the trees of the forest; he planteth an ash, and the rain doth nourish it.*

The forest is growing stuff to make gods with out of ash, and oak, and cedar, and cypress.

[Isaiah 44:15](#). *Then shall it be for a man to burn: for he will take thereof, and warm himself;*

He cuts up part of the tree for fuel, and warms himself with it.

[Isaiah 44:15-17](#). *Yea, he kindleth it, and baketh bread; yea, he maketh a god, and worshippeth it; he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto. He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied: yea, he warmeth himself, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire: and the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth it, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou art my god.*

And have not we seen hundreds of persons adoring a doll, or a little picture said to be a likeness of the virgin, or something of that kind? Ah, me! that even under the garb of Christianity the lowest kind of idolatry should still be common amongst our fellow men; God grant that none of us may ever fall into this deadly evil!

[Isaiah 44:18-20](#). *They have not known nor understood: for he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see; and their hearts, that they cannot understand. And none considereth in his heart, neither is there knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire; yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh, and eaten it: and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree? He feedeth on ashes:*

As madmen will sometimes devour ashes, so surely men who worship things that they have made or bought must be mad: "He feedeth on ashes."

[Isaiah 44:20](#). *A deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?*

If thou shalt worship the crucifix, or anything else that is visible, thou art dishonouring thyself, and thou art breaking the law of God. Remember that, “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” He will have no similitude. This he abhorreth with his whole heart, and will hold no one guiltless who worships an idol of any kind. Even though the man has reverentially and sincerely bowed before it, he is transgressing against God. These are the false gods; now we shall read of the one true God

[Isaiah 44:21](#). *Remember these, O Jacob and Israel; for thou art my servant: I have formed thee;*

“Thou hast not formed me, as these idolaters make their gods; but I have formed thee.”

[Isaiah 44:21](#). *Thou art my servant: O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me.*

God does not forget his people. If you are trusting in him, you may forget him through your infirmity, but because of his infinite love, he will never forget you.

[Isaiah 44:22](#). *I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud; thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee.*

First he pardoned their sins, and then he bade them return unto him. What a wonder of mercy this is—free grace removing sin, and then the sweet constraints of gratitude drawing the forgiven sinner near his God!

[Isaiah 44:23](#). *Sing, O ye heavens, for the LORD hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel.*

Pardoned sin is enough to make even the rocks sing; mountains, trees, forests, and even the lower parts of the earth, are made to echo with song when sin is blotted out.

[Isaiah 44:24](#). *Thus saith the LORD, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the LORD that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself;*

God does everything by his own unaided strength. With whom took he counsel when he formed the universe? Who instructed the Ever blessed

when he made the heavens and the earth! He did it all by his own wisdom and power.

[Isaiah 44:25](#). *That frustrateth the tokens of the liars, and maketh diviners mad: that turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish;*

This is what he does to those who boast and think that they know better than he does. But simple hearts, that will believe his Word, shall know his will, and shall grow wise unto salvation.

[Isaiah 44:26-28](#). *That confirmeth the word of his servant, and performeth the counsel of his messengers; that saith to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited; and to the cities of Judah, Ye shall be built, and I will raise up the decayed places thereof: That saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers: That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.*

This Book of the prophet Isaiah was written long before the days of Cyrus; yet he is here mentioned by name, and the prophecy of what he would do is here given. We know how completely this prophecy was fulfilled; and the Lord who uttered it, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, is our God for ever and ever. He shall be our guide even unto death, blessed be his holy name! Amen.

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CHAPTER 45

Verses 1-16

[Isaiah 45:1-4](#). *Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut; I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron: And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the LORD, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel. For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine*

elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me.

Long before the period of Cyrus's birth, this prophecy was written by Isaiah, and surely it must have flashed solemn conviction upon the heart of the king when he came to read words like these, in which his very name was mentioned, and all his exploits and successes, with which he vanquished his enemies, captured their strong places, and cut the gates of brass in pieces. Our God has all things present before him. To him there is no future. All things are in one eternal now with him, and hence he tells to his prophets the things that shall be.

[Isaiah 45:5](#). *I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me:*

It is a wonderful subject — the providential government of God over princes and potentates that know him not — how he raised up Cyrus on the behalf of his people, that they might be delivered; and though Cyrus did not know it, yet was he, as it were, an instrument in the hand of God — moved according to the divine will.

[Isaiah 45:6-7](#). *That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the LORD, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness, I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things.*

It was to correct the Persian mistake into which Cyrus had fallen of a duplicate deity — one power creating light and another power creating darkness. “No,” says Jehovah, “I am God alone.”

[Isaiah 45:8-9](#). *Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together; I the LORD have created it. Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker!*

As many do in these days. Tongue-valiant men, who dare accuse the Most High and arraign him at their bar.

[Isaiah 45:9](#). *Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth.*

Let them strive with their equals, but who is he that shall come into conflict with the eternal God?

[Isaiah 45:9-10](#). *Shall the clay say to him that fashioned it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands? Woe unto him that saith unto his father, What begettest thou? or to the woman, What hast thou brought forth?*

Quarreling with God is waste of time, is audacity and presumption. It must end in disaster to us, for the Lord is Lord of all.

[Isaiah 45:11-13](#). *Thus saith the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask me of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me. I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded. I have raised him*

That is Cyrus.

[Isaiah 45:13-14](#). *Up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways: he shall build my city, and he shall let go my captives, not for price nor reward, saith the LORD of hosts. Thus saith the LORD, The labour of Egypt, and merchandise of Ethiopia and of the Sabeans, men of stature, shall come over unto thee, and they shall be thine: they shall come after thee: in chains shall they come over, and they shall fall down unto thee, they shall make supplication unto thee, saying, Surely God is in thee; and there is none else, there is no God.*

No other God. The day shall come in which this shall all be true, when men shall relinquish their idols, and believe in that one great invisible God, the maker of all things. For the present we see not this.

[Isaiah 45:15](#). *Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour.*

Throughout these long and weary years, man has forgotten or blasphemed his Maker, and God has sat still and borne it in the majestic patience of his infinity.

[Isaiah 45:16](#). *They shall be ashamed, and also confounded, all of them: they shall go to confusion together that are makers of idols.*

Verses 1-25

The first paragraph concerns Cyrus, and the great work for which God raised him up.

[Isaiah 45:1-4](#). *Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut; I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron: And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the LORD, which call thee by thy*

name, am the God of Israel. For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called the by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me.

A remarkable prophecy, issued long before the time of Cyrus, foretelling that he should conquer Babylon, and destroy it; and, though for many a day Cyrus knew nothing about the Most High God, yet was he used, in the Lord's hand, for wonderful purposes. Sometimes, a man may have been used of God for great ends without his own knowledge. When, however, he comes to the discovery of that fact, as he may if he will but think it over, should he not reverently bow before the Most High, and worship him who, though unknown to him, had been his Helper and his Friend?

[Isaiah 45:5-6](#). *I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me. That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the LORD, and there is none else.*

Those who believe in idols think that there may be lords many and gods many, but he who is a true follower of Jehovah knows that there can be no other god beside him. He filleth all space, and there is no room for another. There is but one Creator, one Preserver, and one God, who alone is to be worshipped.

[Isaiah 45:7](#). *I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil. I the LORD do all these things.*

Cyrus was a believer in two gods, — one the god of light, and the other the god of darkness. Hence this declaration from God's servant, the prophet, that there was no prince of darkness who was a god, but that all things were made by the one Most High God.

[Isaiah 45:8-11](#). *Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together; I the LORD have created it. Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands? Woe unto him that saith unto his father, What begettest thou? or to the woman, What hast thou brought forth? Thus saith the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask me of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me.*

Note the tone which God uses. He speaks like a God, and claims to be above the questioning of his creatures. These verses remind us of what the apostle Paul wrote: “Nay but, O man, who art thou that replies against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? “God is the great Sovereign over all, and he claims a sovereign’s place. He doeth as he wills, but he always wills to do that which is just and right.

[Isaiah 45:12-17](#). *I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded. I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways: he shall build my city, and he shall let go my captives, not for price nor reward, saith the LORD of hosts. Thus saith the LORD, The labour of Egypt, and merchandise of Ethiopia and of the Sabeans, men of stature, shall come over unto thee, and they shall be thine: they shall come after thee; in chains they shall come over, and they shall fall down unto thee, they shall make supplication unto thee, saying, surly God is in thee; and there is none else, there is no God. Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour. They shall be ashamed, and also confounded, all of them: they shall go to confusion together that are makers of idols. But Israel shall be saved in the LORD with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end.*

If you are God’s people, you have a God of whom you need never be ashamed, and one who will not leave you to be ashamed of your confidence and hope. Those that trust to false gods will be ashamed; those that rest upon themselves will be confounded; but stay thyself upon God, O man, and thou shalt never be ashamed, world without end!

[Isaiah 45:18-19](#). *For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD and there is none else. I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain; I the LORD speak righteousness, I declare things that are right.*

Here is the glory of our God, — that his every word is true, and that he has never said, in any place, that which contradicts what he has spoken in public to his people. You may safely rest upon the God who is always the same, who never plays fast and loose with his promises, or speaketh

anything in secret contrary to his pledged word. He is as true as he is sovereign; therefore, stay yourselves upon him.

[Isaiah 45:20-21](#). *Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, ye that are escaped of the nations: they have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god that cannot save. Tell ye, and bring them near, yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I the LORD?*

He challenges all the idols to prove that they had uttered any true prophecy, — that they had spoken about Cyrus, or anybody else, from ancient times, so that the prophecy was literally fulfilled. There were dark double-meaning oracles, with which the false priests mocked their votaries, but the true words of God — his ancient prophecies — proved him to be the only real and true God.

[Isaiah 45:21-23](#). *And there is no God else beside me, a just God and a Saviour. there is none beside me. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.*

Glory be to God, it will be so in the latter days. It shall come to pass that the truth shall be universally triumphant, and the one God, who made the heavens and the earth, shall be worshipped both by heaven and by earth, without any discordant note.

[Isaiah 45:24-25](#). *Surely, shall one say, in the LORD have I righteousness and strength even to him shall men come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed. In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.*

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Isaiah Chapter 46

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER 48

Verses 1-22

[Isaiah 48:1](#). *Hear ye this, O house of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel, and are come forth out of the waters of Judah, which swear by the name of the LORD, and make mention of the God of Israel, but not in truth, nor in righteousness.*

There always were false professors, and I suppose there always will be till Christ comes. A Judas was among the twelve apostles, and we cannot wonder that we find such in every church, but what a dreadful thing it is to wear the name of God, and yet not really to serve him, to be called Christians, and yet not to be like Christ! It must be a very God-provoking thing to be called by his name, and then insult it by not being true to it.

[Isaiah 48:2](#). *For they call themselves of the holy city, and stay themselves upon the God of Israel; The LORD of hosts is his name.*

They profess to trust him, but they do not love him; “they call themselves of the holy city,” but they certainly are not holy citizens. Ah me that God should have to speak to men upon such a matter as this! It is self-evidently wicked, but they will not see it.

[Isaiah 48:3](#). *I have declared the former things from the beginning; and they went forth out of my mouth, and I shewed them; I did them suddenly, and they came to pass.*

There is no better proof that God is God than that his prophecies have been fulfilled. Only the eternal can see into the future. He has done so, and every word of his either has been fulfilled, or will yet be fulfilled.

[Isaiah 48:4-5](#). *Because I knew that thou art obstinate, and thy neck is an iron sinew, and thy brow brass; I have even from the beginning declared it to thee: before it came to pass I shewed it thee: lest thou shouldest say, Mine idol hath done them, and my graven image, and my molten image, hath commanded them.*

See the care of God towards the most obstinate of men. He knows that they will pervert things, so he prevents them as far as it is possible to do so. He tells them what is to happen, that they may not afterwards say that their idol gods have done it. Ah, dear friends, God has taken great interest in many of us! He has, as it were, laid his plans to keep us out of sin; and yet often we have broken out, and have gone over hedge and ditch in the ways of sin. We have seemed resolved to do evil; we have been desperately set on mischief; hence he speaks of us as being “obstinate.” “Thy neck is an iron

sinew, and thy brow brass.” Will God ever speak in mercy to such people as these? We shall see as we read on.

[Isaiah 48:6-8](#). *Thou hast heard, see all this; and will not ye declare it? I have shewed thee new things from this time, even hidden things, and thou didst not know them. They are created now, and not from the beginning, even before the day when thou heardest them not; lest thou shouldst say, Behold, I knew them. Yea, thou heardest not; yea, thou knewest not; yea, from that time that thine ear was not opened: for I knew that thou wouldst deal very treacherously, and wast called a transgressor from the womb.*

What a description! Treacherous, false, yea, very treacherous, beyond the usual degree of treachery; transgressors from our very birth, inured in sin. The very heart is wrong, and all that comes out of us is, therefore, wrong. And now, what follows?

[Isaiah 48:9](#). *For my name’s sake will I defer mine anger, and for my praise will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off.*

“I cannot spare thee for thine own sake; but I will spare thee for my name’s sake. I cannot spare thee because of anything good in thee; but I will spare thee because of good in myself.” If God can glorify himself by your salvation, he finds a blessed motive for saving you, and, since there is no desert in you, he will fall back upon his own glory, and save you for his own name’s sake.

[Isaiah 48:10](#). *Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.*

Thou sinful one, yet one of his own children, he will refine thee again and again, and he will glorify himself by saving thee.

[Isaiah 48:11](#). *For mine own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it: for how should my name be polluted? and I will not give my glory unto another.*

This verse ought to ring like music in the ear of one who is seeking mercy, and who cannot find out how mercy can come to him.

[Isaiah 48:12-13](#). *Hearken unto me, O Jacob and Israel, my called; I am he; I am the first, I also am the last. Mine hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand hath spanned the heavens: when I call unto them, they stand up together.*

What a great God is he whose right hand spanned the heavens, making the arch of the sky, as it were, with the span of his hand!

[Isaiah 48:14](#). *All ye, assemble yourselves, and hear, which among them hath declared these things?*

He still dwells upon prophecy. God claims that he is God because he foretold all that happened, which the idol gods could not do.

[Isaiah 48:14-15](#). *The LORD hath loved him: he will do his pleasure on Babylon, and his arm shall be on the Chaldeans. I, even I, have spoken; yea, I have called him: I have brought him, and he shall make his way prosperous. Come ye near unto me, hear ye this, I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am I: and now the Lord God, and his Spirit, hath sent me. Thus saith the LORD, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go. O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments!*

God again breaks out in lamentations over his wandering people! Not only is he ready to forgive them; but he grieves to think that they should have brought so much sorrow on themselves.

[Isaiah 48:18-19](#). *Then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea: thy seed also had been as the sand, and the offspring of thy bowels like the gravel thereof; his name should not have been cut off nor destroyed from before me.*

All manner of possible good would have been yours had you not rebelled against God; and as you have lost it, God grieves that it should be so.

[Isaiah 48:20](#). *Go ye forth of Babylon, flee ye from the Chaldeans, with a voice of singing declare ye, tell this, utter it even to the end of the earth, say ye, The LORD hath redeemed his servant Jacob.*

What a grand message for anyone to tell! Tell it, tell it, tell it everywhere, that Jehovah hath redeemed his people.

[Isaiah 48:21](#). *And they thirsted not when he led them through the deserts:*

Neither shall you thirst, O redeemed one, when you are in the desert!

[Isaiah 48:21](#). *He caused the waters to flow out of the rock for them:*

Most unlikely places shall yield you succor.

[Isaiah 48:21](#). *He clave the rock also, and the waters gushed out.*

And yet, to finish up the chapter, stands this remarkable sentence: —

[Isaiah 48:22](#). *There is no peace, saith the LORD, unto the wicked.*

O God, have mercy upon us, and let us not be numbered with them!

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 49

Verses 1-17

In this chapter, we have not merely Isaiah speaking concerning the Christ of God; but it is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah, who here speaks concerning himself.

Isaiah 49:1. *Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye people, from far;*

It is very remarkable how constantly the isles are spoken of in this Book of Isaiah, as if it had been foreseen that, in these far-off islands of the sea, the name of Jesus would be greatly magnified. "Listen," says the Messiah, "O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye people, from far."

Isaiah 49:1. *The LORD hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name.*

Christ Jesus our Lord was spoken of by the spirit of prophecy from his very birth, and long before it; and when he did come into the world, and was born of the Virgin Mary, the stars of heaven spake concerning him, and guided the wise men from the East to the place where the young child lay.

Isaiah 49:2. *And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword;*

There are no words anywhere so piercing as the words of our Lord Jesus Christ. When you are giving quotations from various authors, you need never write the name "Jesus" at the bottom of any of his words, for they proclaim their own origin. "Never man spake like this man."

Isaiah 49:2. *In the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me polished shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me;*

The great weapon of God against sin is his Son Jesus Christ. God has no such means of smiting evil, or effecting his purposes of love, as his own dear Son. This is the "polished shaft" which Jehovah delights to use.

Isaiah 49:3. *And said unto me, Thou art my servant,*

Above all others, Christ is the servant of God. He is a Son by nature, a servant by his condescension, a servant for our sakes.

Isaiah 49:3. *O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.*

It is very wonderful that the Redeemer should here be called "Israel." It is not more wonderful, however, than that in another place his people should be called by his name. You remember those two passages in the

prophecy of Jeremiah: “This is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS,” and “This is the name wherewith he shall be called, The LORD our righteousness.” There, the people of God take their Lord’s name; and here, Christ takes the name of his people, and himself deigns to be called Israel. Nor is this an unsuitable name for him, for it is he who wrestled on our behalf, and prevailed even as Israel did at Jabbok. Jesus is a greater Prince with God than Jacob ever was. Well, then, doth Jehovah say to him, “Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.”

[Isaiah 49:4](#). *Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for naught, and in vain: yet surely my judgment is with the LORD, and my work with my God.*

The Messiah, prophetically looking forward, complained that, during his life on earth, he seemed to labour in vain. The nation was not saved: “he came unto his own, and his own received him not.” He wept over the guilty city of Jerusalem; but those tears did not put out the fires of vengeance. He entreated men to turn to God, but they did not and they would not repent. He seemed to labour in vain, and spend his strength for nought, and in vain.

[Isaiah 49:5](#). *And now, saith the LORD that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, and my God shall be my strength.*

Even though the Jewish nation be not yet gathered to Christ, his labour was not in vain. God will not suffer his Son to spend his strength for nought.

[Isaiah 49:6](#). *And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.*

What a blessed word of cheer this is for us poor Gentiles! The favored children of Israel thought us to be little better than dogs; and, behold, we have been lifted up into the children’s place. If Israel be not gathered, the Messiah hath become a light to the Gentiles, and God’s salvation unto the ends of the earth. Yet we cannot help fervently praying, “Oh, that Israel might soon be gathered to Christ!” Her ingathering will be the time of the fullness of the Gentiles.

[Isaiah 49:7](#). *Thus saith the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth,*

Who is this but our Divine Lord, Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ of God? These words are spoken of him whom man despised, of him who was despised and rejected of men, of him whom the nation abhorreth, for that favored nation still, alas! abhors the name of Jesus of Nazareth, and will not cherish towards the Christ anything but thoughts of contempt.

[Isaiah 49:7](#). *To a servant of rulers,*

For, though he was the King of kings, and Lord of lords, he submitted to be a servant to the kings of the earth, and obeyed the rules of human governors. Yet,-

[Isaiah 49:7](#). *Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the LORD that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and he shalt choose thee.*

The day is coming when he that was spit upon shall be the admired of all mankind. No more the crown of thorns, but many diadems of glory shall rest upon his blessed head; and all men, with loud acclaim, shall salute him as King of kings and Lord of lords.

[Isaiah 49:8](#). *Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee; and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages;*

It is the Lord Jesus Christ who shall establish all that is good, and cast down everything that is evil. He shall staunch earth's bleeding wounds, and repair her wilderness wastes. Where he comes, flowers spring up all around his blessed feet.

[Isaiah 49:9](#). *That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places.*

When Christ leads his flock, wherever they go they shall feed; and even if he leads them to the very tops of the hills, he shall make the pastures grow there for them. There is never a place where Christ leadeth us but what it is safe for us to go there. The Shepherd's feet make pasturage for the sheep that follow him; therefore, be not afraid to go wherever he leads you, but rather rejoice that he putteth forth his own sheep, and goeth before them, for "they shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places."

[Isaiah 49:10-11](#). *They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them. And I will make all my mountains a way,*

Where, naturally, there could not be a way, on those pathless summits of the loftiest Alps, the Lord says, “I will make all my mountains a way,”-

[Isaiah 49:11](#). *And my highways shall be exalted.*

“I will throw up causeways.” God will make a way for you to get at him if you want to get at him. If you are willing to make a way for God, he will make a way for you; the gulf shall be bridged, the mountain shall be leveled.

[Isaiah 49:12](#). *Behold, these shall come from far: and, lo, these from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim.*

“The land of Sinim” signifies China. Is it not strange that, in this Book, we should find mention of the land of Sinim, the country of China? But God has a people there, and they shall come to him. I was delighted, last Tuesday, to meet with a brother who had broken bread with us at the Lord’s table; he was a poor Chinaman, so he had helped to fulfill this prophecy:

“These shall come from the west; and these from the land of Sinim.”

[Isaiah 49:13-15](#). *Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the LORD hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted. But Zion said, The LORD hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.*

Will God ever forget his ancient people, the Jews? Never! They forget their God, but Jehovah never forgets his chosen people: “They may forget, yet will I not forget thee.”

[Isaiah 49:16](#). *Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands;*

“I cannot work, I cannot even open the palm of my hand without seeing the memorials of my chosen people: ‘I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands.’”

[Isaiah 49:16-17](#). *Thy walls are continually before me. Thy children shall make haste; thy destroyers and they that made thee waste shall go forth of thee.*

For God is full of kindness to his people, and cannot forget them. Oh, that they would never forget him!

Verses 1-23

[Isaiah 49:1-2](#). *Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye people, from far; the Lord hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name. And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me;*

Our Lord Jesus, that great Prophet of the Church, was in a special manner the Lord's in the matter of his birth. A wondrous holy mystery hangs about his birth at Bethlehem, — he was, in that respect, the Lord's in a very remarkable sense. "He hath made my mouth like a sharp sword." You know how our Lord's mouth, or the Word of his gospel that issues from his mouth, is like a sharp sword — how it conquers, — how it cuts its way, — how, wherever it comes, it pierces "even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." "In the shadow of his hand hath he hid me." You know how the protecting hand of God ever covered Christ, and how his gospel is ever sheltered by the providence of God.

[Isaiah 49:3](#). *And said unto me, Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.*

It is wonderful condescension on Christ's part to take the name of his Church so that he himself is called "Israel" in this passage; and there is another passage, equally remarkable, where the Church is allowed to take one of the names of Christ: "This is the name wherewith she shall be called, The Lord our righteousness." Such an intermingling of interests, such a wonderful unit is there between Christ and his Church, that these twain are truly one.

[Isaiah 49:4](#). *Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain: yet surely my judgment is with the LORD, and my work with my God.*

Our Saviour did, in his earthly ministry, to a large extent labour in vain. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." He was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, yet how few of them recognized him as the good Shepherd. He told his disciples that, after he returned to his Father, those who believed in him should do even greater things than he had done. That promise was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost; and since then it has been fulfilled over and over again in the history of the Christian Church.

[Isaiah 49:5](#). *And now, saith the LORD that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, and my God shall be my strength.*

What though the Jews still reject the Messiah, their sin does not affect his honour. His glory is still as great as ever it was in the esteem of the Most High.

[Isaiah 49:6](#). *And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.*

What a blessed passage this is for you and for me, beloved! Strangers to the commonwealth of Israel were we; but, now, we who were afar off are made nigh by the blood of Jesus, and so are made fellow-heirs with the seed of Abraham, partakers of the self-same covenant blessing as the father of the faithful enjoys. In this let us exceedingly rejoice; and for this, let us praise and magnify the name of the Lord.

[Isaiah 49:7](#). *Thus saith the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, —*

What a true picture this is of the way in which the Jews still treat the promised Messiah! To this day, they gnash their teeth at the very mention of the name of Jesus of Nazareth; and the bitterest words of blasphemy that are ever uttered by human lips come from the mouth of Israel against the Lord Jesus: “him whom the nation abhorreth,” —

[Isaiah 49:7](#). *To a servant of rulers, Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the LORD that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee.*

The Father has chosen Christ to be the precious corner-stone of the eternal temple, and he has also chosen all the living stones that are to be joined to him for ever.

[Isaiah 49:8-9](#). *Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages; that thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places.*

Dear brethren, what honour the Lord has put upon Christ! In proportion as he has been the despised of men, and the abhorred of the Jewish nation, God has made him to be his own delight, his Well-beloved. He displays through him the marvels of his saving power for his own glory. I pray that it may be displayed in our midst just now, and in the way mentioned here: “I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages; that thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness. Shew yourselves.” Come, beloved, after you receive such a message as this from God’s mouth, what prison can hold you? What darkness can conceal you? The word of Christ shall break your bonds asunder, and change your darkness into the glory of noonday. May this gracious work be done for any of you. who are prisoners here!

[Isaiah 49:10](#). *They shall not hunger nor thirst; —*

To the woman at the well, Christ said, “Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst.” That is a parallel to this passage:

“They shall not hunger nor thirst; “ —

[Isaiah 49:10](#). *Neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them.*

Oh, the wondrous sweetness of these exceeding great and precious promises! They are all concerning Christ, you see; undoubtedly, they are given with an eye to us, but yet much more with an eye to him, that he may be glorified in the deliverance and guidance of his people, in the protection of them from danger, and in the abundant provision for the supply of all their needs. It would not be for Christ’s honour to let you die of thirst, poor thirsty one; it would not glorify him to lead you where there were no springs of water. Be sure, then, that God will always do that which will glorify his Son, and he will therefore deal well with you for his sake.

[Isaiah 49:11-12](#). *And I will make all my mountains a way, and my highways shall be exalted. Behold, these shall come from far and, lo, these from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim.*

From far-away China, they must come to Christ; the result of his death is not left to haphazard. Some say that his death did something or other, which, somehow or other, will benefit somebody or other; but we never speak: in that indefinite way. We know that Christ, by his death, did eternally redeem his people, and we are quite sure that he will have all those

for whom he laid down the ransom price. He died with a clear intent, a definite purpose; and for the joy that was set before him, he “endured the cross, despising the shame.” “He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.” The divine intent and purpose of the death of Christ cannot possibly be frustrated. He reigneth from the tree, and he shall win and conquer world without end.

[Isaiah 49:13](#). *Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the Lord hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted.*

How? Why, by the very coming of Christ, by his birth at Bethlehem, and all the blessings which come with the Incarnate God, his afflicted ones are consoled, and all his people are divinely comforted. Shall we not, then, rejoice in Christ, who is himself so full of joy that he teaches the very heavens to sing, and the mountains to break forth into praise?

[Isaiah 49:14](#). *But Zion said, —*

Hear the lament of the poor Jewish Church, like a castaway left all alone, —

[Isaiah 49:14](#). *The LORD hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me.*

When we are glad In the Lord, and are singing out our heart’s joy, there is pretty sure to be someone or other who sorrowfully sighs,” The Lord hath forsaken me.” — People say that there never was a feast so well furnished but that somebody went away unsatisfied; but God will not have it so at his festivals; and hence, the rest of the chapter shows how the Lord comforted this poor Zion, whose lamentation and mourning he had heard. Notice how he begins: —

[Isaiah 49:15](#). *Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?*

“Can a woman” — the tenderer parent of the two, — “forget her child,” —her own child, her feeble little child that still depends upon her for its nutriment and life, — “her sucking child,” — .

[Isaiah 49:15](#). *Yea, they may forget, —*

It is just possible; there have been such monstrosities: “they may forget,” —

[Isaiah 49:15](#). *Yet will I not forget thee.*

“Yet, saith the Lord, should nature change,
And mothers monsters prove,

Sion still dwells upon the heart Of everlasting love.”

How that gracious assurance should comfort the little handful, the “remnant weak and small” of God’s people among the Jews! How it should also comfort any of God’s servants who are under a cloud, and who have lost for a while the enjoyment of his presence!

[Isaiah 49:16](#). *Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; —*

Where they must be seen, and where he can do nothing without touching his people while doing it. When a name is engraven on the hand with which a man works, that name goes into his work, and leaves its impress on the work.

[Isaiah 49:16-17](#). *Thy walls are continually before me. Thy children shall make haste; thy destroyers and they that made thee waste shall go forth of thee.*

Jerusalem, the very Jerusalem that is in Palestine, shall be rebuilt. God will remember her walls, and the Church of God in Israel shall yet rise from that sad low estate in which it has been these many centuries; and all God’s cast-down ones shall be comforted, and his churches, that seem to be left to die, shall be raised up again, for our God is no changeling. His heart does not come and go towards the sons of men.

“Whom once he loves, he never leaves,
But loves them to the end.”

[Isaiah 49:18](#). *Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold: all these gather themselves together, and come to thee.*

What are all converted Gentiles doing, after all, but coming to the one Church? It is no longer a matter of Jew or Gentile, but all who believe are one in Christ Jesus. Let poor Zion rejoice that she herself is enriched by the conversion of these far-off sinners of the Gentiles.

[Isaiah 49:18](#). *As I live, saith the LORD, thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them on thee, as a bride doeth.*

Converts are the garments of the church, her bridal array, her ornaments and her jewels. I wish that all churches thought so; but many of them think that gorgeous architecture, the garnishing of the material building in which they meet, and the sound of sweet music, and the smell of fragrant incense and choice flowers, make up the dignity and glory of a church; but they do no such thing. Converts are the true glory of a church: “Thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all, as with an ornament; and bind them on thee, as a bride doeth.”

[Isaiah 49:19-20](#). *For thy waste and thy desolate places, and the land of thy destruction, shall even now be too narrow by reason of the inhabitants, and they that swallowed thee up shall be far away. The children which thou shalt have, after thou hast lost the other, —*

The children of thy childlessness, — so it runs, — the children of thy widowhood. It was strange that she should have children then; it is not so among in m, but it is so with the Church of God: “The children which thou shalt have, after thou hast lost the other,” —

[Isaiah 49:20-23](#). *Shall say again in thine ears, The place is too strait for me: give place to me that I may dwell. Then shalt thou say in thine heart, Who hath begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and removing to and fro? and who hath brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; these, where had they been? Thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people: and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders. And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers: they shall bow down to thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet; —*

I have heard this passage quoted as a reason why there should be a State Church, — that kings should nourish the Church, — Henry VIII., for instance, and George IV. It was poor milk, I am sure, that they ever gave the Church of God. Yet I have no objection whatever to this text being carried out to the full, — ay, to the very letter, — only mind where the kings are to be put. What place does the verse say that they are to occupy? “They shall bow down to thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet.” There is no headship of the Church here, nothing of that sort; the kings are to be at the feet of the Church, and that is what the State ought to do, submit itself to God, and obey his commands, and give full liberty to the preaching of the gospel. This is all that the true Church of Christ asks, and all she can ever fairly take if she is loyal to her Lord.

[Isaiah 49:23](#). *And thou shalt know that I am the LORD.*

“Jehovah.” “Thou shalt understand the greatness of thy God, his infiniteness, his majesty, his all-sufficiency. ‘Thou shalt know that I am the I AM.’”

[Isaiah 49:23](#). *For they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.*

Glory be to his holy name, none that wait for him shall ever have cause to be ashamed; may we all be of that blessed number, for Christ’s sake!

Amen.

Verses 1-26

[Isaiah 49:1-3](#). *Listen, O isles, unto me, and hearken, ye people from, far; The LORD hath called me from the womb, from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name. And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me; and said unto me, Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.*

Our Lord became, by his incarnation,-by his very birth so marvelous and mysterious, He became that servant of Jehovah by whom God would be glorified. He was, as it were, hidden away, like a sword in its master's scabbard,-concealed and protected, like an arrow hidden in its owner's quiver,-until the time came for God to use him, and then God did use him both as a sharp sword and as a polished shaft.

[Isaiah 49:4](#). *Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain: yet surely my judgment is with the LORD, and my work with my God.*

The Jews, as a nation, were not gathered unto Christ, the highly favoured people, as a whole, did not believe in him. He was expressly sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, yet John was obliged to write, "He came unto his own and his own received him not." So few became his personal followers that it really appeared as if his life-work had been a failure; but he did what all God's true servants must do, he referred his work to the Lord. He said, "Surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work (or, my record) with my God." If we are faithful, that is all that our gracious Master requires of us; we are none of us bound to be successful. If we bear our sincere testimony to the truth, and everybody rejects it, our reward will be none the less in the day when the Lord calls us to give an account of our stewardship. If you, my brother or my sister, are loyal to him whose servant you are, when your Lord comes again, he will say to you, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

[Isaiah 49:5-6](#). *And now, saith the LORD that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, and my God shall be my strength. And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of*

Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.

Though Jesus seemed to fall with the Jews, he has succeeded in a far greater measure with the Gentiles, for great multitudes of them have gladly accepted him as their Saviour.

[Isaiah 49:7-8](#). *Thus saith the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the LORD that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee. Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee:*

Jehovah will bless his Anointed, he will accomplish his great purposes of love and mercy through him.

[Isaiah 49:8-9](#). *And I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages, That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Show yourselves.*

This is Christ's work today, to call out the forgotten ones who are hidden away in the oubliettes, of the Bastille of Despair. He comes and calls them, "Go forth, show yourselves;" and at his bidding they appear, even as Lazarus came forth from the grave at his command. Now listen; this is what becomes of those who come out of sin's prison at Christ's call. They become his sheep:-

[Isaiah 49:9](#). *They shall feed in the ways,-*

On their way to the one great fold on the hill-tops of glory, they shall find suitable and sufficient pasture: "They shall feed in the ways,"-

[Isaiah 49:9-10](#). *And their pastures shall be in all high places. They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them.*

Now recall those verses from the Revelation that we read just now, and note what blessings the good Shepherd has prepared for his sheep even while they are upon this earth.

[Isaiah 49:11-13](#). *And I will make all my mountain, a way, and my highways shall be exalted. Behold, these shall come from far: and, lo, these from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim. Sing, O*

heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the LORD hath comforted his people,

Well may heavens and earth and mountains sing when they have such a theme for their songs as this,

[Isaiah 49:13-14](#). *And will have mercy upon his afflicted. But Zion said, The LORD hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me.*

Zion said so, but it was not true; hear what the Lord says:-

[Isaiah 49:15-16](#). *Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands;*

However unnatural an earthly mother may prove, God will never forsake or forget one of his children.

“‘Yet,’ saith the Lord, should nature change

And mothers monsters prove,

Sion still dwells upon the heart of everlasting love.”

[Isaiah 49:16-21](#). *Thy walls are continually before me. Thy children shall make haste, thy destroyer and they that make thee waste shall go forth of thee. Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold: all that gather themselves together, and come to thee. As I live, saith the LORD, thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them on thee, as a bride doeth. For thy waste and thy desolate places, and the land of thy destruction, shall even now be too narrow by reason of the inhabitants, and they that swallowed thee up shall be far away. The children which thou shalt have, after thou hast lost the other, shall say again in thine ears, The place is too strait for me, give place to me that I may dwell. Then shalt thou say in thine heart, Who hath begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive and removing to and fro? and who hath brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; these, where had they been?*

Oh, that we might often have such a glad surprise as this, and be made to marvel at the Lord’s gracious dealings with us!

[Isaiah 49:22-26](#). *Thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people: and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders. And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers: they shall bow down to thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet, and thou shalt know that I am the*

LORD: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me. Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered? But thus saith the LORD, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children. And I will feed them that oppress thee with their own flesh; and they shall be drunken with their own blood, as with sweet wine: and all flesh shall know that I the Lord am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob.

The enemies of the Lord's people are his enemies too, and he will overthrow them in his own good time, and make the whole world know that he is their Saviour and Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Revelation 7:9-17](#); and Isaiah 49.

Verses 13-26

[Isaiah 49:13](#). *Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains; for the LORD hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted.*

When God blesses his Church, he blesses the world through her. Hence, heaven and earth are invited to be glad in the gladness of the Church of God. Oh, that God would visit his church; nay, he has already done so, and I feel inclined to cry out, as the text does, "Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth: and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the LORD hath comforted his people."

[Isaiah 49:14](#). *But Zion said, the LORD hath forsaken me, and my LORD hath forgotten me.*

We often judge contrary to the truth; and when God is blessing us, we dream that he has forgotten us. Oh, wicked unbelief; cruel unbelief! It robs God of glory; it robs us of comfort. It snatches the song out of our mouth, and fills our soul with groaning: "Zion said, the LORD hath forsaken me, and my LORD hath forgotten me."

[Isaiah 49:15](#). *Can a woman forget the sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet I will not forget thee.*

The child is in a condition in which it reminds the mother of itself; her sucking child, her own child. Can she forget it? It is not according to nature,

—
"Yet," saith the Lord, 'should nature change,

And mothers monsters prove,
Zion still dwells upon the heart Of everlasting love.”

What is true of God’s Church as a whole, is true of every member of it. If any of you think that God has passed over you, one of his believing children, you think what is untrue. He cannot do it. It would be contrary to his nature. As long as he is God, he must remember his people.

[Isaiah 49:16](#). *Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands;*

How appropriately Christ can say this when he looks on the nail-prints, “I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands”! As I said, this morning, Jesus can give nothing, he can take nothing, he can do nothing, he can hold nothing, without remembering his people: “I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands.” How I love that verse of Toplady’s hymn that speaks of this blessed truth! —

“My name from the palms of his hands Eternity will not erase;
Impress’d on his heart it remains In marks of indelible grace:
Yes, I to the end shall endure,
As sure as the earnest is given;
More happy, but not more secure,
The glorified spirits in heaven.”

[Isaiah 49:16-17](#). *Thy walls are continually before me. Thy children shall make haste;*

There shall be many of them. Converts shall be added to the church in great numbers. They shall hurry up; they shall not be long in coming. Very often they delay too long. The promise is, “Thy children shall make haste.”

[Isaiah 49:17](#). *Thy destroyers and they that make thee waste shall go forth of thee.*

I wish this were carried out. If it were, many of the churches of Christ, which are plagued with false doctrines and worldly habits, which are laying them waste, would be delivered from those curses. The enemies outside the walls, however malicious they are, will never be so mischievous as the traitors inside the fortress. Save Troy from the wooden horse, and save Zion from the traitors in her midst, that seek to do her harm.

[Isaiah 49:18](#). *Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold; all these gather themselves together, and come to thee.*

There is a great company coming. The church is going to be increased. Have faith in God. We are not going to receive them now by ones and twos; we thank God we receive them by tens and scores. They are coming by

hundreds and by thousands; let us expect them. By faith, let us see them even now coming.

[Isaiah 49:18](#). *As I live, saith the LORD, thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them on thee, as a bride doeth.*

What an ornament to a church her converts are! These are our jewels. We care nothing for gorgeous architecture or grand music in the worship of God. Our true building is composed of our converts; our best music is their confession of faith. May God give us more of it!

[Isaiah 49:19-21](#). *For thy waste and thy desolate places, and the land of thy destruction, shall even now be too narrow by reason of the inhabitants, and they that swallowed thee up shall be far away. The children which thou shalt have, after thou hast lost the other, shall say again in thine ears, The place is too strait for me: give place to me that I may dwell. Then shalt thou say in thine heart, Who hath begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and removing to and fro? And who hath brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; these, where had they been?*

Sometimes a church is brought very low; there are no additions, there is no unity, everything is breaking up, and going to pieces. When God visits that church, what a change is seen! Then people come flocking to it, and the church wonders whence the converts came. May the Lord make us wonder in that fashion! It will take a great deal to astonish us, after all these years of mercy; yet the Lord can do it. It may be he will make these latter days to be better than the former. Though we have had nearly forty years of blessing together, he may yet increase it, and give us to rejoice yet more and more.

[Isaiah 49:22](#). *Thus saith the LORD GOD, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people; and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders.*

We do not mind how they are brought if they do but come; some in the arms, and some after the Oriental method of putting the child on the shoulder. When God lifts up his hand, great wonders of mercy and grace are wrought.

[Isaiah 49:23](#). *And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers:*

It will take a long time before they learn that art, for kings and queens have generally been destroyers of the Church of Christ. Those will be grand

days when kings shall be the nourishers of the Church, and queens her nursing mothers.

[Isaiah 49:23](#). *They shall bow down to thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet:*

I have heard the first part of this verse quoted as an argument for the union of Church and State: “Kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and queens thy nursing mothers.” I have not the slightest objection, if they will bow down to the Church “with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of her feet.” What is proposed to us is that the Church should bow down to the State, with her face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of the feet of the state, by becoming obedient to rules and regulations made by princes and parliaments. This is not according to the mind of God, nor according to the heart of his people.

[Isaiah 49:23](#). *And thou shalt know that I am the LORD: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.*

If we wait for Christ, for his coming, for the help which he brings, for the salvation that is wrought by him, we shall not be ashamed.

[Isaiah 49:24-25](#). *Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered? But thus saith the LORD, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children.*

And I will feed them that oppress thee with their own flesh; and they shall be drunken with their own blood, as with sweet wine: and all flesh shall know that I the LORD am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob. The mighty may hold their prey with a strong hand; but there is a stronger hand that will deliver the captive. It is Jehovah, the Saviour, the Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob, who says, “I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children.” Here is a divine promise for every parent to plead: “I will save thy children.” May the Lord give you grace to claim that promise, even now, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

Verses 24-26

[Isaiah 49:24](#). *Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered?*

Yes, this shall happen when God makes bare his arm, and stretches it forth to rescue his captive people.

[Isaiah 49:25-26](#). *But thus saith the LORD, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children. And I will feed them that oppress thee with their own flesh; and they shall be drunken with their own blood, as with sweet wine: and all flesh shall know that I the LORD am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob.*

This is the promise of Christ to his Church, both the Jewish and the gentile Church. He will deliver her from all her afflictions and distresses, and her enemies shall feed upon their own flesh, or, they shall be overthrown by mutual enmities. As it was, of old when those that were confederate against Israel suddenly fell to quarreling, and slew each other, so is it, sooner or later, in the battle between truth and error. By-and-by, there is a split in the adversaries' camp, and they devour one another. Let any wrong thing alone, and it will break in pieces of itself. All real and abiding cohesion is gone when men seek to be united against the Lord, and against his Anointed. They shall confute one another, or they shall eat their own words, and so they shall, as it were, feed upon their own flesh.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Isaiah 49:24-26](#); Isaiah , 50.

[ISAIAH CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 50

Verses 1-11

[Isaiah 50:1](#). *Thus saith the LORD, Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have put away?*

Sometimes, the headings to the chapters in our Bible give us the meaning of the passage. They are, of course, not inspired, and are merely put there by the translators but, sometimes, they are little comments upon the text. It is so in the heading of this chapter: — “Christ sheweth that the dereliction of the Jews is not to be imputed to him, by his ability to save, by his obedience in that work, and by his confidence in that assistance,” so that the Lord Jesus here speaks to the Jewish Church. The great Redeemer, “the mighty One of Jacob,” thus speaks to his chosen people Israel: “Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have put away?”

[Isaiah 50:1](#). *Or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away.*

It was sin that caused the alienation between Israel and her God, and it is sin that is the cause of all the estrangement from God in the world. A sinful man, so long as he continues to live in sin, cannot love a holy God.

[Isaiah 50:2-3](#). *Wherefore, when I came, was there no man? when I called, was there none to answer? Is my hand shortened at all, that it can't redeem? or have I no power to deliver? behold, at my rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness: their fish stinketh, because there is no water, and dieth for thirst. I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering.*

What a glorious God this is who says that he has not divorced his people!

How mighty he is; yea, almighty! All power is in his hands. Notice who he is, for he goes on to describe himself: —

[Isaiah 50:4](#). *The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned.*

Just as scholars learn from their teacher. It was a wondrous stoop for the Omnipotent to become a learner; but he descended lower than that.

[Isaiah 50:5](#). *The Lord GOD hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back.*

This was another step in the ladder of Christ's humiliation, but he went lower still. Read the 3rd verse again, and then read the 6th. "I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering."

[Isaiah 50:6-7](#). *I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting. For the Lord GOD will help me, therefore shall I not be confounded, therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed.*

Even though he had to stoop so low as to endure shame and spitting, he knew that the ultimate result would be glory to God and to himself also. He had no thought of despairing. It had been already written of him, "He shall not fail nor be discouraged." He shall surely accomplish the work which his Father gave him to do. The next verse is probably the one from which Paul took that grand challenge of his, "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ

that died,” and so on. He takes out of the mouth of Christ his words of confidence and puts them into the mouth of all Christ’s people.

[Isaiah 50:8](#). *He is near that justifieth me; who will contend with me?*

Our Lord Jesus Christ was justified in his resurrection. He took his people’s sin upon him, and therefore he had to die in their place; but his work was so complete that he was himself justified as well as all his people and he challenges anyone to lay anything to his charge.

[Isaiah 50:8-10](#). *Let us stand together: who is mine adversary? let him come near to me. Behold, the Lord God will help me, who is he that shall condemn me? lo, they all shall wax old as a garment; the moth shall eat them up. Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light?*

It is the Saviour still speaking, for he knew what it was to walk in darkness, and to have no light. And what terrible darkness it was, my brethren! What an awful thing it was to him to have so suffer the withdrawal of the light of his Father’s countenance from him! He knows, therefore, what this trial means; and being full of compassion, he offers to us the kindest counsel if we are in a similar condition. What does he tell us to do? Hearken, you who do love the Lord, yet who are in the dark.

[Isaiah 50:10](#). *Let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God.*

In darkness or in the light, take heed that ye do this, when everything about you seems contrary to the divine promises, and your spirits are ready to sink, take heed to this good counsel of your Saviour: “Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.”

[Isaiah 50:11](#). *Behold, all ye that kindle a fire,*

Ye who would fain save yourselves, —

[Isaiah 50:11](#). *That compass yourselves about with sparks:*

Or, firebrands, —

[Isaiah 50:11](#). *Walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks —*

Or, flambeaux —

[Isaiah 50:11](#). *That ye have kindled.*

That will be the end of it. This grand illumination of yours, — all your good works, all your glorious intellect, and I know not what, — what will come of it?

[Isaiah 50:11](#). *This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow.*

God save us all from such a lying down so that at the last, for Christ's sake! Amen.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Isaiah 49:24-26](#); Isaiah , 50.

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 51

Verses 1-13

[Isaiah 51:1-2](#). *Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him.*

This is for your comfort, dear friends. If God could make out of Abraham and Sarah so great a nation as that of Israel, what is there that he cannot do? Do you say that the cause of God is brought very low in these evil days? It is not so low as when there seemed to be none but Abraham faithful in the whole world; yet God made that one mighty man to be like a foundation upon which he built up the chosen people, to whose keeping he committed the sacred oracles; and if he did that, what can he not do? However low you may individually sink, or however weak you may feel, look back to Abraham, and learn from his experience what God can do with you.

[Isaiah 51:3](#). *For the Lord shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord;*

Then what will her gardens be in those glorious days? When her very wilderness is like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord, what will her cultivated places be? Oh, what grand times are yet in store for the Church of the living God! Let us hope on, and pray on, and work on, never doubting; for, as John Wesley said, "the best of all is, God is with us;" and if he is with us, all must be well.

[Isaiah 51:3](#). *Joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.*

For God's Church is no prison-house, no den of dragons, or cage of owls: it is a place for joy and gladness, for thanksgiving, and the voice of melody. Come, then, and let us bless the Lord with all our hearts. God is

still good to Zion, and he will not desert her. He did much for Abraham; he will do much for us. We may find many precious things in the hole of that pit whence we were digged.

[Isaiah 51:4-5](#). *Hearken unto me, my people; and give ear unto me, O my nation: for a law shall proceed from me, and I will make my judgment to rest for a light of the people. My righteousness is near; my salvation is gone forth, and mine arms shall judge the people; the isles shall wait upon me, and on mine arm shall they trust.*

God will not always be forgotten; man will not always trust to his fellow-man to save him, or put his confidence in the idols he has himself made. The day is coming when the King of Kings shall come to claim his own again, and his loyal people shall see the kingdom spread as it never has done yet. Blessed be his name, this promise shall certainly be fulfilled, “the isles shall wait upon me, and on mine arm shall they trust.” It is remarkable that there are so many prophecies made concerning the isles; and that it is in islands, at this day, that the gospel seems to have spread so marvelously. In our own British isles, in the isles of the southern seas, and in Madagascar, what wonders of grace have been wrought!

[Isaiah 51:6-7](#). *Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished.*

What a mercy it is to get a hold of something that will never wear out, and that can never be dissolved, — something against which the tooth of time may fret itself in vain! This abiding, indestructible thing is the eternal salvation — the everlasting righteousness — which the Lord Jesus has wrought out and brought in for his people. Happy people who have this treasure for their eternal heritage!

[Isaiah 51:7](#). *Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, —*

In the first verse of this chapter, there is a message for those who follow after righteousness; here is a word for those who know it: “Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness,” —

[Isaiah 51:7](#). *the people in whose heart is my law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings.*

If you are true to God, they will be sure to revile you. A Christian should not expect to go to heaven in a whole skin; it is a part of the nature

of serpents and snakes in the grass to try, if they can, to bite at the heel of the child of God, even as that old serpent, the devil, bit at the heel of him who has broken the dragon's head. "Fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings," for your Master suffered in the same fashion long ago.

[Isaiah 51:8](#). *For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool: but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation.*

Let them snarl, and let them bite, if they will; they can do no harm to that righteousness which shall be for ever, or to that salvation which is from generation to generation.

[Isaiah 51:9](#). *Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old.*

We long for God to come again upon the stage of action, to interpose in the world's affairs, and to let men see what he can do. Time was when he was to be found by the burning bush, or on the mountain's brow, or in the cave, or by the well, and earth seemed then like the vestibule of heaven. Come again, O Jehovah, great Lord and King, let thy goings be seen once more in the sanctuary.

[Isaiah 51:9-10](#). *Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon! Art thou not it which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep; that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over.*

Our prayer is that God may do all this over again; and the answer to our prayer is found in the following verse.

[Isaiah 51:11](#). *Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion;-*

Just as they came out of Egypt of old, and with singing and with sound of timbrel, marched through the Red Sea, so shall God bring his people "with singing unto Zion; —

[Isaiah 51:11](#). *And everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away.*

Just as Pharaoh turned his chariot to flee from Israel, and the depths covered him and all his Egyptians, so sorrow and mourning shall flee away from the redeemed of the Lord.

[Isaiah 51:12](#). *I, even I, am he that comforteth you:*

Oh, the beauty and blessing of these glorious words! Let me read them again: “I, even I, am he that comforteth you.”

[Isaiah 51:12](#). *Who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass;--*

You see the grass, cut down by the mower’s scythe, lying in long rows, and withering in the sun; are you afraid of that grass? “no,” you say; “certainly not.” then, be not afraid of men, for they shall be cut down after the same fashion.

[Isaiah 51:13](#). *And forgettest the Lord thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? and where is the fury of the oppressor?*

Why! in the hand of God, and he can let it out, or hold it in, according to his infinite wisdom and almighty power. Why, then, art thou afraid? Is there any might in all the world except the might of the Omnipotent One? Can anything happen but what he permits? Be thou still, then, and rest in him: “Who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and forgettest the Lord thy Maker?” In thy fear there is something of egotism, something of thine own self. Lay that aside; and, as a babe does not feel itself wise enough to judge of danger, but sleeps calmly upon its mother’s bosom, so do thou. All is well that is in God’s hand; and thou also art in God’s hand if thou hast received his atonement in the person of his dear Son. Wherefore, give up thy heart to joy and gladness, and let sorrow and sighing flee from thee. Even now, let this be your happy song, as it is also mine,-

“All that remains for me Is but to love and sing,
And wait until the angels come to bear me to the King.”

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Isaiah Chapter 52

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER 53

Verses 1-12

This is a chapter which you have read hundreds of times, perhaps, I am sure it is one that needs no comment from me. I shall read it through with scarcely a sentence of comment.

[Isaiah 53:1-9](#). *Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he hath done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.*

A strange reason for making his grave with the wicked, and yet remember if it had not been that he had done no violence, he would not have been fit to be a substitute for sinners, and so he was numbered with transgressors to redeem men.

[Isaiah 53:10-12](#). *Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief; when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied; by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death; and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.*

How clearly you have before you here our blessed Redeemer, and how strong are the expressions used by Isaiah to set forth his substitution. If he did intend to teach us the doctrine that Christ suffered in the place and stead of his people, he could not have used more expressive words; and if he did not intend to teach us that truth, it is marvelous that he should have adopted a phraseology so likely to mislead. Yes, we believe and hold it fast, that Christ did take the sins of his people verily and truly upon himself, and did in proper person make a complete expiation for the guilt of all his chosen, and in this we find our hearts' best confidence: —

“Our soul can on this doctrine live,
Can on this doctrine die.”

Have you and I an interest in this atonement, or must the complaint be made concerning us: “Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?”? While I was reading just now, could you say by faith, “Yes, surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows Have you an appropriating faith, which takes the sufferings of Christ to be its own? Do you now humbly, but yet confidently, look to Jesus Christ, the great Burden-bearer on yonder tree, and know that your guilt was there? If so, rejoice, and walk worthily of your calling. If not, soul, you do not know the first letters of the alphabet of religion? May the Lord teach you, for his name's sake.

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CHAPTER 54

Verses 1-10

[Isaiah 54:1](#). *Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the LORD.*

In this Western clime, we do not know all the misery which was felt by Eastern women who were childless; they were looked down upon and despised; yet here God bids them sing. And, dear friends, if you and I feel as if our hearts have become barren, so that we cannot think of God or raise our thoughts towards him as we would desire; if we feel that we have become useless, and for that reason our spirit is greatly depressed, let us

give heed to this sweet, this charming exhortation of Jehovah: “Sing, O barren soul; break forth into singing, and cry aloud;” for God can turn our barrenness into fruitfulness, and make us to rejoice exceedingly before him. If we are now sighing and crying because we are not what we ought to be, or what we want to be, God can, in the richness of his grace, make us all that we desire. Therefore let us begin to be joyful even before the miracle of mercy is wrought; let us have unbounded faith in God, and expect him to bless us, even while we are in our lowest state.

[Isaiah 54:2-3](#). *Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes; For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited.*

This was good news for the poor Gentiles, who were so long spiritually barren, but whose seed was to spread all over the earth. This prophecy has been already fulfilled in a great measure, and the very wording of it is a direction to us if we desire to see the Church of God increased. Make ready for God’s blessing, you who are pining and groaning for greater things than these; God is about to bless you. Enlarge your tents; lengthen the cords, and strengthen the stakes; prepare for the coming blessing, for you are to have better and brighter days than you have ever yet known. Therefore be no more sad, but look forward with joyful anticipation to the good things in store for you.

[Isaiah 54:4](#). *Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed: neither be thou confounded; for thou shalt not be put to shame: for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more.*

I am not going to interpret the passage in its strict connection, but to use it for our comfort and instruction. O you that are cast down, you poor trembling ones that fain would be at one with God, but feel as if you could not find him, believe in the Lord your God, and trust in his Son, Jesus Christ, for there are glad times coming for you! All your former dabs of sadness shall be forgotten, and you shall have such joy and delight as you can hardly imagine at present.

[Isaiah 54:5](#). *For thy Maker is thine husband; the LORD of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called.*

Oh, what a blessing that is! This is a wide-spread mercy: “The God of the whole earth shall he be called.” My soul, come and hide beneath the shadow of these earth-covering wings, for there is room for thee beneath their welcome shelter; and, once there, thou shalt not be banished from that sacred spot, for it is written, “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” “Thy Maker is thine husband,” united to thee in eternal wedlock; therefore, be of good comfort.

[Isaiah 54:6](#). *For the LORD hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God.*

Poor rejected one, has the world cast thee off? Do its sinful pleasures pall upon thee now? Listen: “The Lord hath called thee.” Thou art divorced from the world that thou mayest be for ever united to him.

[Isaiah 54:7-8](#). *For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer.*

What words of comfort lie here to those of the Lord’s people who have fallen into spiritual darkness, and come upon evil days! God still remembers you; his wrath is but for a moment, and will swiftly pass away; but his age-enduring kindness which sweeps across the boundless eternity shall be with you for ever.

[Isaiah 54:9-10](#). *For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee.*

Oh, for grace, oh, for the help of the Holy Spirit to lay hold upon these precious promises, and to feed thereon!

Verses 1-16

Try and suck all the sweetness that you can out of this chapter while we read it. The personal application of a promise to the heart by the Holy Spirit is that which is wanted. The honey in Jonathan’s wood never enlightened his eyes until he dipped the point of his rod into it and tasted it. Try and do the same. This chapter is the wood wherein every bough doth drip with virgin honey. Sip: taste be satisfied.

[Isaiah 54:1-3](#). *Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child; for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the LORD. Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes; For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited.*

Yet, they are called upon to praise God before the mercy comes. “Sing, O Barren,” whilst yet barren. Sing, O desolate one, while yet desolate; and thou who art narrowed and confined for space, thank God that he is about to enlarge thee, and begin already to stretch thy cords and strengthen thy stakes. We ought to act upon faith, and sing upon faith. The songs which are made at the sight of mercy are very sweet, but the songs that are sung before the mercy comes are those which are most acceptable to God. We may say of the sonnets of faith, “Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed.”

[Isaiah 54:4](#). *Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed: neither be thou confounded; for thou shalt not be put to shame: for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more.*

The dark past, the dreary past, shall be so obliterated with abounding mercy that they shall forget it. Thy memory of it shall not be painful. It shall only be as a foil behind the bright diamond of mighty mercy, if thou dost remember it at all.

[Isaiah 54:5](#). *For thy maker is thine husband;*

Bound to thee by the dearest, closest, and most enduring ties.

[Isaiah 54:5-7](#). *The LORD of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall be called. “For the LORD hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God. For a small moment” —*

Not “a moment,” but “for a small moment.”

[Isaiah 54:7-8](#). *Have I forsaken thee: but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment: but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee; saith the LORD thy Redeemer.*

This belongs to the whole Church of God. I know we might refer it all to the Church in general, but I invite you tonight to remember that what belongs to the Church as a body belongs to every member of that mystical body. Therefore, feast here. Be not afraid. Take these words as spoken to you even to you — by God the Holy Spirit.

[Isaiah 54:9-10](#). *For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee.*

What more can he say than to you he hath said? What surer pledges can he give? Oh! rest, rest, rest, sweetly rest, on this sure word of covenant love. Then let the mountains move. He told you they would. Then let the hills of your comfort sink. He told you they would. But even then, when earth itself doth reel, and the very pillars of the universe are snapped, he standeth still the same. “I have sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee.”

[Isaiah 54:11](#). *O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colors, and lay thy foundations with sapphires.*

Built with jewels.

[Isaiah 54:12](#). *And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones.*

They must be rare sights if the windows are so rare. If the windows be of agate, what are the sights that are seen through them? And if the very gates and doors are carbuncles what must there be in the house of love within? If the very borders and the outside fringes of the royal domains of heaven be of precious stones, what must it be to be there? Remember that the best thing in this world is trodden under feet in the world to come; for we are told that the streets are paved with gold. Men hunt after it here, and tread on it there, for they have nothing better there than this world can possibly afford them.

[Isaiah 54:13](#). *And all thy children shall be taught of the LORD*

It must be a greater privilege, than windows of agates and gates of carbuncle, to see our children — to see all the children of God — taught by his own Spirit.

[Isaiah 54:13](#). *And great shall be the peace of thy children.*

That is the most precious pearl of all, with its soft radiance, precious to the soul.

[Isaiah 54:14-15](#). *In righteousness shalt thou be established: thou shalt be far from oppression; for thou shalt not fear: and from terror; for it shall not come near thee. Behold, they shall surely gather together, but not by me:*

Enemies will come, but God will not be with them.

[Isaiah 54:15-16](#). *Whosoever, shall gather together against thee shall fall for thy sake. Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire,*

For he cannot blow any more than God lets him. He is God's creature. The maker of the weapons of war is still in the hands of God.

[Isaiah 54:16](#). *And that bringeth forth an instrument for his work: and I have created the waster to destroy.*

When he does his worst, he is only doing what I meant he should do. The divine decree of God still, with its mighty circle, doth encompass the worst deed of man, and overrules it all for the good of his Church.

Verses 1-17

The precious promises, contained in this chapter, belong in the first place to the Church of God; but, as that which belongs to the Church, really belongs to every member of it, we shall not be acting dishonestly with the Scripture if we, who are believers, personally take home to ourselves every drop of comfort that we can find here.

[Isaiah 54:1](#). *Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child:*

Sing, even though thou art barren. Do not postpone thy song until God's promise is fulfilled unto thee; but sing even whilst thou art desolate and forlorn, and let faith pitch the key-note. Let me, therefore, entreat any of you, who are disconsolate and sad, to give heed to the words of the prophet, and even now begin to sing. Give to God songs in the night; imitate the nightingale, and sing though not a star is to be seen.

[Isaiah 54:1](#). *For more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the LORD.*

After all, we who have the deepest sorrow have the highest joy, and if we are sometimes desolate, we need not wish to change with those who always keep the even tenor of their way. If we have great downs, we also

have great ups; if the valleys be deep, blessed be God the hills are high, and the view from their summits is glorious. Let us be thankful even if our lot is a hard one, if we are the Lord's, "for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord."

[Isaiah 54:2-3](#). *Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes; For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited.*

This is another act of faith; — not only singing before the mercy comes, but getting ready to receive it before it is in sight, stretching the curtains and the cords in order to have room to house the blessing which has not yet arrived. Carnal reason says, "When we have the children, we will enlarge the tent; when we have gathered the congregation, we will build a house of prayer;" but faith says, "I will enlarge my heart that it may be able to take in the blessing which is sure to come. I will be big with expectation. I will open my mouth wide, — not when I see the blessing, but before I see it, that God may place the blessing in my open, empty mouth." May the Lord graciously give us enlarged expectations; for, according to our faith, so shall it be unto us!

[Isaiah 54:4](#). *Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed: neither be thou confounded; for thou shalt not be put to shame: for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more.*

Here is a third line for faith to run upon, namely, that of courage. Before you are strong, before you have been lifted up out of your weakness, be of good courage, and fear not; for, if you walk by faith, and trust in the Lord with all your heart, you shall never have any cause to be ashamed of having done so. The Lord will always honour your faith because your faith honours him. Be of good cheer, for you shall yet have good reason to rejoice; and all those days, that you are now ashamed to think of, in which you lived without God, and without Christ, your days of sad and terrible widowhood, shall be so completely surpassed by the abundance of mercy which you shall receive from the Lord, that you shall not remember them any more.

[Isaiah 54:5](#). *For thy maker is thine husband; the LORD of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called.*

Oh, how blessed it is that Jehovah, Israel's God, the Lord of hosts, is the God of the whole earth; so that we poor Gentiles may come and hide under the shadow of his wings; and what a joy it is to all believers that this great God has united us in the sacred bonds of marriage with himself! "Thy Maker is thine Husband." Oh, what bountiful provision will such a Husband make for us! How well will he comfort us! How abundantly will he bless us! So let our hearts be glad in him.

[Isaiah 54:6](#). *For the LORD hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God.*

Some of you know what it is to have had your affections betrayed, and your hearts broken by unfaithful friends. Now the Lord calls you to come close to himself, that you may prove his faithfulness, and so forget your past sorrows in your present and future joy.

[Isaiah 54:7-8](#). *For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer.*

These choice words do not need any explanation, this blessed plaster only needs to be applied to the wounded heart, and it will heal it at once. If the Lord will but speak these sentences into our souls, so that we may know that they are really meant for us, our rapture will be complete. Let me read these verses again: "For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith Jehovah thy Redeemer," — thy God, — thy next of kin, — thine Advocate and Champion. What a blessed name is this, and what a wonderful combination is this, — Jehovah, thy next of kin!

[Isaiah 54:9-10](#). *For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed;*

There is nothing really stable about them; all things that are visible must melt and flow away.

[Isaiah 54:10](#). *But my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee.*

What gracious words are these! What majesty there is in such consoling sentences as these! They remind us of Mr. Paxton Hood's lines, —

“All his words are music, though they make me weep, Infinitely tender, infinitely deep.”

[Isaiah 54:11](#). *O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, —*

Where art thou? Hast thou come in here to seek the consolation thou canst not find anywhere else? Then see how God lays himself out to comfort thee; he has put into human language the true sympathy for thee that he feels in his heart; and again he says to thee, “O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted,” —

[Isaiah 54:11](#). *Behold, I will lay thy stone, with fair colors, and lay thy foundations with sapphires.*

Thou shalt have done with the rough tossing of the troubled sea; and thou shalt come to land, — to a royal city which hath foundations of sapphire, — to a king's palace where even the stones shall be stained with rich vermilion such as only princes use in their costly buildings: “I will lay thy stones with fair colors, and lay thy foundations with sapphires.”

[Isaiah 54:12](#). *And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones.*

See what riches belong to the Church of the living God; and, as I have already reminded you, everything that belongs to the Church belongs to every member of it. So we expect to see our Lord's face through a window of agate, and to go through a gate of carbuncle to meet him in the place of communion, which shall itself be enriched with all manner of precious stones. Yes, and everything that has to do with us, — even the very “borders” of our life shall be laid with “pleasant stones.” Happy are all ye who are the favorites of heaven, the beloved of the Lord. Blessed are ye even in your basket and your store; blessed in the common things of your life, as well as in the choicest parts of your Christian experience.

[Isaiah 54:13](#). *And all thy children shall be taught of the LORD*

Our children are often our greatest care. We ask, “How shall they be educated? Where shall we place our boys and our girls?” Put them under the care of God; for, as Elihu said to Job, “Who teacheth like him?”

[Isaiah 54:13-14](#). *And great shall be the peace of thy children. In righteousness shalt thou be established: thou shalt be far from oppression; for thou shalt not fear: and from terror; for it shall not come near thee.*

The man who has the fear of God within his heart need have no fear of anybody else.

“Fear him ye saints, and you will then Have nothing else to fear;

Make you his service your delight.

He’ll make your wants his care.”

[Isaiah 54:15](#). *Behold, they shall surely gather together,*

You will have enemies, even if you lead the most blameless life that can be lived; for the absolutely blameless One had many cruel enemies who hounded him to death.

[Isaiah 54:15](#). *But not by me:*

God is not with them, for he is on your side.

[Isaiah 54:15](#). *Whosoever shall gather together against thee shall fall for thy sake.*

Oh, how often, and how mysteriously, and how terribly God has smitten the enemies of his people! The hand of the Lord has gone out against them as it went out against Sennacherib and his host, in the days of good king Hezekiah.

[Isaiah 54:16](#). *Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work; and I have created the waster to destroy.*

Even over the most wicked and the most powerful of men, there is the supremacy of God; and deep and mysterious though the doctrine is, yet divine predestination applies even to such sinners as Judas Iscariot, and the vilest of the vile in all times; and herein is our confidence, — that God is greater than death, and the devil, and hell, he is supreme above all the malice and craft and cruelty of the worst and the greatest of men.

[Isaiah 54:17](#). *No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; —*

“No weapon” of any kind — however cunningly made, or however deftly handled, — “no weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper;” —

[Isaiah 54:17](#). *And every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn.*

The tongue — that worst of weapons, whose wicked words are sharper than swords, — is like a condemned criminal.

[Isaiah 54:17](#). *This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord,*

Did I not rightly say that these precious promises belong not only to the whole Church of God as a body, but also to each individual member of that Church?

[Isaiah 54:17](#). *And their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD.*

If, then, your righteousness is found in God, in God you shall find everything else that you need for time and for eternity. God grant this unto each one of us, for his dear name's sake! Amen.

[ISAIAH CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 55

Verses 1-4

It is the language of infinite mercy, speaking to the abject condition of mankind. We have become naked, and poor, and miserable through sin, and God, instead of driving us from his presence, comes loaded with mercy, And thus he speaks to us.

[Isaiah 55:1](#). *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.*

See the freeness of divine love! See how God who knows the wants of souls, provides all things needful for them — water — the water of life; and as if that were not enough, the wine of joy, the milk of satisfaction; and he offers these freely. But, mark, there is no gain for him: the gain is for ourselves, for he saith, “He that hath no money, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” All that you want, dear friend, God is ready to give you. Do you want these good things? Then come and welcome. It is God who bids you come.

[Isaiah 55:2](#). *Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?*

Why do you seek to get comfort for your souls where you will never get it? Why do you try to content your immortal nature upon things that will die? There is nothing here below that can satisfy you. Why spend your money then for these things, and your labour for nothing?

[Isaiah 55:2](#). *Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.*

God has real food for your soul — something that will make you truly happy. He will satisfy you, not with the name of goodness, but with the reality of it, if you will but come and have it. You shall have fullness — you shall have delight — if you are but willing to come and receive it.

[Isaiah 55:3](#). *Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live;*

Then who would not hear — who would not give the attention — if by that attention life immortal may be received?

[Isaiah 55:3](#). *And I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.*

Will God enter into covenant with sinful men — with thirsty men — with hungry men — with needy men — with guilty men? Ah! that he will. “I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.”

[Isaiah 55:4](#). *Behold, I have given him*

That is the Son of David — Jesus the Christ — “I have given him.”

[Isaiah 55:4](#). *For a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.*

If you want anyone to tell you what God is, Jesus Christ is the witness to the character of God. Do you want a leader to lead you back to peace and happiness — a commander by whose power you may be able to fight Satan and all the powers of darkness that hold you in bondage? Has all in Jesus Christ that I can need for time and eternity, and this can all be mine for the asking, and receiving. Shall we not ask and receive?

Verses 1-7

[Isaiah 55:1](#). *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters,-*

To the waters which flowed from that smitten Rock of which we have been reading.

[Isaiah 55:1-3](#). *And he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me:*

See, the way of salvation is through Ear-gate. We must hear the gospel, for it is not what we are to do, but what we are to receive that will save us; and we must come to God to hear it before we can receive it. “Faith cometh by hearing.” Give a very earnest ear, then, to the preaching of the gospel of Christ: “Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.” Again the Lord says, “Incline your ear, and come unto me.”

[Isaiah 55:3](#). *Hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.*

Says someone, “I can understand God making a covenant with David; but will He make a covenant with me?” Yes, and after the same sure tenor, too: “I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.” God will promise to bless you, and save you, and keep you, and present you in glory in the day of Christ’s appearing; and this shall be a covenant which shall never be broken. Though all things else are changed, yet that covenant shall stand secure for ever. It will fill you with joy when you understand that such a covenant as this is made with you; and you will say, as David did, “Although my house be not so with God; yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure.” Oh, what a blessing it is to have a share in this covenant!

[Isaiah 55:4](#). *Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.*

“I have given him;” that is, David’s greater Son, the true David, “I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.”

[Isaiah 55:5](#). *Behold, thou —*

That is, Jesus, the Son of David: “Behold, thou” —

[Isaiah 55:5-7](#). *Shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee because of the Lord thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee. Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*

Oh, that many may put this blessed promise to the proof even now, for Christ’s sake! Amen,

This exposition consisted of readings from Isaiah 53; and [Isaiah 55:1-7](#).

Verses 1-11

[Isaiah 55:1](#). *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat: yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.*

Remark the wonderful condescension of God, that though the gifts of his grace are so precious that all the world could not buy them, yet he condescends to ask his creature to have those gifts. He stands, as it were,

like one who has goods to sell, and he cries, “Ho! such and such a passer-by, turn hither: give ear in this way. Ho! everyone that thirsteth.” If, then, there is any soul that wants God, O soul, God desires you infinitely more than you desire him; and he invites you to come to him. Do not delay.

[Isaiah 55:2](#). *Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?*

Seeking happiness in a thousand ways with much toil and trouble, but with bitter disappointment.

[Isaiah 55:2](#). *Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.*

God invites his creature to listen to him. “Do,” saith he “but lend me thine ear a little. Do but hearken diligently to what I have to tell you.” Oh! should not God’s message of love command the attention of all mankind?

[Isaiah 55:3](#). *Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live;*

Salvation does not come to men through the eye, but through the ear. Not what you see in the finery of the priest or the altar. That can do you no good. But listen to the gospel. It is by ear-gate that God’s mercy comes triumphant into the soul of man. “Incline your ear and come unto me. Hear and your soul shall live.”

[Isaiah 55:3](#). *And I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.*

Here God will strike hands with the sinner and enter into a compact with him — a covenant of mercy and of grace, through Jesus Christ, the Saviour.

[Isaiah 55:4](#). *Behold I have given him for a witness to the people,*
To bear witness to men of what God is.

[Isaiah 55:4](#). *A leader and commander to the people.*

For Christ loves the people, and he leads them rightly. He will lead them to glory.

[Isaiah 55:5](#). *Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee because of the LORD thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee.*

The promise is to Christ. Today are these words fulfilled in our ears, for, in calling these British Isles to know Christ, God has given to the Lord Jesus a people that knew him not. What did our forefathers know of Jesus when he was here below? And yet in this land he has multitudes of hearts that love his name. Oh! that God would give this whole house full of souls

to Christ tonight. What a casket it would make full of jewels! Oh! that the gracious Father would bestow it on his Son!

[Isaiah 55:6-11](#). *Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.*

Therefore, we are not at all afraid about the success of the preaching of the gospel. Some will be saved tonight wherever Jesus Christ is preached. My dear unsaved hearer, will it be you? I pray it may be. May the Lord grant that this may be the last night of your unregeneracy, and be your spiritual birth-night. Some will be saved. Will you be of the number?

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 138.; [Isaiah 55:1-11](#); [Romans 8:28-39](#).

Verses 1-13

[Isaiah 55:1-2](#). *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?*

Why have you sought rest where it can never be found? Why have you craved delights which can never satisfy you? Cease from such folly.

[Isaiah 55:2](#). *Hearken diligently unto me, —*

Thus speaks the Lord Jehovah: “Hearken diligently unto me, —

[Isaiah 55:2-3](#). *And eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, —*

“With you” who have any desire for it, — “with you” who hunger and thirst after righteousness, and who have no other recommendation than that, poor as it is, — “I will make an everlasting covenant with you” —

[Isaiah 55:3-4](#). *Even the sure mercies of David. Behold, I have given him*

—
The Son of David, — “great David’s greater Son,” — and God’s own well beloved and only-begotten Son, even Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. God says “I have given him” —

[Isaiah 55:4-7](#). *For a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people. Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee because of the LORD thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel, for he hath glorified thee. Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*

Blessed be his holy name!

[Isaiah 55:8-13](#). *For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and making it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall, not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. For ye shall go out with joy and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.*

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 23 and Isaiah 55.

[ISAIAH CONTENTS](#)

Isaiah Chapter 56

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER 57

Verses 1-21

A lament for the death of the righteous — many of them put to death by persecution.

[Isaiah 57:1-2](#). *The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart: and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come. He shall enter into peace: they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness.*

When there is a storm coming on, you may see the shepherds among the hills, gathering their sheep and taking them home, and when good men die in large numbers, and the Church's ranks are thinned, it is sometimes a token that bad times are coming on, and so God takes away the righteous from the evil to come. Oh! did men know what the world loses when a good man dies, they would regret it far more than the death of emperors and kings who fear not God. But as for those who are made righteous by the grace of God, they need not fear to die. To them it will be a rest — a sleep with Jesus — till the trump of the resurrection, and all the evil that will come upon the world will not touch them. They shall rest till the Master comes. Now, the rest of the chapter is a very terrible description of the sin of the people of Isaiah's day. And at last it contains a very brilliant display of the grace of God.

[Isaiah 57:3-4](#). *But draw near hither, ye sons of the sorceress, the seed of the adulterer and the whore. Against whom do ye sport yourselves? against whom make ye a wide mouth, and draw out the tongue? are ye not children of transgression, a seed of falsehood.*

Because this people so exalted against God and his gospel, God would not allow that they were the true seed of Israel at all. He makes them out to be a false, degenerate breed- and he asks them how they dare to sport against his prophets, and draw out the tongue, and make a wide mouth against those who spoke for the God of Israel.

[Isaiah 57:5](#). *Enflaming yourselves with idols under every green tree, slaying the children in the valleys under the cliffs of the rocks?*

The Lord had said that they should offer sacrifice only on one altar at Jerusalem, and this to him alone, but they had set up altars under all the ancient oaks to worship all sorts of gods. In addition to this, they had gone

so far after the cruel way of the Pagans, that they offered their own children in sacrifice in the valleys, under the cliffs and the rocks.

[Isaiah 57:6](#). *Among the smooth stones of the stream is thy portion; they, they are thy lot: even to them hast thou poured a drink offering, thou hast offered a meat offering. Should I receive comfort in these?*

They had set up the smooth stones which they had found in the brook, and made them into altars — nay made gods of them, for when man wants to make a god, anything will do, whether it is the fetish of the cannibal, or the round robin of the ritualist. It little matters which. A piece of bread will do for a god, as well as a piece of stone. Anything will man worship, sooner than worship the great, invisible, eternal God.

[Isaiah 57:7-8](#). *Upon a lofty and high mountain hast thou set thy bed: even thither wentest thou up to offer sacrifice. Behind the doors also and the posts hast thou set up thy remembrance:*

Where they ought to have put up texts of Scripture and the remembrance of God's law, they had set up memorials of their false gods everywhere, for when men become superstitious and worship falsely, they seem to be far more eager about it than those who worship the true God. They go on all fours at it, and give themselves wholly up to their superstitions.

[Isaiah 57:8-9](#). *For thou hast discovered thyself to another than me, and art gone up; thou hast enlarged thy bed, and made thee a covenant with them; thou lovedst their bed where thou sawest it. And thou wentest to the king with ointment, and didst increase thy perfumes and didst send thy messengers far off, and didst debase thyself even unto hell.*

When they were in trouble, instead of going to God they went to the king of Egypt, that he might come and help them against the king of Assyria; but they would never turn to God. They loved idols, and so they trusted in an arm of flesh. They forgot the invincible arm which had overthrown Pharaoh at the Red Sea, and wrought such wondrous miracles for the deliverance of his people; and they made gods of the kings of the earth and trusted in them, "and didst debase thyself even unto hell."

[Isaiah 57:10](#). *Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way;*

They did so much, and they were so superstitious, that they even wearied themselves with it.

[Isaiah 57:10](#). *Yet saidst thou not, There is no hope: thou hast found the life of thine hand; therefore thou wast not grieved.*

So long as they did but live they did not think that there was any hope of anything better, and so they were not grieved for all their sin and all their trouble.

[Isaiah 57:11](#). *And of whom hast thou been afraid or feared, that thou hast lied, and hast not remembered me, nor laid it to thy heart? have not I held my peace even of old, and thou fearest me not?*

This is the old trouble — that because God does not smite down sinners there and then they take liberties with him. They do not know that his patience — his slackness, as they call it — is long-suffering, because he is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance, and so he puts up his sword. Yet he says, “Have not I held my peace, even of old, and thou fearest me not?”

[Isaiah 57:12](#). *I will declare thy righteousness, and thy works; for they shall not profit thee.*

They said, “Why, we are very righteous. Have not we got a god in every corner? As for our works, we have plenty of them. Have not we temples built everywhere, and altars set up on every hill and in every valley?” “Yes,” says God, “such is your righteousness. They shall not profit thee.”

[Isaiah 57:13](#). *When thou criest, let thy companies deliver thee; but the wind shall carry them all away; vanity shall take them: but he that putteth his trust in me shall possess the land, and shall inherit my holy mountain;*

Oh! what a sarcasm! but how just. You that love not God, when you are in trouble, let your sins deliver you if they can. Let your pleasures comfort you.

[Isaiah 57:14-15](#). *And shall say, Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, take up the stumblingblock out of the way of my people. For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.*

We dwell in time, and by and by we are hurried into eternity but God always dwells in eternity. It is a very beautiful thought that he should have two dwelling-places. A blasphemer once met a humble Christian man, and he said, “Pray, is yours a great God or a little God?” “Well,” said he, “he is so great a God that the heaven of heavens cannot contain him, but he condescends to make himself so little that he can dwell in my poor humble heart.” God has two temples. The one is the high and holy place: the other

is the lowly and the humble place. May we have him in our hearts, and then shall we be in his heaven ere long.

[Isaiah 57:16](#). *For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth:*

God does not like being angry, and though sin provokes him, yet he feels not at ease when he is wrathful.

[Isaiah 57:16](#). *For the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made.*

It would destroy them. Man could not bear God's anger ever more.

[Isaiah 57:17-19](#). *For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners. I create the fruit of the lips;*

God teaches men how to speak words of penitence, and faith, and prayer, and praise.

[Isaiah 57:19](#). *Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the LORD and I will heal him.*

He puts it twice over, because it is such a prodigy of grace that God should heal sinners that are so polluted with sin. He puts it over again. "I will heal him."

[Isaiah 57:20](#). *But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.*

"Work up" such is the word — "whose waters work up mire and dirt" continually, as it were, in a work, and bringing up its filthiness from the bottom — bringing it to the shore — taking away the brightness from every wave and the crystal blue from every drop. Its waters cast up mire and dirt.

[Isaiah 57:21](#). *There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.*

Verses 10-21

The prophet has been giving a very terrible description of the sin of the nation. We need not read it all, but at last he says this:

[Isaiah 57:10](#). *Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way;*

"Thou art wearied out with thine own way. Thou hast been so zealous in thy rebellion against God that thou hast actually fatigued thyself in the pursuit of evil." That is a true description of those who have worn themselves out in the ways of sin.

[Isaiah 57:10](#). *Yet saidst thou not, There is no hope: thou hast found the life of thine hand; therefore thou wast not grieved.*

Though they had hunted for pleasure, and had not found it, and had brought themselves into great distress, yet they would not give up the hope of, after all, succeeding in their rebellion. Oh, how obstinately are men set upon seeking satisfaction where it never can be found,— namely, in the pursuit of sin! These people were still alive, and they were content to be so; but they were not grieved although God had sorely chastened them.

[Isaiah 57:11](#). *And of whom hast thou been afraid or feared, that thou hast lied, and hast not remembered me,—*

“Me, thy Maker, thy Friend, to whom thou must own thy very soul, unless that soul shall go down into the pit, ‘Thou hast not remembered me,’” —

[Isaiah 57:11](#). *Nor laid it to thy heart? have not I held my peace even of old, and thou fearest me not?*

When God is very long suffering, and lets men alone in their sin; then, often, they quite forget him, and have no fear of him.

[Isaiah 57:12](#). *I will declare thy righteousness, and thy works; for they shall not profit thee.*

If God once takes the self-righteous man’s righteousness, and explains what it really is, he will soon reveal to its owner that it is a mere delusion and sham, that will not profit him at all.

[Isaiah 57:13](#). *When thou criest, let thy companies deliver thee;*

“When sickness, and depression of spirit, and death itself, shall come to you, and you begin to dread what is to follow, and cry to those who comforted you in your time of health, what will they be able to do for you?”

[Isaiah 57:13](#). *But the wind shall carry them all away; vanity shall take them: but he that putteth his trust in me shall possess the land, and shall inherit my holy mountain;*

All confidence in men shall be blown away as chaff is driven by the wind; but faith in God wins the day.

[Isaiah 57:14-15](#). *And shall say, Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, take up the stumblingblock out of the way of my people. For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.*

That is a wonderful verse. You notice that the prelude to it explains the greatness and the holiness of God; and then, like an eagle swooping out of the sky even down to the earth, we find God coming from his high and lofty place to dwell with humble and contrite hearts. Not with the proud,—not with you who think yourselves good and excellent,— does God dwell; but with men who feel their sin, and own it; with men who feel their unworthiness, and confess it. I will read this verse again to impress it upon your memory: “Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.”

[Isaiah 57:16](#). *For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made.*

See the tender meaning of God’s message in this verse. He has been encouraging the guilty one, and making him feel the enormity of his ounces; and then he says, “I will not do that any more, lest I should crush him. He is too weak to bear any more punishment or reproof; therefore I will not any longer afflict him, but I will turn to him in mercy, ‘for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made.’”

[Isaiah 57:17](#). *For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart.*

Here God shows that his chastening does not always produce a good result; for, sometimes, when men are tried on account of sin, they grow worse and worse: “I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart.” What does God say of such a great sinner as that?

[Isaiah 57:18](#). *I have seen his ways,—*

“I have seen that he goes from bad to worse when I afflict him. Now I will try another plan. ‘I have seen his ways,’”

[Isaiah 57:18-19](#). *And will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners. I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the LORD and I will heal him.*

It is heart-melting to see the tenderness of God. “I will not further smite him, lest his spirit should fail before me. I will not continue to strikt him, because I can see that he only goes farther away from me the more I chastise him. I will deal with him in abounding love: ‘I will heal him.’” I

believe that there is many a sinner who runs away from God thinking that the Lord is his enemy; and as God pursues him, he does not dare look back. He thinks that it is the step of the Avenger that he hears, so he flies faster and farther away from God; but when he does venture to look back, and ends that it is a loving Father's face that is gazing upon him, oh! how he regrets his folly in running from him! Then he throws himself into the arms of the God of love, and wonders however he could have been the enemy of this his greatest Friend. May such a happy turn as that happen to some whom I am now addressing!

[Isaiah 57:20-21](#). *But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.*

They may have the semblance of peace, or a false peace, but nothing which is worthy of being called peace.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Isaiah 57:10-21](#); and [Isaiah 58:1-11](#).

[ISAIAH CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 58

Verses 1-11

[Isaiah 58:1-2](#). *Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins. Yet they seek me daily,—*

There are many nominally religious people who are full of sin. They have an external religion which allows them to live in rebellion against God. And such people are not easily convinced of sin. Hence the prophet is bidden to lift up his voice like a trumpet; yet, even if he does so, they will not hear him. There are none so deaf as those that will not hear; and these men are not wishful to hear what God has to say to them: "Yet they seek me daily," —

[Isaiah 58:2](#). *And delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God.*

They are always in a place of worship if possible; they cannot have too many services and sermons; yet they have no heart towards God. O my dear

friends, let us always be afraid of merely external religiousness! Genuine conversion, real devotion to God, true communion with God, these are sure things; but mere outward religiousness is nothing but so much varnish and tinsel, it is indeed but the ghastly coffin of a soul that never was quickened unto spiritual life. This is the way these sham religionists talked about their religion, —

[Isaiah 58:3](#). *Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge?*

When God rejects a man's religion, what must be the reason of it? Here is the explanation.

[Isaiah 58:3](#). *Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labours.*

“You fast, but you make your workmen toil on still; you determine that they shall not have one atom of their labour abated; and you make an amusement of what you call a fast: ‘In the day of your fast ye find pleasure.’”

[Isaiah 58:4](#). *Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high.*

The best sort of mere external religion will soon turn sour. If you do not worship the Lord in a right spirit, God will loathe the very form of your service. Why, you might, by hypocrisy, make even prayer-meetings to be hateful in the sight of God; and the ordinances may be made as abominable to God as the mass itself. You can soon degrade sermon-hearing into mere listening to oratory, and the Sabbath-day may easily become an object only of superstitious and formal observance. The heart — the heart is everything; if that be wrong, it sours the sweetest things under heaven.

[Isaiah 58:5](#). *Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the LORD?*

Does God care for the externals of worship only? Is he satisfied with sackcloth and ashes, and the hanging down of the head like a bulrush?

[Isaiah 58:6](#). *Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?*

Yes, this is true fasting before God; — not to demand your pound of flesh, and declare that you will have it; not to grind down the poor man to the last farthing; but “to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free.”

[Isaiah 58:7](#). *Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?*

That is the kind of fast that the Lord approves,— to deny yourself that you may give to those who are in need.

[Isaiah 58:8-9](#). *Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the LORD shall be thy reward. Then shalt thou call, and the LORD shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity;*

That is, if thou shalt take away all oppression, all wrong-doing to men, all talking of falsehood and speaking vanity: “Then shall thy light break forth as the morning.”

[Isaiah 58:10-11](#). *And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon day: and the LORD shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.*

What promises God gives to those who consider the poor and needy round about them! But if you shut your ears to the cry of the distressed, God will shut his ears to your cry.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Isaiah 57:10-21](#); and [Isaiah 58:1-11](#).

Verses 1-12

[Isaiah 58:1-2](#). *Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins. Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God.*

And what a strange thing this is, that there are some people who take delight in the ordinances of God, and yet they are living in the most shameful sin. I must confess this remains a mystery to me. But I hear of

some who will attend prayer-meetings and seem to enjoy them — who are to be found in the House of God whenever the doors are opened, and yet their characters will not bear the light. One would think that they would not wish to be told of their sins, and to come under a faithful ministry, and yet they do, and the more faithful that ministry is the more they seem to like it, and yet go on in their sins. Oh! what strange blindness is this which loves the light, and yet will not see by it — men that take to themselves water and much soap and yet will not wash — that heap up the bread about them as if they built a house with bread, and yet do not eat of it. Oh! infatuation most strange, to love the gospel apparently, and yet not to receive it into the heart so as to be changed by it. See how God talks to this religious people.

[Isaiah 58:3](#). *Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labours.*

They fasted, and then they said, “Why did not God accept our fasting?” Why, because they made their poor servants work up to the very last all that they could do. They never gave them any rest. They exacted all their labours, and they themselves, while they pretended to faint, were taking their pleasure,

[Isaiah 58:4](#). *Behold ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as ye do this day to make your voice to be heard on high.*

They were fond of getting into religious disputes; and when they had a fast day they fell to loggerheads about different doctrines, and they got angry with one another, till they began to smite with the fist of wickedness, and they thought that a day spent in that manner would be acceptable to God. What kind of a God would he be?

[Isaiah 58:5-6](#). *Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the LORD? Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness,*

That is, if by any dishonesty you have got a man in your power, set him free — if you have oppressed him, give him his rights. This is God’s kind of fasting.

[Isaiah 58:6](#). *To undo the heavy burdens,*

Not to exact from a man what you have no right to have, but what, perhaps, the law may allow you to get out of him. This is God's fasting — "to undo the heavy burdens."

[Isaiah 58:6-7](#). *And to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry,*

It is God's kind of fasting to give what you would have eaten yourselves, to let other's feast. "To deal thy bread to the hungry."

[Isaiah 58:7](#). *And that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him: and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?*

When you know that there are poor persons, perhaps of your own kith and kin — and, in one respect, we are all of one flesh — when we know that there are such, and yet refuse to help them, it is idle to talk about fasting. But if we would see to this, then comes this promise.

[Isaiah 58:8-9](#). *Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the LORD shall be thy reward. Then shalt thou call, and the LORD shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger,*

That is, the scorning the poor man.

[Isaiah 58:9-11](#). *And speaking vanity; And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon day: And the LORD shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones:*

You see, by giving comes getting. According to the philosophy of God, it is by watering others that we get watered ourselves. God feeds the man that feeds others. He made fat the bones of the hungry. Now, God says he will make fat his bones. He satisfied the souls of those that were in drought as best he could, and now God will satisfy his soul in drought, and make him: —

[Isaiah 58:11-12](#). *And thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not. And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in.*

God help us to obey his precept that we may partake in his promise.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Isaiah 58:1-12](#), Jeremiah 30.

Verses 1-14

[Isaiah 58:1](#). *Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.*

See, friends, how stolid men are by nature. God's messengers must not only speak, they must speak very forcibly, they must speak as with the sound of a trumpet, before men will hear them. Among the most stolid of all are those who think themselves God's people, but who are not really and spiritually so. It is hard to reach the common sinner; but it is harder still to reach the baptized sinner, the man who professes to be a Christian, but who has only the name to live, while he is spiritually dead.

[Isaiah 58:2](#). *Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways,*

They are careful to offer morning prayers, they would not go into their business without bending the knee to God; and they are eager and attentive hearers in the house of the Lord.

[Isaiah 58:2](#). *As a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God.*

Is it not strange that men will often continue to take delight in the externals of religion, while they give their heart to their sins? Outwardly, they keep up with great regularity all the observances of religion; yet in heart they are far from God.

[Isaiah 58:3](#). *Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge?*

They could not make out why they did not benefit by their religiousness.

They fasted, but they did not find themselves improved thereby. They afflicted their souls, yet they did not receive pardon for their sins, and they could not make it out. The Lord explained the mystery.

[Isaiah 58:3](#). *Behold, in the day of your fast ye fled pleasure; and exact all your labours.*

It is very easy to abstain from eating food of a certain kind, yet you can make another kind of food just as palatable; and while you are yourself resting, you may be compelling others to work for you. What is this but hypocrisy? I think it is a common saying among the Arabs and Egyptians, when a man is very ugly in temper, "One would think that he was keeping a fast," because it often happens in long fasts that men grow irritable; what is the good of fasting when that is the only result?

[Isaiah 58:4](#). *Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness:*

Even in their fasts, they disputed with one another; one said the fast should be on such a day, another would keep it on another day; and no doubt there are some professing Christians who are very zealous, mainly out of spite against other professors; they with as much zeal keep fast days or feast days the wrong way as others do the right way. It is a pity when this sort of party spirit is mixed up with the observances of religion.

[Isaiah 58:4](#). *Ye shall not fast as ye do this day,*

Some fasted in order to appear very religious. "Oh!" people would say, such a man must be very good, he fasts thrice in the week." That is a kind of fasting to which God has no respect. To feel pride while we fast with the stomach, is a poor way of showing how holy we are.

[Isaiah 58:4-5](#). *To make your voice to be heard on high. Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the LORD?*

The mere appearance of sorrow, the outward garb of mortification,-what is there in that to please the Lord?

[Isaiah 58:6](#). *Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?*

That is the kind of fasting which God cares for,-when a man leaves off oppressing those who toil for him, when he makes their tasks lighter, when he seeks their comfort, when he no longer grinds them between the millstones that threaten to crush the life out of them.

[Isaiah 58:7](#). *Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?*

For they are your own flesh and blood. Though they may be total strangers to you, yet are they men like yourself. This is the fast that God delights in, when men take care to look after the poor, and to relieve the distressed when this is done,--

[Isaiah 58:8](#). *Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the LORD shalt be thy reward.*

Do not take those promises out of their connection. Observe that they are made to those that clothe the naked, and feed the hungry, and care for the poor. If you have done this, then you can ask God to fulfill this promise, but not else. Then, when thou hast done this,-

[Isaiah 58:9](#). *Then shalt thou call, and the LORD shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am.*

If you have cared for the needy, God will care for you when you are needy. Is it not his way to reward the gift of even a cup of cold water to one of his disciples? Has he not promised that he will give back again into our bosoms that which we have given to others for his sake?

[Isaiah 58:9](#). *If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke,*

If you do not oppress anybody,-

[Isaiah 58:9](#). *The putting forth of the finger,*

That is, the finger pointing scornfully to people, and the contemptuous enquiry, "Who are they?" -- looking down upon your fellows, who perhaps are far better than yourself,-you must put all that away.

[Isaiah 58:9](#). *And speaking vanity;*

That constant idle talk of which some are so fond, that utterance of falsehood which many practice, that also must be put away.

[Isaiah 58:10](#). *And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon day*

Now mind again what I said just; do not go stealing with this promise without noticing the connection in which it is placed: "If thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity;" but not till then.

[Isaiah 58:11](#). *And the LORD shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.*

What rich promises to the generous and the kind! There are some who scatter and yet increase, and there are others who withhold more than is meet, and it tendeth to poverty. These promises are distinctly made to those who care for the needy and suffering. My brothers and sisters, mind well what the Lord here teaches you, for these things are far better than fasting. Better than any outward ordinances whatsoever are real acts of kindness, for remember that the same God who said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and

with all thy mind,” made the second table of his law to run thus, “and thy neighbour as thyself.”

[Isaiah 58:12](#). *And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in.*

God’s people are to seek to turn wildernesses into paradises. There is no part of the world so full of sorrow but the heart of the believer may bring gladness to it.

[Isaiah 58:13-14](#). *If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD*

There is no doubt that a reverent, happy, joyful keeping of the Sabbath ministers greatly to spiritual advancement. Here is the promise made to those who delight in the Sabbath,-

[Isaiah 58:14](#). *And I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.*

God help us to be observant of the precepts of this chapter that its promises may be blessedly fulfilled in our experience! Amen.

[ISAIAH CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 59

Verses 16-21

59:16. *And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him.*

Man’s extremity was Christ’s opportunity. There was no one left to save poor fallen manhood, no one who could lift a hand or a finger for our rescue; therefore, Jesus came, and fought, and bled, and died, and conquered on our behalf.

[Isaiah 59:17-19](#). *For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloke. According to their deeds,*

accordingly he will repay, fury to his adversaries, recompence to his enemies; to the islands he will repay recompence. So shall they fear the name of the LORD from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun.

Christ came once, and he is to come a second time, because he will be again needed here; and when he returns, he will ease himself of his adversaries, and speedily win the victory for truth and righteousness. Then shall the whole earth know what Christ can do.

[Isaiah 59:19-21](#). *When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him. And the redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the LORD. As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the LORD my spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever.*

The Church of God shall have the Spirit of truth and the Word of truth ever abiding in her midst. God will not break his covenant by withdrawing his Spirit from his Church. The Redeemer has come, and his work of redemption is accomplished. The Spirit also has come, but his work is not as yet done; it is being performed from day to day, and the Spirit will never be withdrawn while any part of his ministry remains unfulfilled. The consequence of all this is the glory of the true Church of the living God. There are better days coming for the cause of Christ and of truth. Listen, and be encouraged, all ye that are heavy of heart!

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 103; [Isaiah 59:16-21](#); and [Isaiah 60:1-16](#)

[ISAIAH CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 60

Verses 1-16

[Isaiah 60:1-3](#). *Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.*

The Church of God is one, whether it be among Jews or Gentiles. That poor Church seemed left and forsaken; dark days came, and it looked as if the Church must even cease to exist, but it did not. Now, God has brought in many sinners of the Gentiles, and he will bring them in much more numerous in the future times of refreshing. They shall come in armies, in hosts, in nations, and the Church of God shall be exceedingly glorious.

[Isaiah 60:4-5](#). *Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughter shall be nursed at thy side. Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee.*

All the strength of the land and of the sea,— the armies and the navies shall come and prostrate themselves before the Church of God. The supreme power on earth shall yet be the Christ in the midst of his Church.

[Isaiah 60:6](#). *The multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all they from Sheba shall come: —*

The Easterns shall bow before the King; they that of old had some light shall come to the yet greater light. In those holy lands, which afterwards became so unholy, there shall yet be a return to the truth, and all the false prophets shall be expelled. Where Mohammed's crescent has cursed the nations, there shall shine again the Sun of righteousness, with healing in his wings.

[Isaiah 60:6-7](#). *They shall bring gold and incense; and they shall shew forth the praises of the LORD. All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto thee, the rams of Nebaioth shall minister unto thee: they shall come up with acceptance on mine altar, and I will glorify the house of my glory.*

Wandering tribes of wild Arabs shall come and bow before Christ, and lay their wealth at his feet.

[Isaiah 60:8](#). *Who are these that fly a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?*

The growing Church sees a greater multitude coming to her than even the populous East could muster; whence come they? Listen, brethren, and look around, and see for yourselves.

[Isaiah 60:9](#). *Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto*

the name of the LORD thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because he hath glorified thee.

In ships from these remote islands, and from countries that were dimly spoken of, in the East, as “lands of Tarshish,” far away, great multitudes were to come to Christ. Are they not coming today from this Ultimo Thule, this distant land beyond the pillars of Hercules, are they not coming to Christ “as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows”?

[Isaiah 60:10-16](#). *And the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee: for in my wrath I smote thee, but in my favour have I had mercy on thee. Therefore thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night; that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought. For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted. The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious. The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee, The city of the LORD, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel. Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through thee, I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations. Thou shalt also suck the milk of the Gentiles, and shalt suck the breast of kings: and thou shalt know that I the LORD am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob.*

In God’s good time, all this shall come to pass.

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 103; [Isaiah 59:16-21](#); and [Isaiah 60:1-16](#)

Verses 1-22

The subject of this chapter is, “The glory of the Church in the abundant access of the Gentiles, and the great blessings after a short affliction.”

[Isaiah 60:1](#). *Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee.*

The Church is like the moon, which shines with borrowed light. When God shines upon the Church, then the Church herself shines by reflecting his light. The glory of Jehovah is her glory, if that be withdrawn, she is dark indeed; but when that shines into her, and through her, then her brightness is great indeed.

[Isaiah 60:2-3](#). *For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the LORD shall arise upon thee and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.*

There is nothing that breaks the darkness except the light from God's face; and when that falls upon the Church, then the Church straightway begins to shine in the midst of the darkness, and multitudes come to the light, and even the great ones of the earth, the kings, come to the brightness of her rising.

[Isaiah 60:4](#). *Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side.*

There is no sign here of the Church of God being deserted, on the contrary, she shall become, through the grace of God, the center of attraction. Men shall come from distant lands to her, however far removed they were, they shall still come: "thy sons shall come from far." She shall also be increased by the accession of those near at hand: "and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side."

[Isaiah 60:5](#). *Then thou shalt see, and, flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee.*

O, that we might live to see this happy day, when we shall feel a holy awe because of God's glory as revealed in his Church! This fear is not a servile dread but a holy awe of God, and then the heart shall be enlarged, we shall deal with great things, wish for great things, attempt great things, do great things, and see great things. "Thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged," for the sailor far away upon the sea, and the whole strength of the Gentiles shall come unto thee.

[Isaiah 60:6-7](#). *The multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah, all they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall shew forth the praises of the LORD. All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto thee, the rams of Nebaioth shall minister unto thee: they shall come up with acceptance on mine altar, and I will glorify the house of my glory.*

These people had mostly been followers of false prophets, but they too shall forsake their fanaticism and their bigotry, and come to unite with the

Church of God. Those least likely and furthest off from hope, shall be brought in by the sovereign grace of God.

[Isaiah 60:8](#). *Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?*

The Church is astonished; she asks, “Who can they be?”

[Isaiah 60:9-10](#). *Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the LORD thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because he hath glorified thee. And the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee: for in my wrath I smote thee, but in my favour have I had mercy on thee.*

The Church of God is one continuously. At first, it was a Jewish Church, and it has never ceased to comprise within its bounds some members of the chosen race. But now, in these latter days, she has broken the narrow bonds of race, and from Tarshish and the distant isles of the sea, multitudes are already coming to the church of God, and they shall come much more numerous in the years that have not yet arrived.

[Isaiah 60:11-14](#). *Therefore thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night, that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought. For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish, yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted. The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious. The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee;*

Or, if they do not themselves come, their children shall; each generation shall include a remnant according to the election of grace; and, in due time, shall come the great ingathering.

[Isaiah 60:14-22](#). *And as they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet, and they shall call thee, The city of the LORD, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel. Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through thee, I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations. Thou shalt also suck the milk of the Gentiles, and shalt suck the breasts of kings: and thou shalt know that I the LORD am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob. For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron: I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exactors*

righteousness. Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise. The sun shall be no more thy light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the LORD shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the LORD shall be thine everlasting light and the days of thy mourning shall be ended. Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified. A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the LORD will hasten it in his time.

“Amen! Amen!” so say we, with all our heart.

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CHAPTER 61

Verses 1-11

[Isaiah 61:1](#). *The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,*

You know who it is that speaks these words, our Lord Jesus himself.

[Isaiah 61:1-2](#). *Because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn;*

The Divine Messiah comes to usher in the true jubilee, the blessed day in which the poor shall have the gospel preached unto them, and in which the broken-hearted shall find their brokenness healed. He comes to bring the captive ones back from the Babylon of sin, and to deliver from prison those who, because of their transgressions, are bound with fetters; in a word, he comes to proclaim that now is the accepted time, now is the day of grace, now is the year of jubilee. As for the adversaries of his people, unto them it shall be “the day of vengeance of our God,” for the Lord will deal out to them, measure for measure, as they have dealt unto his oppressed and persecuted people.

[Isaiah 61:3](#). *To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty —*

Or, “a coronet” —

[Isaiah 61:3](#). *For ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.*

When Jesus comes, he brings all things with him, for he is all things to his people, and they find their all in him. There is no sorrow at his coming to those who receive him; it is gladness, gladness repeated, and gladness multiplied. Not only doth joy come in one form, but in many, as the verses of this chapter so sweetly remind us, and that which comes is permanent, making those that receive it to be like long-standing trees, for they shall outlive their sorrows, and prove that they were planted of God for his own glory.

[Isaiah 61:4](#). *And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations.*

Truly, God’s living Church today shall do all this. The Jewish Church became a waste, and God’s glory seemed to be trodden under the foot of his foes; but the true children of the promise, they who are counted for the seed, even as many as believe, who are thus the seed of believing Abraham, shall build up all these wastes, and happy shall they be in such joyous service.

[Isaiah 61:5-6](#). *And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be your plowmen and your vinedressers. But ye shall be named the Priests of the LORD: men shall call you the Ministers of our God: ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves.*

Because of the sin of his people, the aliens and the foreigners trample upon them; but if you and I are truly of the holy seed, having living faith in Christ, we shall look upon the whole race of men as enduring all their care and toil on our behalf. They shall be our plowmen and our vinedressers; but we shall be the ministers of God, the priests of the Lord, making use of every new invention, — traveling by steam, speaking by telephone, — using everything for God’s glory, letting men invent all they can, and we ourselves turning all things to account for the honour and glory of our God.

I know that there is another fulfillment of this test for God’s ancient people, but this also is a fulfillment of it to us who are his spiritual people, his real children, born according to the promise.

[Isaiah 61:7](#). *For your shame ye shall have double; and for confusion they shall rejoice in their portion:*

That is a sweet state of heart for any of us to be in, — to rejoice in our portion. Oh, what a wonderful portion we have to rejoice in! How blessed is the lot of God’s chosen people! However small a part of our portion may be visible to the eye here below, yet we can sing, —

“All things are ours; the gift of God,
The purchase of a Saviour’s blood;
While the good Spirit shows us how
To use and to improve them too.”

Instead of confusion such as once was the lot of the righteous, “they shall rejoice in their portion;”

[Isaiah 61:7](#). *Therefore in their land they shall possess the double: everlasting joy shall be unto them.*

Here is another choice expression: “everlasting joy.” Theirs is not a transient joy, like the mirth of fools, which is as the crackling of thorns under a pot, but “everlasting joy shall be unto them.”

[Isaiah 61:8](#). *For I the LORD love judgment, I hate robbery for burnt offering; and I will direct their work in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.*

That is why they have everlasting joy. There would be no everlasting joy if it were not for the everlasting covenant. Those gentlemen who want to cut that word “everlasting” out of our Bibles will find that it will be a very long while before we shall agree to be despoiled of it; nay, we shall never consent to give it up. We shall always rejoice that we have God’s everlasting love, and an everlasting covenant, and therefore that we shall have everlasting joy.

[Isaiah 61:9](#). *And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles,*

They shall be discerned and distinguished. Just as surely as you may know a Jew anywhere in the world today, so shall men know the people of God. Though they wear no peculiar garb, yet their speech shall betray them. There shall be a something about them which shall bear testimony to the fact that “they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed.” “Their seed shall be known among the Gentiles,” —

[Isaiah 61:9-10](#). *And their offspring among the people: all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the LORD hath blessed. I will greatly rejoice —*

Not a little, for he is a great God, so “I will greatly rejoice” in him. “The Lord hath done great things for us,” let us therefore greatly rejoice in him. “I will greatly rejoice” —

[Isaiah 61:10](#). *In the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God;*

Not only shall my lips be full of joy, but my inmost nature, the very essence of my being, “my soul shall be joyful in my God.” “In my God.” That is a stage higher than saying, “I will greatly rejoice in the Lord.” We do greatly rejoice in the Lord, but our very soul is joyful when we can each one call him, “my God.” That is a possession that the richest among you may well envy if you have it not.

[Isaiah 61:10](#). *For he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.*

The loveliest sight in the world is one of God’s people. We sometimes sing, and sadly sing, concerning this earth, —

“Where every prospect pleases,
And only man is vile.”

But there is another side to that picture, for when the “man” is a true child of God, we can say, —

“Though every prospect pleases,
Yet man outshines them all.”

Well did the psalmist sing, “Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.” Angels do homage to the renewed man; for the promise is, “They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.” You who are children of God need not wish to change places even with an archangel, for you are brother to him who sits upon the throne of God; you wear a nature that is akin to that of the Only-begotten, indeed, it is the self-same nature as his. Glory, then, in this great truth, that you are covered with the robe of righteousness, decked with ornaments, like a bridegroom, and adorned with jewels, like a bride.

[Isaiah 61:11](#). *For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.*

They are sown in the earth at present; but, as the seeds come up in the springtime beneath the genial showers and the shining of the sun, so righteousness and praise shall in due time come up in a golden harvest on

every hill and valley of this poor sinful world. Hasten it, O Lord, hasten it in thine own good time! Amen.

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Isaiah Chapter 62

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER 63

Verses 1-19

Some of you will remember that chapter 62 ends with the announcement of the Saviour's coming: "Say ye to the daughter of Zion, behold, thy salvation cometh; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him," The present chapter describes his coming.

Isaiah 63:1. *Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah?*

Who can HE be, this mysterious personage, this friend of God's people, this destroyer of their enemies? Who can HE be?

"Who is this that comes from Edom,
All his raiment stain'd with blood;
To the slave proclaiming freedom;
Bringing and bestowing good:
Glorious in the garb he wears,
Glorious in the spoils he bears?"

Isaiah 63:1. *This that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save.*

He that has come to save us is majestic in his person, but he is also mighty in his power to save. When we ask, "Who is this?" the answer comes to us, "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save)" Listen to this, you who feel that you are great sinners, you who know that you need a mighty Saviour. Here is one able to do for you all that you need. He comes from the field of battle, from the place of conquest, where he has fought the fight on your behalf, and won for you the victory over sin, and death, and hell. Who is he?

“’Tis the Saviour, now victorious.
Traveling onward in his might;
’Tis the Saviour, oh, how glorious To his people is the sight!
Jesus now is strong to save;
Mighty to redeem the slave.”

[Isaiah 63:2-3](#). *Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat? I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me:*

In all Christ’s redeeming work he was alone. None could help him to redeem his people. He must alone pay the ransom price. None could help him in his last great battle, when he stood forth as the sole Champion of all whom his Father had given to him.

“Death and hell will he dethrone,
By his single arm alone.”

[Isaiah 63:3-4](#). *For I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come.*

It was the day of vengeance on the enemies of God, vengeance on sin and death, and hell; and it was the year of redemption for the great host of believers in Christ, for whom his garments were dyed in his own most precious blood. Notice how the great redeemer speaks of his chosen people; “My redeemed.”

[Isaiah 63:5-6](#). *And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me; and my fury, it upheld me. And I will tread down the people in mine anger, and ‘make them drunk in my fury, and I will bring down their strength to the earth.*

Dear friends, I will not go into a full explanation of these verses just now; I have often explained them to you; but this is the one lesson that they teach, there is a Saviour “mighty to save.” Nothing can destroy those who put their trust in him; he will overthrow every enemy of our souls if we take him to be our Saviour. Now the prophet speaks again

[Isaiah 63:7](#). *I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the LORD, and the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which he hath bestowed*

on them according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his lovingkindnesses.

It is well to talk of God's love and God's mercy, for, if we afterwards speak of our own sin and unfaithfulness, it tends to set our sin in a clearer light, and we are the more ready to confess it, and to mourn over it. God has dealt well with us; and, therefore, that we have dealt ill with him, is the more shameful. See what he did for his ancient people, and behold in his action a picture of what he has done for his spiritual Israel.

[Isaiah 63:8](#). *For he said, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie: so he was their Saviour.*

He thought well of them, he said, "They will be true to me." He loved them; he chose them; he put them in a place of trust and honour; he entered into fellowship and sympathy with them.

[Isaiah 63:9](#). *In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old.*

This is what he did for them in Egypt, what he did for them in the desert. He was very near them, one with them, very tender to them.

[Isaiah 63:10](#). *But they rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit; therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them.*

Hear ye this, ye people of God! This is what God will do to you if you rebel against him, and vex his Holy Spirit; he will turn to be your enemy, and will fight against you. If God's people will not yield to his love and his pity, they must suffer from his hand and his rod.

[Isaiah 63:11](#). *Then he remembered the days of old, Moses, and his people, saying, Where is he that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of his flock? where is he that put his holy Spirit within him?*

God begins to think of the past, and of what he did for his people in the days of old.

[Isaiah 63:12-14](#). *That led them by the right hand of Moses with his glorious arm, dividing the water before them, to make himself an everlasting name? That led them through the deep, as an horse in the wilderness, that they should not stumble? As a beast goeth down into the valley, the Spirit of the LORD caused him to rest: so didst thou lead thy people, to make thyself a glorious name.*

See what God did for his people in his tenderness and lovingkindness. Is it not strange that, after that, they rebelled against him?

[Isaiah 63:15](#). *Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of thy holiness and of thy glory: where is thy zeal and thy strength, the sounding of thy bowels and of thy mercies toward me? are they restrained?*

If you are in trouble tonight, if you have lost the light of God's countenance, here are words for you to use in prayer to God.

[Isaiah 63:16](#). *Doubtless thou art our father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O LORD, art our father, our redeemer; thy name is from everlasting.*

Get a hold of this great truth, believer. Say, "God is my Father. He is my Father still; and though he smite me, though he frown upon me, I will not quit my hold on him; I will still plead his dear Son's name, and wait for his mercy, trusting in his grace."

[Isaiah 63:17-18](#). *O LORD, why hast thou made us to err from thy ways, and hardened our heart from thy fear? Return for thy servants' sake, the tribes of thine inheritance. The people of thy holiness have possessed it but a little while: our adversaries have trodden down thy sanctuary. We are thine: thou never barest rule over them; they were not called by thy name.*

I pointed out to you, at the beginning of our reading, that this chapter appropriately follows the preceding one. It is itself most suitably followed by chapter 64. Indeed, the first verse of that chapter belongs to this one, and should not have been separated from it. God's people, in their low estate, recognized that deliverance must come from the Lord alone, so they prayed, "Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence, as when the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil, to make thy name known to thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at thy presence!" God bless the reading of his Word, and give us his presence during the whole of the service, for Christ's sake. Amen!

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CHAPTER 64

Verses 1-12

[Isaiah 64:1-2](#). *Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence, as when the melting fire burneth,*

Or, much better, “as when the brushwood burneth”; for if God does but come to his people, they are ready to catch the flame, like the dry heather which is soon ablaze; and his enemies also shall be like brushwood before the fire.

[Isaiah 64:2-3](#). *The fire causeth the waters to boil, to make thy name known to thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at thy presence! When thou didst terrible things which we looked not for, thou comest down, the mountain flowed down at thy presence.*

O Lord, come again! Thou didst come in the past; repeat thy former acts, and let us see what thou canst do for the avenging of thy people.

[Isaiah 64:4](#). *For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him.*

God is ready to help. He has everything in preparation before our needs begin. He has laid in supplies for all our wants. Before our prayers are presented, he has prepared his answers to them; blessed be his name! You remember how Paul uses this passage, “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit.” The spiritual man is a privileged man.

[Isaiah 64:5](#). *Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways:*

God does not wait for us to return to him. He meets us. He comes to us the moment that we turn our feet towards his throne. While we are, like the prodigal, a great way off, he sees us, and has compassion upon us, and runs to meet us.

[Isaiah 64:5](#). *Behold, thou art wroth; for we have sinned: in those is continuance, and we shall be saved.*

In thy faithfulness, in thy love, in thyself, in thy ways of mercy there is continuance. This is our safety. What are we? Here is the answer: —

[Isaiah 64:6](#). *But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.*

It is not a flattering picture that the prophet draws. Even our righteousnesses are like filthy rags, fit only for the fire; what must our righteousnesses be like? We, ourselves, are like the sere leaves on the trees;

and just as the wind carries away the faded leaves of autumn, so our sins, like a mighty blast, carry us away.

[Isaiah 64:7-8](#). *And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee:*

That is a wonderful description of prayer. When a man rouses himself from sinful lethargy, and stirs himself up to take hold of God in prayer, he will become an Israel, a prince prevailing with God.

[Isaiah 64:8](#). *For thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities. But now, O Lord, thou art our father;*

Adoption does not come to an end because of sin. Regeneration or sonship does not die out; it cannot die out. I am my father's son, and so I always shall be; and if I am my heavenly Father's son, I shall never cease to be so.

"Now, O Lord, thou art our Father!" This truth must not be perverted into an argument for sinning; it ought rather to keep us from sinning, lest we should grieve such wondrous love.

[Isaiah 64:8-12](#). *We are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand. Be not wrath very sore, O Lord, neither remember iniquity for ever: behold, see, we beseech thee, we are all thy people. The holy cities are a wilderness, Zion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation. Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, is burned up with fire: and all our pleasant things are laid waste. Wilt thou refrain thyself for these things, O Lord? Wilt thou hold thy peace, and afflict us very sore?*

The prophet touches the minor key, and weeps and wails for the sorrows of his people; but he does not neglect to pray. In the next chapter God breaks out, and says, "I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not." How much more quickly is he found of them who do seek him! Verily, God does hear prayer; and he will hear prayer; let us not cease to pray to him as we look round on the sad state of the professing church at this time, and with Isaiah let us cry, "Wilt thou refrain thyself for these things, O Lord? Wilt thou hold thy peace, and afflict us very sore?"

This exposition consisted of readings from Isaiah 63-64

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Isaiah Chapter 65

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

Isaiah Chapter 66

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CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

Jeremiah

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CHAPTER 1

Verses 1-19

[Jeremiah 1:1-3](#). *The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests that were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin: to whom the word of the LORD came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign. It came also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, unto the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah the son of Josiah king of Judah, unto the carrying away of Jerusalem captive in the fifth month.*

Jeremiah was a young man when he was called to the prophetic office; and he was sent of God, as a young prophet, to help the young king, Josiah. His public life, therefore, opened somewhat happily. But, after the death of Josiah, wicked kings sat upon the throne, and it was the painful lot, and yet in some respects the choice privilege, of this weeping prophet to be sent upon his Master's errand, time after time, to a disobedient and gainsaying people, who wrought him only evil while he sought their good. The Holy Spirit, you see, is careful to note important dates in the history of God's servants; and you and I also should keep a record of the times when God sets us to work, and when he gives us special grace for the service to which he has called us.

[Jeremiah 1:4-6](#). *Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child.*

He was but young, and, when young men are called to be ambassadors for God, it behoves them to feel the weight of the responsibility that rests upon them, and to be conscious of their lack of experience, and of their want of fitness for the work. In that consciousness of unfitness, there often lies the evidence of their fitness for the task entrusted to them. Peradventure, out of weakness they shall be made strong; but if they do not feel their weakness, they are not likely to cry to God for help, or to receive it from him. "Ah, Lord God!" said young Jeremiah, "behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child."

[Jeremiah 1:7](#). *But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak.*

Now, even a child can often speak anything that has been said to him; to repeat what he is told to say, is not beyond his capacity; and, after all, this is a Christian minister's principal work. Somebody says, "We want thinkers." Yes, so we do; but we want men whose thoughts shall be subordinate to the thoughts of God, ministers who do not come to utter their own thoughts, but to deliver their Master's message, to tell to us what he has told to them. Is that sermon merely what you think, sir? Then, what do I care what you think? What is that to me, anymore than what I think may be to you. If, however, you can come to me, and say, "Thus saith the Lord," I will give diligent heed to your message, and I am bound to receive it; but woe be to that minister whose word shall be other than this!

[Jeremiah 1:8](#). *Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD.*

When a king sends an ambassador to a foreign court, he cannot usually go with him; but God's ambassador always has his King with him. Oh, what courage he ought to have with such a Companion!

[Jeremiah 1:9](#). *Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth.*

For you young brethren who are to be preachers of the gospel, I cannot wish anything better than that the Lord may touch your mouth in this way. In the old times that some of us remember, godly men used to pray that the Holy Spirit would be "mouth, matter, and wisdom" to the preachers of the Word. It was not at all a bad prayer, for it was a petition that he would give to his servants the right subject, the right spirit, and the right utterance, — that he would teach them how to speak, what to speak, and in what spirit to speak it.

[Jeremiah 1:9](#). *And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth.*

That is a true picture of a Spirit-sent preacher of the gospel, — a man who has God's words in his mouth. I said before that the minister must not utter his own thoughts, but here we see that he must not even utter his own words. God's thoughts are best delivered in God's words; and the more of Scripture there is in our teaching, the more true, the more divine, and the more powerful, will it be.

[Jeremiah 1:10](#). *See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.*

What a mysterious power rested on this God-sent messenger! Poor Jeremiah was often in prison, frequently at death's door, yet he was the master of nations and kingdoms, and the Lord gave him authority to root them up or to plant them, to throw them down or to build them up. What wondrous power God gives to those who faithfully preach his Word! Well might Mary Queen of Scots say that she was more afraid of John Knox's preaching than of all the armies that came against her.

[Jeremiah 1:11-14](#). *Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Jeremiah, what seest thou? And I said, I see a rod of an almond tree. Then said the LORD unto me, Thou hast well seen: for I will hasten my word to perform it. And the word of the LORD came unto me the second time, saying, What seest thou? And I said, I see a seething pot; and the face thereof is toward the north. Then the LORD said unto me, Out of the north an evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land.*

The Chaldeans and the Babylonians were like a great cauldron, boiling and seething, sending forth smoke and steam over the nations, and ready to scald Jerusalem to its destruction.

[Jeremiah 1:15-16](#). *For, lo, I will call all the families of the kingdoms of the north, saith the LORD and they shall come, and they shall set everyone his throne at the entering of the gates of Jerusalem, and against all the walls thereof round about, and against all the cities of Judah. And I will utter my judgments against them touching all their wickedness, who have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, and worshipped the works of their own hands.*

God tells Jeremiah that he was about to destroy Jerusalem because of the people's sin. He was not merely to foretell their doom, but he was also to tell the reason of it, — that it was the result of their sin, and especially of the sin of idolatry, to which mankind is ever exceedingly prone. It is most difficult to keep men to pure spiritual worship, — the worship of the unseen God in spirit and in truth. They will get away, if they can, to some outward form or another. They will take the very bread of communion, and worship it; or the image of the bleeding Saviour, and make an idol of that. Somehow or other, they will have something visible, or tangible, as the object of their adoration. Men will fall into idolatry of one kind or another even to this

day; and this is a God-provoking offense, from which may the Lord, in his mercy, graciously preserve all of us perfectly clear!

[Jeremiah 1:17](#). *Thou therefore gird up thy loins, —*

“Thou hast a hard task before thee, Jeremiah, a stern life’s work cut out for thee; ‘therefore gird up thy loins,’ “ —

[Jeremiah 1:17](#). *And arise, —*

“There must be no waiting, no idleness: ‘Arise,’ “ —

[Jeremiah 1:17](#). *And speak unto them all that I command thee:*

“Do not trim it at all, or pare it down, or omit distasteful portions; but ‘speak unto them all that I command thee.’”

[Jeremiah 1:17](#). *Be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them.*

We ought to be so afraid of God that we are afraid of nobody else. “Fear him, ye saints, and you will then have nothing else to fear.” Send all your fears to heaven, and there let them stop.

[Jeremiah 1:18-19](#). *For, behold, I have made thee this day a defended city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land. And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the LORD, to deliver thee.*

[JEREMIAH CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 2

Verses 1-19

[Jeremiah 2:1-3](#). *Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying, Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the LORD, I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel was holiness unto the LORD, and the firstfruits of his increase: all that devour him shall offend; evil shall come upon them, saith the LORD.*

God remembered what Israel used to be in those good days when the Lord alone did lead them and there was no strange god among them. Now he bids them remember from whence they had fallen, and repent and do their first works lest he come unto them in wrath. Oh, beloved, if you ever

lived near to God — if you ever rested your head on Christ’s bosom, and have now wandered away from him and are spiritually cold and dead, begin to chide yourself; for the Lord himself, in the word before us, doth chide you. He calls you to a sorrowful remembrance of the position from which you have descended — the heights of grace from which you have come down. Breathe the prayer that he would restore you again. “Wilt thou not revive us again, that thy people may rejoice in thee.”

[Jeremiah 2:4-5](#). *Hear ye the word of the LORD, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel: thus saith the LORD, What iniquity have your father found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain?*

He asks them whether there was any fault in him — any failure in keeping his promise, — whether he had dealt unjustly or unmercifully with them that they had thus gone away from him and walked after vanity.

[Jeremiah 2:6](#). *Neither said they; Where is the LORD that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, that led us through the wilderness, through a land of deserts and of pits, through a land of drought, and of the shadow of death, through a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt?*

Ought they not always to have remembered the wonderful wilderness journey where God seemed to multiply his miracles in the midst of their great necessities? Some of you have passed through a wilderness too, yet have you been richly supplied. You have had to admire the constancy of the divine goodness. God has not failed you ever, even in your worst circumstances. Do not let it be said of you that you never say, “Where is the Lord that brought us up out of the land of Egypt.” On the contrary, always fly to him when you are in time of trouble. Remember that this is the way to glorify God. “He shall call upon me and I will answer him “ is one of God’s own promises; and then he adds — “and he shall glorify me.”

[Jeremiah 2:7-8](#). *And I brought you into a plentiful country, to eat the fruit thereof and the goodness thereof but when ye entered, ye defiled my land, and made mine heritage an abomination. The priests said not, Where is the LORD? and they that handle the law knew me not: the pastors also transgressed against me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit.*

Was not this very shameful that in Canaan, which God had chosen beyond all countries for its fertility that he might give it to his own people

for ever, there they began to set up idols, and altars to other gods? And the priests, whose lips ought to have kept knowledge, and the prophets who above all men were bound to have spoken in the name of the Lord joined the people in their sin. They even urged them to worship Baal — that dummy deity, unworthy of a moment's respect who should not have been so much as thought of by God's people. They ought not even to have taken the name of Baal into their lips. Do you not see yourselves here, O backsliders? If you ever knew the Lord and have gone back to the world, if you have submitted yourselves again to the powers thereof, and sinned with a high hand, have you not acted most shamefully towards your God? And ought you not, with a blushing countenance and weeping eyes to return to him and ask mercy at his hands?

[Jeremiah 2:9-11](#). *Wherefore I will yet plead with you, saith the LORD, and with your children's children will I plead. For pass over the Isles of Chittim, and see; and send unto Kedar, and consider diligently, and see if there be such a thing. Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit.*

How powerfully this is put! No other nation gave up its gods. Though they were no gods, but mere images of clay or gold, they would not change them. They stuck to their idolatries with wonderful pertinacity; but God's people gave up the true God to worship the demons of the nations round about. And is it not an unhappy thing that there are now some who at least call themselves God's people who go back to the world and seem to be more in love with it than ever they were? It is a horrible thing that is done. I have heard of a chieftain of an Indian tribe whose nephew was converted to the faith but who, after a short time, fell into sin and renounced his profession; the old chief used always to answer all the teaching of the missionary with this argument: "My nephew tried it and gave it up. He ought to know." Well, when this was told to the young man it broke his heart, and happily brought him back to the God he had forsaken. Perhaps there are some in the world who are gathering excuses for continuing in sin from the unhappy conduct of such as backslide. "Look at him," say they, "how hot and zealous he was, and see what he is now." Can you bear the thought, backslider? If there remains a spark of love to Christ in your soul, you will feel bitterly the sorrow that others should make an excuse for blasphemy and for rebellion against Christ, out of your evil conduct. Oh,

pray tonight — “Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free spirit.”

[Jeremiah 2:12-13](#). *Be astonished O, ye heavens at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the LORD. For my people have committed two evils they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.*

If a man should change for the better, his selfishness might be a little excuse for leaving his old love, but when he changes for the worse — leaves a fountain for a cistern — a flowing fountain for a broken cistern that holds nothing — why, there is madness in his sin. “Be astonished, O ye heavens and be horribly afraid.”

[Jeremiah 2:14-17](#). *Is Israel a servant? is he a homeborn slave? why is he spoiled? The young lions roared upon him and yelled, and they made his land waste: his cities are burned without inhabitant. Also the children of Noph and Tahapanes have broken the crown of thy head. Hast thou not procured this unto thyself in that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God, when he led thee by the way?*

The people of Israel had got into a dreadful state of poverty and famine and oppression. Their enemies had so destroyed the land that it was full of lions that even yelled in the very streets where once men and women and children abounded. And God says to them, “Is not this the result of your own sin? Was it so when you lived near to me? Have you not brought this upon yourself by your sin?” So, child of God, if you are unhappy tonight — if you are mourning — if you cannot find comfort in the world — no comfort in God either, “hast thou not procured this unto thyself? When thou didst live near to God, when prayer was continual, when thou didst watch thy conduct, when thou didst go softly asking God to guide thee from day to day, was it not better with thee then than now. Then thy peace was like a river and thy righteousness like the waves of the sea. If it be not so now, hast thou not procured this unto thyself in that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God when he led thee by the way?”

[Jeremiah 2:18](#). *And now what hast thou to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor? or what hast thou to do in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of the river?*

For instead of going to the fountain of living waters, they were hoping to be helped by the Egyptians or helped by the Assyrians. Just as there are some Christians who try to drink the muddy waters of sinful pleasure and of

carnal lust, they are beginning to think the muddy river very sweet and to like the taste of it. It is a deadly evil when professing Christians begin to do as others do, and to mix with the world and feel pleasure in it. There will be a blight upon you if you turn from God! Misery will dog your steps ere long, if you be indeed a child of God.

[Jeremiah 2:19](#). *Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord GOD of hosts.*

A very solemn passage. May we lay it to heart. Not only is there guilt in our sin for which we shall have to answer at God's judgment seat, but there is evil in it which will come swiftly upon our own heads even here, "Be sure thy sin will find thee out." The thing thou thinkest will be thy strength, will be thy scourge. What thou dreamest of as pleasure will prove to be thy plague. If thou hast ever known the joy of God's service all this shall be doubly true of thee: thou shalt never be able again to find satisfaction in the world, and God, the God whom thou didst once delight in, will let thine own wickedness correct thee, and thy backslidings reprove thee, because he wishes thee to come back again to his side, and to drink again of the living waters which thou hast so foolishly forsaken.

Verses 1-25

[Jeremiah 2:1-3](#). *Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying, Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem saying, Thus saith the LORD: I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness in a land that was not sown. Israel was holiness unto the LORD, and the first-fruits of his increase: all that devour him shalt offend; evil shall come upon them, saith the LORD.*

God reminds his people of what they used to be in their first days, when they came out of Egypt. They had very sadly declined from what they then were. They were none too faithful to the Lord then; but they had fallen back even from that condition. Does not this passage come home to some of you who are not now what you once were? May the Lord graciously speak through these words to your ear, and to your heart, if you have backslidden from him in any degree!

[Jeremiah 2:4-5](#). *Hear ye the word of the LORD, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel: thus saith the LORD, What iniquity*

have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain

What faults have you to find with God, that you have left him? What fault have you seen in the ever-blessed Christ, that your love to him should have grown cold?

[Jeremiah 2:6-7](#). *Neither said they, Where is the LORD that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, that led us through the wilderness, through a land of deserts and of pits, through a land of drought, and of the shadow of death, through a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt? And I brought you into a plentiful country, to eat the fruit thereof and the goodness thereof; but when ye entered, ye defiled my land, and made mine heritage an abomination.*

It is a sad charge against anybody that he forgets the care that God has taken of him in the days of his poverty and affliction. When a man becomes rich, and is surrounded by earthly comforts, it is a terrible thing that he should then forget God; or that, the more God does for him, the less he thinks of God. This is strangely ungrateful conduct, yet the children of Israel acted thus. They were better in the wilderness, though they were bad enough there, they were better in the wilderness than they were in Canaan, better on the desert sand than they were in the land that flowed with milk and honey. And there are some, nowadays, who were better in their poverty than they are in their prosperity, and some who were better by a long way in their times of sickness than they now are in their balmy days of health. Alas, that it should be so!

[Jeremiah 2:8](#). *The priests said not, Where is the LORD? and they that handle the law knew me not: the pastors also transgressed against me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit.*

It is always ill with the people when the ministers go wrong. If the dogs do not protect the flock, but are dumb dogs that cannot bark, what is to become of the sheep?

[Jeremiah 2:9-11](#). *Wherefore I will yet plead with you, saith the LORD, and with your children's children will I plead. For pass over the isles of Chittim, and see; and send unto Kedar, and consider diligently, and see if there be such a thing. Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit,*

God bids them go to the West, across the Mediterranean, to Chittim, that is, probably Cyprus, or to go to the East, away there to Kedar, or Arabia, and see whether any Gentile nation ever changed its gods, which really were no gods. “And yet,” says the Lord, “here is a people that knew the one living and true God, but they have turned aside to idols: ‘My people hath changed their glory for that which doth not profit.’” O friend, if there is no truth in religion, I do not wonder that you give it up! But if you ever knew its blessed sweetness, if Christ was ever precious to you, if you did once enjoy the gospel of his grace, how is it that you have grown cold towards it, and declined from its ways?

[Jeremiah 2:12-13](#). *Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the LORD. For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold-no water.*

To go away from the flowing fountain to the stagnant waters of a cistern, is great folly; but to go and hew out broken cisterns that can hold no water, but merely mock your thirst, is madness of the worst kind.

[Jeremiah 2:14](#). *Is Israel a servant? is he a home born slave? why is he spoiled?*

God made him to be his son, not his slave; but Israel went aside from God, and so became a slave, being carried away into captivity by the very nation whose gods the chosen people worshipped.

[Jeremiah 2:15-16](#). *The young lions roared upon him, and yelled, and they made his land waste: his cities are burned without inhabitant. Also the children of Noph and Tuhapanes have broken the crown of thy head.*

The Israelites went and worshipped idols, and then the very nations whose gods they worshipped invaded the land, and broke the crown of their head, or made them bald, which was to the Jews a mark of mourning or of disgrace.

[Jeremiah 2:17](#). *Hast thou not procured this-unto thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God, when he led thee by the way?*

You who are depressed in soul, you who have grown spiritually poor, you who are in great trouble of heart, listen: “Hast thou not procured this unto thyself?” Didst thou not make the rod for thine own back by going away from thy God? It was well enough with thee when thou didst trust in him; but now that thou hast turned aside from him, all these evils have

come upon thee. “Hast thou not procured this unto thyself, in that thou hast forsaken Jehovah thy God, when he led thee by the way?”

[Jeremiah 2:18](#). *And now what hast thou to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor?*

“The waters of the Nile;” or, as it may be read, “the waters of that muddy river.” The Israelites had suffered so much during their long captivity in Egypt, that one would have thought they would never have wanted to go near the house of bondage again: “What hast thou to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor?”

[Jeremiah 2:18](#). *Or what hast thou to do in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of the river?*

You are trying to find pleasure in the world, you are going to the resorts of sin, to seek amusement there. If thou art a child of God, “What hast thou to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor? Or what hast thou to do in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of the river?” What doest thou there, Elijah? Thou hast lost the comforts of religion by thy backsliding; and now thou art trying to make up for them by going into the world’s gaiety. It will never do; thou canst never fill thy belly with the husks that the swine do eat. If thou wert one of the swine, thou mightest do so; but if thou art thy Father’s son, it is only the bread in his house that will satisfy thy hungry soul.

[Jeremiah 2:19-25](#). *Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shalt reprove thee: know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord GOD of hosts. For of old time I have broken thy yoke, and burst thy bands; and thou saidst, I will not transgress; when upon every high hill and under every green tree then wanderest, playing the harlot. Yet I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me? For though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much hope, yet thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord GOD, how canst thou say, I am not polluted, I have not gone after Baalim? see thy way in the valley, know what thou hast done: thou art a swift dromedary traversing her ways; a-wild ass used to the wilderness, that snuffeth up the wind at her pleasure: in her occasion who can turn her away? all they that seek her will not weary themselves; in her month they shall find her. Withhold thy foot*

from being unshod, and thy throat from thirst, but thou saidst, There is no hope no; for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go.

God compares his erring people, in the delirium of their sin, to these wild creatures that cannot be tamed, but are driven by their ungovernable passions whithersoever they will. Alas, that men should be so sinful that God can only find a parallel to them in the wild asses of the wilderness! See, also, what despair will do for its victims. When a man says, "There is no hope," then he feels that for him there is no repentance. When he believes that God will not forgive him, then he will not turn from his evil ways. "Thou saidst, There is no hope: no, for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go." God save any here present who are getting into the clutches of Giant Despair! May they know the true goodness of God, and may that goodness lead them to repentance! Amen.

Verses 20-37

[Jeremiah 2:20-26](#). *For of old time I have broken thy yoke, and burst thy bands; and thou saidst, I will not transgress; when upon every high hill and under every green tree thou wanderest, playing the harlot. Yet I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me? For though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord GOD. How canst thou say, I am not polluted, I have not gone after Baalim? see thy way in the valley, know what thou hast done: thou art a swift dromedary traversing her ways; A wild ass used to the wilderness, that snuffeth up the wind at her pleasure; in her occasion who can turn her away? all they that seek her will not weary themselves; in her month they shall find her. Withhold thy foot from being unshod, and thy throat from thirst: but thou saidst, There is no hope: no; for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go. As the thief is ashamed when he is found, so is the house of Israel ashamed; they, their kings, their princes, and their priests, and their prophets, —*

And there are many people whose repentance is of no more value than the shame of a thief, when he is found out. Oh, for something better and deeper than this!

[Jeremiah 2:26-27](#). *So is the house of Israel ashamed; they, their kings, their princes, and their priests, and their prophets, Saying to a stock, Thou art my father; and to a stone, Thou hast brought me forth: for they have*

turned their back unto me, and not their face: but in the time of their trouble they will say, Arise, and save us.

Some men never pray except in stormy weather. Their religion is wholly dependent upon their condition and circumstances. If all is going well with them, they bend not their knees before the Lord, but when they are in sore distress, and especially if they think they are likely soon to die, then they cry unto God, “Arise, and save us,” with no more true faith than these idolaters had when they cried to their powerless idols.

[Jeremiah 2:28-30](#). *But where are thy gods that thou hast made thee? let them arise, if they can save thee in the time of thy trouble: for according to the number of thy cities are thy gods, O Judah. Wherefore will ye plead with me? ye all have transgressed against me, saith the LORD. In vain have I smitten your children; they received no correction: your own sword hath devoured your prophets, like a destroying lion.*

So far from accepting God’s rebukes in the right spirit, and forsaking their idol gods, they even turned upon the Lord’s messengers and put his prophets to death.

[Jeremiah 2:31](#). *O generation, see ye the word of the LORD.*

“If you will not hear it, see it.”

[Jeremiah 2:31](#). *Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness? wherefore say my people, We are lords; we will come no more unto thee?*

“Do you not see,” says the Lord to these rebellious people, “how much I have done for you? Have you forgotten the numberless mercies I have lavished upon you? I have kept from you nothing that was really good for you. When you worshipped me in sincerity and in truth, you prospered exceedingly; but when you turned away from me, you made a sad mistake. See, then, the sermons which providence itself preached to you if ye will not hear what my prophets say to you in my name.”

[Jeremiah 2:32](#). *Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? yet my people have forgotten me days without number.*

The very beauty of a believer — his glorious dress — is his God. Then can we ever forget him; or all the precious things of the covenant of grace which he so freely bestows upon us? Can we — can we — have fallen so low as to forget the God to whom we owe so much? Alas, he can still say, “My people have forgotten me days without number.”

[Jeremiah 2:33-34](#). *Why trimmest thou thy way to seek love? therefore hast thou also taught the wicked ones thy ways. Also in thy skirts is found the blood of the souls of the poor innocents: I have not found it by secret search, but upon all these.*

God's ancient people had so completely turned away from him, and wandered so far from him, that they had practiced all manner of evil in order to prove their love for other gods. They even went among the heathen, and taught them to sin yet worse than they had sinned before. This was most shameful backsliding, a horrible evil in the sight of God.

[Jeremiah 2:35](#). *Yet thou sayest, Because I am innocent, surely his anger shall turn from me.*

The most guilty people are often the most self-righteous. The sinful nation, which ought to have pleaded guilty, here says, "Because I am innocent, surely his anger shall turn from me."

[Jeremiah 2:35](#). *Behold, I will plead with thee, because thou sayest, I have not sinned.*

That is the great abuse of quarrel between God and men. Many a man still says, "I have not sinned," although God's law condemns him, and the very office of the Saviour proves that the guilty one needed to be saved by One who was almighty. Self-righteousness is a thing which God utterly abhors.

[Jeremiah 2:36](#). *Why gaddest thou about so much to change thy way? thou also shalt be ashamed of Egypt, as thou wast ashamed of Assyria.*

First they trusted to Assyria to save them; and when that broken reed failed them, then they trusted to Egypt; and in a similar fashion, we go from one false hope to another, — from one carnal confidence to another, gadding about to change our way; yet, all the while, refusing to turn unto the Lord.

[Jeremiah 2:37](#). *Yea, thou shalt go forth from him, and thine hands upon thine head:*

Thou shalt go forth as a captive, with thine hands bound above thy head; or, like one in great pain or sorrow, thou shalt hold thine hands to thy head.

[Jeremiah 2:37](#). *For the LORD hath rejected thy confidences, and thou shalt not prosper in them.*

May God, in his mercy, save all of us from false confidences, both now and throughout our whole lives!

JEREMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

Verses 1-23

In this chapter, the sin of God's people is put in the strongest possible light. The figure used may be even said to be a coarse one, but man's sin is itself a coarse thing. The thoughts suggested in this chapter are not what the delicate might desire; but then there is no delicacy in sin.

Jeremiah 3:1. *They say, If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return unto her again? shall not that land be greatly polluted?*

God himself seems here to be at a non plus. His people had gone away from him, they had acted unfaithfully to him, they had joined themselves unto other gods. The case was a very difficult one. If the Lord takes these people back again, will it not look like putting a premium upon sin? That is just the question that is constantly being raised. If God freely forgives great sinners, will it not look as if he treated sin too leniently? Will not free salvation, by faith in Jesus, lead to sin? The world says that it will; and even the Scripture seems to raise the question: "If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return unto her again? Shall not that land be greatly polluted?" Yet Judah had been worse than the woman here described.

Jeremiah 3:1. *But thou has played the harlot with many lovers;*

Here was an awful depth of sin, a terrible enormity of wickedness.

Jeremiah 3:1. *Yet return again to me, saith the LORD.*

What a splendor of divine love is here revealed! I do not wonder that the question should be put, "How can God act thus, and yet be just?" He can do it, and yet be just, as we have often showed you; but, still, it is a very great wonder of grace.

Jeremiah 3:2-3. *Lift up thine eyes unto the high places, and see where thou hast not been lien with. In the ways hast thou sat for them, as the Arabian in the wilderness; and thou hast polluted the land with thy whoredoms and with thy wickedness. Therefore the showers have been withholden, and there hath been no latter rain; and thou hadst a whore's forehead, thou refused to be ashamed.*

This was very strong, rough language, but oh! how true it was! The people had gone astray from God into all manner of filthiness and pollution; and even when God had chastened them by withholding the showers till they were threatened with famine, they did not turn to him. They seemed to have a brow like adamant, they could not be made ashamed. There may be some persons of that kind in this assembly; if so, let them notice what God says: —

[Jeremiah 3:4](#). *Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My father, thou art the guide of my youth?*

Will not you come back again? You are invited to return unto the Lord, despite your wandering, your perverseness, your abominable iniquity. Will you not remember the better days when God was the Guide of your youth? You were not always what you are now. Will you not from this time cry unto the Lord, “My Father, thou art the Guide of my youth”?

[Jeremiah 3:5](#). *Will he reserve his anger for ever? will he keep it to the end?*

No, that he will not; there is none so slow to anger as our God, and there is none so ready to be rid of it as he is. He is a God ready to pardon, waiting to forgive, delighting in mercy. Even though the sin should be so foul that, as I read it to you, I seem almost to blush in the reading, as you may in the hearing, yet, black as it is, God can put it all away in the greatness of his mercy.

[Jeremiah 3:5](#). *Behold, thou hast spoken and done evil things as thou couldst.*

Thou hast gone as far in sin as thou couldst go; only lack of power has prevented thee from being even worse than thou art. Yet this is the kind of people to whom God speaks in mercy, inviting them to return unto him.

[Jeremiah 3:6](#). *The LORD said also unto me in the days, of Josiah the king, Hast thou seen that which backsliding Israel hath done? she is gone up upon every high mountain and under every green tree, and there hath played the harlot.*

Building temples to false gods on every mountain and in every grove.

[Jeremiah 3:7](#). *And I said after she had done all these things, Turn thou unto me. But she returned not. And her treacherous sister Judah saw it.*

That made Judah’s sin even worse than that of Israel; she saw this great iniquity in another, and yet went and committed it herself.

[Jeremiah 3:8-9](#). *And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also. And it came to pass through the lightness of her whoredom, that she defiled the land, and committed adultery with stones and with stocks.*

Bowing down before idols made of wood or stone.

[Jeremiah 3:10-12](#). *And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah hath not turned unto me with her whole heart, but feignedly, saith the LORD. And the LORD said unto me, The backsliding Israel hath justified herself more than treacherous Judah. Go and proclaim these words toward the north, —*

What must these words be? Must they not be, “You have treated me so ill that I will never have anything to do with you again; even common decency requires that I should put you away from all hope for ever”? No; listen to these words, and be astounded: —

[Jeremiah 3:12](#). *And say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the LORD and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the LORD, and I will not keep anger for ever.*

Oh, the measureless mercy of these gracious sentences! Deep and black as the sin is, and fearful and terrible as is the description of it, how bright, how clear is the immeasurable love which promises to put that sin away, and forget and forgive it once for all!

[Jeremiah 3:13](#). *Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the LORD thy God, and hast scattered thy ways to the strangers under every green tree, and ye have not obeyed my voice, saith the Lord.*

Confess that sad fact, acknowledge that you have thus sinned. Into the ear of God pour out the full confession of your criminality. He cannot ask for anything less than this; surely you cannot demur to it. If you have thus treated him, come and confess it with your head in his bosom, for he is willing to receive you even if you be the very biggest sinner out of hell.

[Jeremiah 3:14-15](#). *Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion: and I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.*

When God once begins to pardon men, there is no end to it. He goes on to bless them with all that they need He makes them to be like the sheep of his pasture, who shall be richly and happily fed.

[Jeremiah 3:16](#). *And it shall come to pass, when ye be multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, saith the LORD, they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the LORD: neither shall it come to mind: neither shall they remember it; neither shall they visit it; neither shall that be done any more.*

You know that they had been accustomed to the old ceremonial religion, which was full of outward rites and forms. God says that, when he brings his erring people back to himself, they shall have done with all that mere externalism. They shall come to worship God in spirit and in truth, and to commune with him without the medium of the ark of the covenant or an earthly priest. They shall walk before him in the joy of their spirits; yet these, mark you, are some of the people who are described in this chapter as having defiled the house of God, and gone astray from him to their utter disgrace.

[Jeremiah 3:17](#). *At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the LORD and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem:*

Even to that very city that had become like a harlot, and was full of abominations.

[Jeremiah 3:17-18](#). *Neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart. In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel,*

There is no more quarrelling when grace comes in. Israel and Judah in the old days fought against each other; but when they alike taste of pardoning grace they shall love each other.

[Jeremiah 3:18-19](#). *And they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your fathers. But I said, how shall I put thee among the children, —*

When God had said all this, he appears to have come to a pause, and even in his own heart the question seems to arise, How can he deal with these greatly sinful ones as his children? “I said, How shall I put thee among the children,” —

[Jeremiah 3:19](#). *And give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the host of nations? and I said, Thou shalt call me, My father; and shalt not*

turn away from me.

God knew how to change the character and to change the heart, so that these filthy ones, who went farthest astray, should come back to him, and should become among the most holy, the most loyal, the most obedient of all his children. Oh, that his grace might work that miracle again in our midst! Remember what he did for Saul of Tarsus, that transcendent persecutor, how he made him to be the very bravest of his apostles; and he can at this moment take those who form the chosen body-guard of the devil and so change them that they shall become the soldiers of the cross, nearest to Christ, the great Commander. The Lord, by his servant the prophet, goes over this sad story again: —

[Jeremiah 3:20](#). *Surely as a wife treacherously departeth from her husband, so have ye dealt treacherously with me, O house of Israel, saith the LORD.*

But listen —

[Jeremiah 3:21](#). *A voice was heard upon the high places,*

The places where they had built the altars to the false gods: “A voice was heard upon the high places,” —

[Jeremiah 3:21](#). *Weeping and supplications of the children of Israel: for they have perverted their way, and they have forgotten the LORD their God.*

How pleasant to the ears of God is the weeping of his backsliding people! The happy God does not wish men to be sorrowful, but he is glad that they should be sorrowful for sin. Now that they have begun to bemoan their wanderings and their wickedness, they will come back to their God, so he says to them: —

[Jeremiah 3:22-23](#). *Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the LORD our God. Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains: truly in the LORD our God is the salvation of Israel.*

So they come back to him, and find the salvation which they need.

Verses 6-25

Let us read part of the 3rd chapter of Jeremiah where God brings a solemn accusation against the two nations of Israel and Judah because they forsook the living God, and went after idols — neglected his pure and holy worship, and followed after the abominable rites of the heathen.

[Jeremiah 3:6-7](#). *The LORD said also unto me in the days of Josiah the king, Hast thou seen that which backsliding Israel hath done? she is gone*

up upon every high mountain and under every green tree, and there hath played the harlot. And I said after she had done all these things. Turn thou unto me.

Depth of mercy that God should bid such a polluted one return to him. “Yet I said, after she had done all these things, Turn thou unto me.”

[Jeremiah 3:7-8](#). *But she returned not. And her treacherous sister Judah saw it. And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also.*

Some cannot be kept back from sin by the punishment of others, but they run into the fire in which others have been burnt, and so they aggravate their sin.

[Jeremiah 3:9](#). *And it came to pas through the lightness of her whoredom that she defiled the land, and committed adultery with stones and with stocks.*

That is to say, she gave her heart to false gods, and worshipped stones and stocks. And how it must anger the living God to see men turn away from him to worship blocks of wood and stone, instead of him and especially a people who have been instructed concerning the living God, and so commit the grossest act of disloyalty to him, and be rebellious to the lot degree.

[Jeremiah 3:10-11](#). *And for all this her treacherous sister Judah hath not turned unto me with her whole heart, but feignedly, saith the LORD. And the LORD said unto me, The backsliding Israel hath justified herself more than treacherous Judah.*

The one sinned openly and persevered in it. The other pretended to repent and did not, and that pretended repentance was more hateful in the sight of God than even the daring and open sin of Israel. What next?

[Jeremiah 3:12](#). *Go and proclaim these words towards the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the LORD. And I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the LORD, and I will not keep anger for ever.*

The offense was foul. It is such a one as stabs at the heart of man’s honour. It is an offense which a man will scarcely ever forgive, But God bids his wandering Israel come back, and proclaims mercy — free mercy — even to such gross transgressors.

[Jeremiah 3:13](#). *Only acknowledge thine iniquity,*

It is all he asks thee to do. Confess that thou hast done wrong. “Only acknowledge thine iniquity.”

[Jeremiah 3:13](#). *That thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God, and hast scattered thy ways to the strangers under every green tree, and ye have not obeyed my voice, saith the LORD,*

It was under the trees that they set up their altars to worship their false gods; so that they turned the graves, which should be full of beauty and sweet with song, into the places of idolatry, whereby God was provoked. But he says, “Only confess it. Come and lament it. Own that you have been guilty, and I will put away the sin.”

[Jeremiah 3:14-16](#). *Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD: for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion: And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding. And it shall come to pass, when ye be multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, saith the LORD, they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the LORD, neither shall it come to mind neither shall they remember it; neither shall they visit it; neither shall that be done any more.*

Evangelical repentance, when it brings pardon with it, usually puts a slight upon mere legal ceremonies. We need not the symbol when we get the substance. We need no ark of the covenant nor holy place at Jerusalem when once the Lord appear in plenteous grace to put away our sin.

[Jeremiah 3:17-18](#). *At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the LORD and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart. In those days, the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel,*

Nothing unites people like the grace of God. Two men that have been pardoned by the same Saviour ought to love one another, and they will.

[Jeremiah 3:18-19](#). *And they shall come together out of the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your fathers. But I said,*

After all this mercy, he seems to come to a pause, “But I said” —

[Jeremiah 3:19](#). *How shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations?*

Is it possible? Can it be done? These harlot nations that have defiled and polluted themselves with unutterable filthiness — can they be put among

the children — the children of God?

[Jeremiah 3:19-22](#). *And I said, Thou shalt call me, My father and shalt not turn away from me. Surely as a wife treacherously departeth from her husband, so have ye dealt treacherously with me, O house of Israel, saith the LORD. A voice was heard upon the high places, weeping and supplications of the children of Israel: for they have perverted their way, and they have forgotten the LORD their God. Return ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings.*

Do you hear it? Do you hear God's promise? Do you hear his command? "Return, ye backsliding children. I will heal your backslidings." Now for the answer. God grant that it may well up in your hearts.

[Jeremiah 3:22-23](#). *Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the LORD our God. Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains:*

We leave all false confidences. We forsake our earthly joys.

[Jeremiah 3:23-24](#). *Truly in the LORD our God is the salvation of Israel. For shame hath devoured the labour of our fathers from our youth; their flocks and their herds, their sons and their daughters.*

They have not profited by worshipping idols. They have suffered through it.

[Jeremiah 3:25](#). *We lie down in our shame, and our confusion covereth us: for we have sinned against the LORD our God, we and our fathers, from our youth even unto this day, and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God.*

There you see the repentance which the Lord commanded at his people's hands, and wherever there is such a repentance as that there are sure to be acceptance and salvation. God grant us that repentance, and save us for his mercy's sake.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Jeremiah 3:6-25](#); [Jeremiah 4:1-29](#).

Verses 12-25

[Jeremiah 3:12-14](#). *Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the LORD and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the LORD, and I will not keep anger for ever. Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the LORD thy God, and hast scattered thy way to the strangers under every green tree, and ye have not obeyed my voice, saith*

the LORD. Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD for I am married unto you:

There is a mixed figure here, but there is no mixed sense: children and yet married unto him. The bond was a double one, they were begotten and betrothed. God cares little about the rules of human oratory and formal eloquence. If his meaning can only be made perfectly plain, he freely breaks through all such rules and regulations as we properly make for our talk. “O backsliding children I am married unto you.”

[Jeremiah 3:14](#). *And I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion:*

That is, “two of a tribe;” for the word “family” was used in a very large sense in those times, and comprehended perhaps the whole of one of the twelve tribes.

[Jeremiah 3:15](#). *And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.*

The backsliders when they come back shall not be left outside the fold, but they shall have shepherds to watch over them, and they shall not be left to a lean pasture, but they shall be fed with knowledge and understanding. This is fine fare for the hungry soul! Knowledge is good, but understanding is better. To know may be of little service unless we have the inner and deeper knowledge with it, and understand what we know. These pastors shall feed you with knowledge and understanding. They shall not only teach, but teach so that you cannot fail to learn.

[Jeremiah 3:16](#). *And it shall come to pass, when ye be multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, saith the LORD, they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the LORD neither shall it come to mind: neither shall they remember it, neither shall they visit it; neither shall that be done any more.*

Ceremonial retreats into the dim background when the spiritual is in full vigor. They have come to God for themselves, and they need not now that saved ark of gopher wood lined within and without with gold. In the present day those that walk near to God think but little of the eternal. That which God commands they obey; but their confidence lies in himself. True religion is not a form, but a life, and the soul. Living near to God, is the main, the really essential thing.

[Jeremiah 3:17](#). *At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the LORD and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the*

LORD, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart.

This is, I believe, yet to be literally fulfilled in Jerusalem itself; and spiritually also, to be fulfilled in the Church, when she shall not be behind the nations but become their head, and take the lead in all of blessing for mankind.

[Jeremiah 3:18-19](#). *In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your father. But I said, How shall I put thee among the children,*

As if God himself were at a pass and brought to a nonplus. These people had sinned so much, and they had been driven consequently to the ends of the earth. “I said, How shall I put thee among the children?”

[Jeremiah 3:19](#). *And give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations? and I said, Thou shalt call me, My father;*

When God gives us the spirit of children then it becomes easy for him to put us among the children. Where the nature of children is given by divine regeneration, the rights of children may well be given by adoption. “I said, Thou shalt call me, My Father.”

[Jeremiah 3:19](#). *And shalt not turn away from me.*

I always look upon that second part of the blessing as being perhaps the richer of the two. The final perseverance of the saints forms the cluster of crown jewels that it found in the gasket of the covenant. “Thou shalt not depart from me. Thou shalt not turn away from me.” Oh —

“If ever it should come to pass
That sheep of Christ could fall away
My fickle, feeble soul, alas!
Would fall ten thousand times a day.”

But he that has begun the good work has promised to carry it on. There is our safety and our rest. “Thou shalt call me, My father; and shalt not turn away from me.”

[Jeremiah 3:20-21](#). *Surely as a wife treacherously departeth from her husband, so have ye dealt treacherously with me, O house of Israel, saith the LORD. A voice was heard upon the high place, weeping and supplications of the children of Israel: for they have perverted their way, and they have forgotten the LORD their God.*

The worst of crimes — that a wife should be false to her marriage vows, and turn aside from her husband whom she is bound to love, and very seldom is it that a husband calls a treacherous wife back again, — but God in infinite mercy hateth putting away. He cannot bear divorce. He holds still to the object of his love, and therefore complains with a sweet fidelity of affection, of the treachery of Israel; and while he is doing it a voice is heard upon the high places, weeping and supplications of the children of Israel, for they have perverted their way, and have forgotten Jehovah their God; and therefore what was there for them but sorrow. They were on their high places offering sacrifice and incense to their new gods, and instead of joy and holy psalms and hymns of delight, they were crying like the priests of Baal, and cutting themselves and torturing themselves. God heard it, weeping and supplications, not to him, for they had perverted their way. Their sorrow did not come from him, for they had forgotten the Lord their God. But that sorrow had something hopeful about it. They found no joy in their new gods, and derived no comfort from their backslidings.

[Jeremiah 3:22](#). *Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings.*

Oh, the wonderful mercy of God! He treats sin as a disease. It was a grand thought, that, on God's part, that he would not so much look upon sin as being a willful deed and crime, but would look upon it as a malady of the mind and soul. "I will heal your backslidings." And see the sweet answer that Israel gives to this.

[Jeremiah 3:22](#). *Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the LORD our God.*

Oh, that that answer might come from every backsliding heart that is here tonight — that there might be a restoration of the wanderer to his God.

[Jeremiah 3:23](#). *Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains:*

See, they were trying to get it from their high places. They lifted up their voices to their gods, but they only learnt to mourn and weep. "In vain is salvation hoped for from the hills and from the multitude of mountains."

[Jeremiah 3:23-25](#). *Truly in the LORD our God is the salvation of Israel. For shame hath devoured the labour of our fathers from our youth; their flocks and their herds, their sons and their daughters. We lie down in our shame, and our confusion covereth us: for we have sinned against the*

LORD our God, we and our fathers, from our youth even unto this day, and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God.

May such repentance as that fall to the lot of any wanderers who listen now to my words.

JEREMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 4

Verses 1-29

Jeremiah 4:1-2. *If thou wilt return, O Israel, saith the LORD, return unto me: and if thou wilt put away thine abominations out of my sight, then shalt thou not remove. And thou shalt swear, The LORD liveth, in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness; and the nations shall bless themselves in him, and in him shall they glory.*

So he sets before them life and death. First, he begins with these words of encouragement. He begs them to come, for God is willing to receive them notwithstanding all.

Jeremiah 4:3-4 *For thus saith the LORD to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns. Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem: lest my fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings.*

They had the outward religion, but the Lord's servant bids them know that they must have heart religion. The heart must be purged: the inward must be cleansed. This they had no mind to. They would multiply their sacrifices and their outward performances, but as to cleanliness of heart, this they cared not for.

Jeremiah 4:5-7. *Declare ye in Judah, and publish in Jerusalem; and say, Blow ye the trumpet in the land: cry, gather together, and say, Assemble yourselves, and let us go into the defended cities. Set up the standard towards Zion: retire, stay not: for I will bring evil from the north, and a great destruction. The lion is come up from his thicket, and the destroyer of the Gentiles is on his way: he is gone forth from his place to make thy land desolate; and thy cities shall he laid waste, without an inhabitant.*

This was a terrible prophecy. The Chaldeans, who had broken to pieces so many other kingdoms and powers, were on their way. The lion enraged, had leaped from his thicket and was about to tear, and rend, and do universal havoc; and if they did not turn to God, their whole land would be laid waste. One would think that such a heavy blow should have awakened them to a sense of their danger and their sin, but, alas! it was not so.

[Jeremiah 4:8-9](#). *For this gird you with sackcloth, lament and howl: for the fierce anger of LORD is not turned back from us. And it shall come to pass at that day, saith the LORD, that the heart of the king shall perish, and the heart of the princes; and the priests shall be astonished, and the prophets shall wonder.*

Universal fear would take hold upon them. If they would not rightly fear the Lord and turn to him; the time would come when, without exception, the greatest and the wisest of them, should be taken with a sudden panic.

[Jeremiah 4:10](#). *Then said I, Ah! Lord God! surely thou hast greatly deceived this people and Jerusalem, saying, Ye shall have peace; whereas the sword reacheth unto the soul.*

God promises them peace, but it was upon a condition which they did not fulfill. There was peace while they gave up their sin, but “There is no peace, With God, unto the wicked”: and so they missed it.

[Jeremiah 4:11-12](#). *At that time shall it be said to this people and to Jerusalem. A dry wind of the high places in the wilderness toward the daughter of my people, not to fan, nor to cleanse, Even a full wind from those places shall come unto me: now also will I give sentence against them.*

What an awful line that is. “Now also will I give sentence against them.” They had been on their trial. They are found guilty. They will not repent. “Now will I proceed to pronounce their doom and give sentence against them.”

[Jeremiah 4:13](#). *Behold, he shall come up as clouds, and his chariots shall be as a whirlwind: his horses are swifter than eagles. Woe unto us! for we are spoiled.*

They began to cry out when they began to smart, and the prophet comes in again.

[Jeremiah 4:14](#). *O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved.*

There is ever that silver bell of mercy ringing out the note of invitation. “O Jerusalem, thy sorrows, thy destruction may yet be averted if thou wilt turn from thy darkness, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved.

[Jeremiah 4:14-18](#). *How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee? For a voice declareth from Dan, and publisheth affliction from mount Ephraim. Make ye mention to the nations: behold, publish against Jerusalem, that watchers come from a far country and give out their voice against the cities of Judah. As keepers of a field, are they against her round about; because she hath been rebellious against me, saith the LORD, Thy way and thy doings have procured these things unto thee; this is thy wickedness, because it is bitter, because it reacheth unto thine heart.*

When “great judgments are abroad,” it always is on account of great sin. It was so in the case of Israel. “Thy doings have procured these things unto thee.” Oh! when the ungodly man begins to reap the result of his life — when, in his own body and in his own home, he begins to see what sin will often bring the drunkard to, let him hear these words: “This is thy wickedness. Thy way and thy doings have procured these things unto thee.” Now follows the lament of Jeremiah — one of the most wonderful pieces of sorrowful writing that will ever be read in your hearing.

[Jeremiah 4:19-21](#). *My bowels, my bowels! I am pained at my very heart; my heart maketh a noise in me; I cannot hold my peace, because thou has heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war. Destruction upon destruction is cried; for the whole land is spoiled: suddenly are my tents spoiled, and my curtains in a moment. How long shall I see the standard, and hear the sound of the trumpet?*

The dreadful blast of war, the blood-red flag of murder, flying through the land, while the Chaldeans slew right and left, young and old — we want to put ourselves into Jeremiah’s position to be able to realize the horror of this case.

[Jeremiah 4:22-23](#). *For my people is foolish, they have not known me; they are sottish children, and they have none understanding: they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge. I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was without form, and void: and the heavens, and they had no light.*

As if they had gone back to chaos — to the primeval darkness — to the first disorder ere God began to create.

[Jeremiah 4:24-29](#). *I beheld the mountains, and, lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly. I beheld, and, lo, there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled. I beheld, and, lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the LORD, and by his fierce anger, For thus hath the LORD said, The whole land shall be desolate; yet will I not make a full end. For this shall the earth mourn, and the heavens above be black; because I have spoken it, I have purposed it, and I will not repent, neither will I turn back from it. The whole city shall flee from the noise of the horsemen and bowmen; they shall go into thickets, and climb up upon the rocks; every city shall be forsaken, and not a man dwell therein.*

Now all this did happen. It all came to pass. Palestine, the glorious garden of God, was made as dreary as a wilderness. It is not much better now. It has scarcely recovered. God will re-gather them to the land one day, but oh! what a sight it was when God at last had ended his patience — poured out the vials of his wrath upon his once favored land.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Jeremiah 3:6-25](#); [Jeremiah 4:1-29](#).

[JEREMIAH CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 5

Verses 1-6

[Jeremiah 5:1](#). *Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it.*

It was a very wonderful offer, on the part of God, to forgive the inhabitants of the whole city of Jerusalem for the sake of one man; and it was all the more remarkable because he gave them time to make a thorough search to see whether such a person could be found: “if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth.” Into what a horrible state of guilt must the Jewish capital have fallen when there was not one man, even among the magistrates or the priests, who cared for that which was just and true. May God prevent London and England from becoming like Jerusalem and Judah! May truth and righteousness flourish in our land!

[Jeremiah 5:2](#). *And though they say, The LORD liveth; surely they swear falsely.*

Even those who assumed an appearance of being religious, and who said, “Jehovah liveth,”—even they were false swearers. To what a terribly sad state had the age come when its very religion was a lie, and its professedly holy things were thoroughly rotten!

[Jeremiah 5:3](#). *O LORD, are not thine eyes upon the truth?*

If there be any truthful man anywhere, God sees him. His eyes are upon him, he regards him with attentive delight, and he will take care of him with the utmost vigilance. But what was the real character of these people?

Listen.

[Jeremiah 5:3](#). *Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return.*

Nothing could make them act rightly; whatever God did with them, they still persisted in their iniquity.

[Jeremiah 5:4-5](#). *Therefore I said, Surely these are poor; they are foolish: for they know not the way of the Lord, nor the judgment of their God. I will get me unto the great men, and will speak unto them; for they have known the way of the LORD, and the judgment of their God:*

But he found no improvement among them; they were even worse than the poor and ignorant, for he goes on to say,—

[Jeremiah 5:5-6](#). *But these have altogether broken the yoke, and burst the bonds. Wherefore a lion out of the forest shall slay them, and a wolf of the evenings shall spoil them, a leopard shall watch over their cities: every one that goeth out thence shall be torn in pieces: because their transgressions are many, and their backslidings, are increased.*

Now let us continue our reading at verse 10, where we shall see that both the house of Israel and the house of Judah had turned aside from the Lord their God.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Jeremiah 5:1-6](#); [Jeremiah 5:10-31](#); and [Revelation 22:1-7](#).

Verses 10-31

[Jeremiah 5:10-12](#). *Go ye up upon her walls, and destroy; but make not a full end: take away her battlements; for they are not the LORD'S. For the house of Israel and the house of Judah have dealt very treacherously against me, saith the LORD. They have belied the LORD,—*

They have made it out as though God himself were a liar. They have contradicted him whose word is the truth itself. They have despised his threatenings, they have refused his invitations, they have disbelieved his promises: “they have belied the Lord,”—

[Jeremiah 5:12-14](#). *And said, It is not he; neither shall evil come upon us; neither shall we see sword nor famine: and the prophets shall become wind, and the word is not in them: thus shall it be done unto them. Wherefore thus saith the LORD God of hosts, Because ye speak this word, behold, I will make my words in thy mouth fire, and this people wood, and it shall devour them.*

It is a dreadful state of things when God turns from pleading with men to threatening them, when he ceases to invite them to return to him, and denounces them as transgressors against his laws. At such times, he makes the words that come out of the mouths of his prophets to be like fire, and men are utterly consumed by them as the stable in the field is destroyed by the devouring flames.

[Jeremiah 5:15-18](#). *Lo, I will bring a nation upon you from far, O house of Israel, saith the LORD: iris a mighty nation, it is an ancient nation, a nation whose language thou knowest not, neither understandest what they say. Their quiver is as an open sepulcher, they are all mighty men. And they shall eat up thine harvest, and thy bread, which thy sons and thy daughters should eat: they shall eat up thy flocks and thine herds: they shall eat up thy vines and thy fig trees: they shall impoverish thy fenced cities, wherein, thou trustedst, with the sword. Nevertheless in those days, saith the LORD, I will not make a full end with you.*

See how, in the midst of his wrath, God remembers mercy. He utters a terrible sentence concerning transgressors, and then he pauses, and says, “Nevertheless,”—listen to the gentle note of pity in that word,—“Nevertheless, in those days, saith the Lord, I will not, make a full end with you.” Still does he spare the guilty, and in his longsuffering he gives them further opportunities for repentance.

[Jeremiah 5:19](#). *And it shall come to pass, when ye shall say, Wherefore doeth the LORD our God all these things unto us? then shalt thou answer them, Like as ye have forsaken me, and serve strange gods in your land, so shall ye serve strangers in a land that is not yours.*

A man may often see his sin in its punishment. Because they had served strange gods, therefore the Lord sent them to serve strangers in a strange

land. Remember, O transgressor, that thy sin will come home to thee in some form or other! if we sow the wind, we shall reap the whirlwind. “Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” Therefore, let us beware of scattering seeds of sin, for they will produce a terrible harvest of woe.

[Jeremiah 5:20-21](#). *Declare this in the house of Jacob, and publish it in Judah, saying, Hear now this, O foolish people, and without understanding; which have eyes, and see not; which have ears, and hear not:*

And, alas! there are far too many of such people still about. They hear God’s Word, yet it never reaches their hearts. They see what God’s hand is doing all around them, yet they do not and they will not really see it as they should.

[Jeremiah 5:22](#). *Fear ye not me? saith the LORD, will ye not tremble at my presence, which, have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it?*

There is a little belt of sand which checks the surging sea, and says to it, “Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed.” Now, if sand, which is so weak a thing, can, nevertheless, control the mighty ocean within bounds, how readily ought you and I to be governed by God, and held in check even by the slightest intimations of his will!

[Jeremiah 5:23](#). *But this people hath a revolting and a rebellious heart; they are revolted and gone.*

God restrains the sea, but nothing seems to be able to restrain the sinfulness of man. He breaks ever every barrier that should keep him back; he is like a desolating torrent when he gives way to iniquity.

[Jeremiah 5:24](#). *Neither say they in their heart, Let us now fear the LORD our God, that giveth rain, both the former and the latter, in his season: he reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest.*

Though God gives timely and suitable seasons for the growth and ingathering of the corn,—rain when it is needed to aid the upspringing of the blade, and fine weather for garnering the harvest,—yet many men see not the hand of God at all, and they are therefore not moved by gratitude to bless his name, and fear him to whom they are indebted for all that they receive. Oh, what an ungrateful and blind creature is man!

[Jeremiah 5:25](#). *Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withholden good things from you.*

Does any unconverted man here know what good things he has missed up to the present moment? Suppose you, my friend, were to be saved tonight, yet can you even imagine what joy you have lost through all the years of your past impenitence? Nothing can ever give back to you the years that have gone, or impart to you, in the future, the joy you might have had, but which you have missed. And, mark you, if there were no hell to be endured, it is enough of hell to have missed heaven. It will be grief enough to your heart, at the last, to find that “your sins have withholden good things from you.”

[Jeremiah 5:26](#). *For among my people are found wicked men:*

“Among my people,” saith the Lord,—in the very church itself, making as loud a profession as the most genuine Christian,—“among my people are found wicked men.” Here, in this place, tonight, mingling with the godly in this congregation, are found wicked men. The Lord have mercy upon them, and turn them from their evil ways!

[Jeremiah 5:26](#). *They lay wait, as he that setteth snares; they set a trap, they catch men.*

Beware of these man-catchers, who entrap souls, and ruin them for ever, ensnaring them by leading them into evil habits and transgressions.

[Jeremiah 5:27-28](#). *As a, cage is full of birds, so are their houses full of deceit: therefore they are become great, and waxen rich. They are waxen fat, they shine: yea, they overpass the deeds of the wicked:-*

The manifestly wicked,—

[Jeremiah 5:28-29](#). *They judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless, yet they prosper; and the right of the needy do they not judge. Shall I not visit for these things?*

Angels in heaven, God says to you, “Shall I not visit for these things?” And they answer, “Yea, Lord.” Even to the devils in hell, he may put the same question. They are already smarting under his wrath, and he may say to them, “Shall I not visit for these things?” And they also answer, “Yea.” He puts the question to all intelligent beings who know what is right and true, “Shall I not visit for these things?” And they, with one consent, reply, “Yea, Lord; it must be so.”

[Jeremiah 5:29-31](#). *Saith the LORD: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this? A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the*

land; the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so:

It is a most horrible thing that God's own people should ever be willing that error should be preached, and that oppression and wrong-doing of any kind should be practiced. You know that, if God's own people did not tolerate false doctrine, it would soon cease to be heard in many places. But it is when those who profess to know God's Word endorse that which is contrary to the truth that error is kept in power in the land: "The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so."

[Jeremiah 5:31](#). *And what will ye do in the end thereof?*

That is a question which I would propose in God's name to all here. Is your religion of such a character that, when you come to die, it will bear you up? Or have you taken up with some form of falsehood which will not stand the test of your dying hour? Are you living in neglect of God? Is your life such that he must be angry with you, for he is angry with the wicked every day? Then, take home to yourself the question with which this chapter closes, "What will ye do in the end thereof?" I am going to speak to you presently about those who go forth with Christ, without the camp, bearing his reproach, so let us read a few verses about the glory which awaits them by-and-by.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Jeremiah 5:1-6](#); [Jeremiah 5:10-31](#); and [Revelation 22:1-7](#).

[JEREMIAH CONTENTS](#)

Jeremiah Chapter 6

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER 7

Verses 1-16

[Jeremiah 7:1-3](#). *The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, Stand in the gate of the LORD'S house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the LORD, all ye of Judah, that enter in at*

these gates to worship the LORD. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Amend your ways and your doings; and I will cause you to dwell in this place.

Many of them thought that, if they went up to the temple, it was all right with them, if they did but go through the outward ritual, they would certainly be accepted. They must have been astonished when Jeremiah, the weeping prophet, met them at the temple door, and told them that the best worship of God was holiness, not the mere outward ceremony but the renewal of the life, the cleansing of the heart before him.

[Jeremiah 7:4-7](#). *Trust ye not in lying words, saying The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD. The temple of the LORD, are these. For if ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if ye thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbour; if ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt: then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers for ever and ever.*

The blessing is not to the temple and the temple worshippers, the blessing is to holy men, to such as love righteousness, to such as obey the living God, and do justice between man and man, and especially between themselves and the poor and needy of the earth. It is needful to say this even now, for there are some who talk of being regenerated by baptism, of being saved by sacraments, they trust in their priests, and rely upon their performances. "Trust ye not in lying words;" that is the Scriptural description of all that kind of thing, - just lying words, and nothing better.

[Jeremiah 7:8-10](#). *Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit. Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; and come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations?*

Will you quote the very decree of God as an excuse for your sin? Will you make it out that even he is partaker in your criminality? That will never do; only a lying heart could conceive of such an abomination.

[Jeremiah 7:11-16](#). *Is this house, which is callest by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen it, saith the LORD. But go ye now unto my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness, of my people Israel. And now, because ye have done all these works, saith the LORD, and I*

spake unto you, rising up early and speaking, but ye heard not; and I called you, but ye answered not; therefore will I do unto this house, which is called by my name, wherein ye trust, and unto the place which I gave to you and to your father, as I have done to Shiloh. And I will cast you out of my sight, as I have cast out all your brethren, even the whole seed of Ephraim. Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me: for I will not hear thee.

You know how, through the sin of Eli's sons, God forsook Shiloh; and the tent of his house and the ark of his covenant were removed, and Shiloh became an utter desolation. This will God do to any church that becomes unfaithful to him. Go ye to Rome, and see what she is today,--mother of harlots, though once she seemed to be the chaste spouse of Christ. Her idolatries are as many as those of the heathen, for she forsook the truth of God, and turned aside from the Most High. Think not that God is tied to any place, or to any ministry. If we walk not before him aright, he may take the candlestick out of its place, he may take the talent away and give it to others, and then "Ichabod" shall be written on the walls whether it be of Shiloh or of Jerusalem. Jeremiah has thus shown us clearly that no confidence can be placed in holy places or outward ceremonies; the state of the heart and the life is the all-important matter.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Jeremiah 7:1-16](#); and [Jeremiah 17:1-14](#)

Verses 21-26

[Jeremiah 7:21-22](#). *Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Put your burnt offerings unto your sacrifices, and eat flesh. For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices:*

You have heard what God said to them when they came out of Egypt.

[Jeremiah 7:23-26](#). *But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you. But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward.*

Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day I have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them: yet they hearkened not unto me, nor inclined their ear, but hardened their neck: they did worse than their fathers. God

grant that these words may never be a truthful description of us! Oh, may we keep the covenant of our God, and walk before him with a holy, reverent fear, and serve him all our days! Amen.

This exposition consisted of readings from Exodus 15; and [Jeremiah 7:21-26](#).

[JEREMIAH CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 8

Verses 1-22

[Jeremiah 8:1](#). *At that time, saith the LORD, they shall bring out the bones of the kings of Judah, and the bones of his princes, and the bones of the priests, and the bones of the prophets, and the bones of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, out of their graves:*

The prophet Jeremiah had to foretell terrible judgments upon the guilty people, who had been often warned, but who had at last gone beyond all bearing, and were about to be destroyed by the Chaldeans, for here we have the picture of Judah and Jerusalem invaded by the Chaldeans and Babylonians, just before the city was utterly destroyed. It was a very common practice to bury treasure with the bodies of kings, hence when any land was invaded by foreign foes, they broke open the tombs, and searched for hidden valuables and it was a sign of the special detestation of the enemy, and of their fury against the people, when they dragged the carcasses out of the graves, and scattered the bones to the four winds of heaven. In this case, it was foretold that this desecration would not only take place with regard to the bones of the kings, in whose tombs the greatest treasure might be expected to be found, but the bones of princes, priests, prophets, and people were all to be alike brought forth.

[Jeremiah 8:2](#). *And they shall spread them before the sun, and the moon, and all the host of heaven, whom they have loved, and whom they have served, and after whom they have walked, and whom they have sought, and whom they have worshipped: they shall not be gathered, nor be buried; they shall be for dung upon the face of the earth.*

What a striking and appropriate judgment that was! As they had worshipped the sun, that very sun was to dry their bones. As they had

worshipped the moon, that moon's rays should fall upon their relics, and the stars, which they had adored, would also be quite unable to help them.

[Jeremiah 8:3](#). *And death shall be chosen rather than life by all the residue of them that remain of this evil family, which remain in all the places whither I have driven them, saith the LORD of hosts.*

There was to be stern treatment for the dead; but it would be worse with the living, for the Chaldeans were strong, fierce, cruel, and most ingenious in the torments which they inflicted upon their captives. It was an awful thing to be living in such times as those, and it always is a terrible thing to be living when God's judgments are abroad in the earth, and sinners are hardened in their sin.

[Jeremiah 8:4-5](#). *Moreover thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD, Shall they fall, and not arise? shall he turn away, and not return? Why then is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding? they hold fast deceit, they refuse to return.*

Perseverance in sin is a great aggravation of it. There are some who fall into sin, but, by God's grace, they are raised out of it, and they turn away from iniquity, and are restored to God's favor. Where there is true grace in the heart, where there is spiritual life there will be restoration sooner or later; but there are others, like the people of Jerusalem, who have "slidden back by a perpetual backsliding." Day after day, they grow more outrageous in their wickedness.

[Jeremiah 8:6](#). *I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright: no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? every one turned to his course as the horse rusheth into the battle.*

God listened; he waited to be gracious; he was eager to hear one penitent cry, and to observe one tear of genuine repentance, but, as the war-horse is eager for the fray, and, at the first blast of the trumpet, seeks to dash into the very center of the fight, so did these ungodly people. Instead of turning to God, they turned more desperately to sin.

[Jeremiah 8:7](#). *Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the LORD.*

When God's judgments are being experienced, it is high time to repent. But these people did not think of such a thing, they were not half so sensible as migratory birds, which come and go as the seasons guide them.

Jeremiah 8:8. *How do ye say, We are wise, and the law of the Lord is with us, certainly in vain made he it; the pen of the scribes is in vain.*

What! do they talk like that, the people who do not know and do not regard God's judgments, do they talk in such a style as that? Ah, yes! Some of the most wicked of them have a so-called "religion" upon which they still pride themselves. Their hands are red with blood, yet they keep a Bible handy. They say, "We are wise, and the law of the Lord is with us;" all the while that they are sinning against the Lord and his law. Scribes multiplied copies of the law, and some of these very people, who were most hardened in guilt, possessed a copy. But, says God, "certainly in vain made he it; the pen of the scribes is in vain;" and our own Bible Societies may go on printing Bibles by the million; but, as long as men do not obey what is taught in the Bible, the work of the printing press, like that of the copyist, will be in vain. We need more than the letter of the Word, valuable as that is; we need to know, in spirit and in truth, what the Spirit teaches through the letter, and also to practice it. God grant that even our Bibles may not rise up in judgment against us.

Jeremiah 8:9. *The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have rejected the word of the LORD, and what wisdom is in them?*

See God's judgment upon a man wise in his own conceit. You hear every now and then, of some wonderfully learned, philosophic, scientific man, and many folk are frightened because he is an infidel. He does not possess true wisdom; God's description of such a man is this, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God."

Jeremiah 8:10-11. *Therefore will I give their wives unto others, and their fields to them that shall inherit them; for every one from the least even unto the greatest is given to covetousness, from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely. For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace.*

It is a dreadful thing when those, who ought to warn the people simply flatter them; when, instead of speaking sharp, stern, honest, faithful words, they cry, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace." Such false teachers say, "Do not trouble yourself; all will come right at last. You may live as you like, but there is no hereafter that need alarm you; in another state, you may get set right, whatever God's Word declares as to the punishment of the impenitent. There are far too many of these smooth-tongued deceivers

living now. God deliver this land from them, lest they become an occasion of judgment against the people!

[Jeremiah 8:12](#). *Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore shall they fall among them that fall: in the time of their visitation they shall be cast down, saith the LORD.*

They had gone so far that they could not blush. It is a dreadful thing when a man has lost the very sense of shame; there will be no repentance where that is the case.

[Jeremiah 8:13](#). *I will surely consume them, saith the LORD: there shall be no grapes on the vine, nor figs on the fig tree, and the leaf shall fade; and the things that I have given them shall pass away from them.*

They would not recognize the Giver, so the gift should be taken away from them. Now the people dwelling in the country villages begin to be alarmed because of the Chaldeans, and they say:

[Jeremiah 8:14-16](#). *Why do we sit still? assemble yourselves, and let us enter into the defended cities, and let us be silent there: for the LORD our God hath put us to silence, and given us water of gall to drink, because we have sinned against the LORD, We looked for peace, but no good came; and for a time of health, and behold trouble! The snorting of his horses was heard from Dan: the whole land trembled at the sound of the neighing of his strong ones, for they are come, and have devoured the land, and all that is in it; the city, and those that dwell therein.*

Dan was the northernmost tribe, bordering on Phoenicia, and after Nebuchadnezzar conquered the Phoenicians, he began to march through the territory of Daniel. The mighty horses of the Chaldeans can be seen represented upon the slabs brought home by Mr. Layard, they are a very prominent part of the Chaldean force; so the poet-prophet pictures them as being heard as far as from Dan as all the way to Jerusalem, so terrible was their snorting. This, of course, is the imagery of poetry, but there was terrible reality behind it.

[Jeremiah 8:17](#). *For, behold, I will send serpents, cockatrices, among you, which will not be charmed, and they shall bite you, saith the LORD.*

Such were the Chaldeans, crafty as serpents, full of the venom of cruelty wherever they came, there was no way of charming them as a serpent may be charmed. They came on a deadly errand, and thoroughly did they perform it.

[Jeremiah 8:18-21](#). *When I would comfort myself against sorrow, my heart is faint in me. Behold the voice of the cry of the daughter of my people because of them that dwell in a far country: Is not the LORD in Zion? is not her king in her? Why have they provoked me to anger with their graven images, and with strange vanities? The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved. For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt; I am black; astonishment hath taken hold on me.*

The weeping prophet sorrows over the desolation of his land, in words that have seldom been surpassed for sublime sympathy and pathos:

[Jeremiah 8:22](#). *Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?*

This exposition consisted of readings from Jeremiah 8; [Jeremiah 9:1](#).

JEREMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 9

Verse 1

[Jeremiah 9:1](#). *Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, then, I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!*

Matthew Henry well observes that, in the Hebrew, the same word signifies “eye” and “fountain”, as if God had as much given us eyes to weep with as to see with, as if there were as much cause to sorrow over sin as to look out upon the beauties of the world. Magnificent in its poetry, and most touching in its pathos, is this verse, which ought never to have been cut off from the previous chapter: “Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!”

This exposition consisted of readings from Jeremiah 8; [Jeremiah 9:1](#).

Verses 1-26

[Jeremiah 9:1](#). *Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!*

Jeremiah foresaw that the Chaldeans would come up, and so many would be slain that the nation would be almost destroyed.

[Jeremiah 9:2](#). *Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men; that I might leave my people, and go from them! for they be all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men.*

He mourned because of the doom that awaited them; but he equally mourned because of the sin that would bring that doom upon them. He wished that he could get away into one of those refuges, which were provided in lonely places, where travelers might lodge for a night.

[Jeremiah 9:3](#). *And they bend their tongues like their bow for lies:*

They made use of the tongue, as if it were a bow, to shoot out falsehood. It is a very graphic description of the men of Jeremiah's day. He dips his pen in his heart's blood as he writes about them.

[Jeremiah 9:3](#). *But they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth;*

Oh, no! No one stood up for the truth in those days; no man was willing to suffer for it, to argue for it, or even to own it.

[Jeremiah 9:3](#). *For they proceed from evil to evil, and they know not me, saith the LORD.*

They grew worse and worse. It is the way of wicked men to ripen into greater sin. They proceeded from evil to evil; and Jeremiah had Jehovah's testimony for it that, though they knew a great many things, they did not know the LORD: "They know not me, saith the LORD."

[Jeremiah 9:4](#). *Take ye heed every one of his neighbour, and trust ye not in any brother: for every brother will utterly supplant, and every neighbour will walk with slanders.*

It was an evil time indeed when, even in the domestic circle, there could be no brotherly confidence. "Every brother will utterly supplant." Jacob's name, you remember, was supplanter; and all these men were Jacobs, each one ready to supplant his brother, to throw him on one side that he might occupy his place. As to neighbourly conduct, there was none; the neighbours were all gossips and slanderers of one another.

[Jeremiah 9:5](#). *And they will deceive every one his neighbour, and will not speak the truth: they have taught their tongue to speak lies, and weary themselves to commit iniquity.*

What a sad state they were in! Their tongues spoke lies without any teaching; but they schooled them till they were masters of the art of lying. They were D.D.s, doctors of dissembling; they understood the art thoroughly. They had taught their tongue to speak lies, and they had committed so much evil that they even tired themselves in the doing of it.

[Jeremiah 9:6](#). *Thine habitation is in the midst of deceit; through deceit they refuse to know me, saith the LORD.*

Putting forth all their critical ingenuity to get rid of God, his Word, inspiration, and the divine sacrifice, doing all they could that they might not know God.

[Jeremiah 9:7-8](#). *Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, Behold, I will melt them, and try them; for how shall I do for the daughter of my people? Their tongue is as an arrow shot out; it speaketh deceit: one speaketh peaceably to his neighbour with his mouth, but in heart he layeth his wait.*

Do you wonder that Jeremiah wept? With so true a spirit, so tender and sympathetic, he could not bear it when man had become man's worst enemy, and no man could be relied upon, for all practiced and spoke deceit.

[Jeremiah 9:9](#). *Shall I not visit them for these things? saith the LORD: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?*

Divine justice sets the fire of indignation burning. Nothing excites God's wrath more than continued falsehood and deceit, unkindness, unbrotherly conduct, and unholiness of life. Put all these evils together, and you have more than enough God-provoking sins calling for an avenging visitation.

[Jeremiah 9:10](#). *For the mountains will I take up a weeping and wailing, and for the habitations of the wilderness a lamentation, because they are burned up, so that none can pass through them; neither can men hear the voice of the cattle; both the fowl of the heavens and the beast are fled; they are gone.*

The prophet pictures what the Chaldeans would do. They would not only destroy the cities, but they would even rob the hills of their cattle, and sweep the fields till there would be nothing left that men could gather.

[Jeremiah 9:11](#). *And I will make Jerusalem heaps, and a den of dragons; and I will make the cities of Judah desolate, without an inhabitant.*

Jeremiah had to live to see all this. The thought of it pulled up the sluices of his tears, and made him wish that all the clouds and seas and rains would come, and dwell in his eyes, for his grief had need of all the watery things that nature could produce. George Herbert sings, and I quote his lines to illustrate the depth of Jeremiah's griefs

“Let every vein Suck up a river to supply mine eyes,
My weary, weeping eyes, too dry for me,
Unless they get new conduits, new supplies,
To bear them out, and with my state agree.”

[Jeremiah 9:12](#). *Who is the wise man, that may understand this? and who is he to whom the mouth of the LORD hath spoken, that he may declare it, for what the land perisheth and is burned up like a wilderness, that none passeth through?*

The land would never have been desolate if it had not been for the wickedness of the people. Sin-sin it is that does the mischief. There are some who cavil at the punishment that God puts upon sin; they would do better if they found fault with the sin which brings its own punishment with it. There is nothing arbitrary in God's justice; he allows sin itself to ripen, and when it is finished, it bringeth forth death eternal.

[Jeremiah 9:13-14](#). *And the LORD saith, Because they have forsaken my law which I set before them, and have not obeyed my voice, neither walked therein; but have walked after the imagination of their own heart, and after Baalim,*

After many Baals, is the meaning; many are the gods that men make for themselves when they turn away from Jehovah.

[Jeremiah 9:14-15](#). *Which their fathers taught them: therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will feed them, even this people, with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink.*

You cannot sin without suffering. If you will not drink of the waters of obedience, but will drink of the waters of rebellion, they shall be bitter.

[Jeremiah 9:16](#). *I will scatter them also among the heathen, whom neither they nor their fathers have known: and I will send a sword after them, till I have consumed them.*

A patriot for man, a prophet for God, do you marvel that he wept?

[Jeremiah 9:17](#). *Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Consider ye, and call for the mourning women, that they may come; and send for cunning women, that they may come:*

These were the hired mourners, the women who were paid to go to funerals, and simulate grief. "Send for your weepers now;" said the LORD of hosts, "for if you ever needed mourners, you need them now."

[Jeremiah 9:18-19](#). *And let them make haste, and take up a wailing for us, that our eyes may run down with tears, and our eyelids gush out with waters. For a voice of wailing is heard out of Zion,*

These were no mock mourners; but real weepers, who had cause to mourn.

[Jeremiah 9:19](#). *How are we spoiled! we are greatly confounded,*

Why did they not say, “How have we sinned”? No; men will think of the punishment they suffer; but they will overlook the sin they commit.

[Jeremiah 9:19](#). *Because we have forsaken the land, because our dwellings have cast us out.*

Why did not they say, “Because we have forsaken the LORD, because we have cast off the worship of Jehovah”? You cannot bring men to that point. They quarrel with the rod rather than with the hand that holds it. They mourn over the result of sin; but to the sin itself they still cling.

[Jeremiah 9:20-21](#). *Yet hear the word of the LORD, O ye women, and let your ear receive the word of his mouth, and teach your daughters wailing, and every one her neighbour lamentation. For death is come up into our windows,*

It did not wait to come in by the door. In time of war or pestilence, death comes how it will through every casement, closed or open.

[Jeremiah 9:21](#). *And is entered into our palaces, to cut off the children from without, and the young men from the streets.*

Generally, in war, they spare the children; and they carry the young men away as captives. The Chaldeans were cruel; they killed the little ones, and they slew the young men.

[Jeremiah 9:22](#). *Speak, Thus saith the LORD, Even the carcasses of men shall fall as dung upon the open field, and as the handful after the harvestman, and none shall gather them.*

So dreadful was the devastation that was wrought by these Chaldeans on account of the people’s sin, that dead bodies lay like heaps of dung that the husbandman strews upon the field.

[Jeremiah 9:23-24](#). *Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD.*

This was the God who turned again to his rebellious people, and who would have been glad if they had but known him. He would have made them richer than the rich, and wiser than the wise, and mightier than the mighty; but they would not have the things in which Jehovah delighted.

[Jeremiah 9:25](#). *Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will punish all them which are circumcised with the uncircumcised;*

If they sin like others, they shall die like others, circumcised or uncircumcised, baptized or unbaptized.

[Jeremiah 9:26](#). *Egypt, and Judah, and Edom,*

You see that Judah is sandwiched in between Egypt and Edom. Those who were the people of God are put in the same category with the accursed nation, because they had forsaken him, and mixed up with them.

[Jeremiah 9:26](#). *And the children of Ammon, and Moab, and all that are in the utmost corners, that dwell in the wilderness: for all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart.*

If the heart be not right with God, vain are all external rites.

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CHAPTER 10

Verses 1-25

[Jeremiah 10:1-2](#). *Hear ye the word which the Lord speaketh unto you, O house of Israel: Thus saith the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them.*

Among the heathen, if certain stars were in conjunction, it was considered unlucky; and certain days of the week were also regarded as unlucky, just as to this day, there are people who think that it is very unfortunate to commence anything on a Friday. There are a great many foolish superstitions floating about this silly world, but you Christian people should never allow such follies to have any influence upon you. Neither the fiends of hell, nor the stars of heaven, can ever injure those who put their trust in God.

[Jeremiah 10:3-4](#). *For the customs of the people are vain: for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe. They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not.*

Those ancient prophets seemed to take delight in heaping scorn upon the god-making of the heathen. Even the heathen poets made sport of the god-making; one of them very wisely said that it would be more reasonable to worship the workmen who made the god, than to worship the god which the workmen had made.

[Jeremiah 10:5](#). *They are upright as the palm tree, but speak not: they must need be borne, because they cannot go.*

Pretty gods they must be, cannot move, and cannot even stand till they are nailed up, and cannot stir unless they are carried from place to place.

[Jeremiah 10:5-8](#). *Be not afraid of them; for they cannot do evil, neither also is it in them to do good. Forasmuch as there is none like unto thee, O LORD thou art great, and thy name is great in might. Who would not fear thee, O King of nations? for to thee doth it appertain: forasmuch as among all the wise men of the nations, and in all their kingdoms, there is none like unto thee. But they are altogether brutish and foolish: the stock is a doctrine of vanities.*

To teach people to worship mere stocks and stones, may well be called “a doctrine of vanities.”

[Jeremiah 10:9](#). *Silver spread into plates is brought from Tarshish, and gold from Uphaz, the work of the workman, and of the hands of the founder: blue and purple is their clothing: they are all the work of cunning men.*

Step into any Roman Catholic Joss-house in England, or on the Continent or, for the matter of that, into any Anglican Joss-house, for they are all very much alike and you will see that the modern “gods” are no better than those upon which the prophets of old poured scorn, and I think it is our duty to pour scorn upon these saints, and saintesses, and Madonnas, and Bambinos, and I know not what besides.

[Jeremiah 10:10-13](#). *But the LORD is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting king: at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation. Thus shall ye say unto them, The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens. He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion. When he uttereth his voice, there is a multitude of waters in the heavens, and he causeth the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth; he maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures.*

To what a height of sacred imagery does Jeremiah mount! He seems to shake off his usual melancholy spirit when he comes to sing the praises of the Lord. He uses very similar language to that of Job, his fellow-sufferer.

[Jeremiah 10:14](#). *Every man is brutish in his knowledge:*

Every idolater proves that he knows no more than a brute beast when he worships a stock or a stone.

[Jeremiah 10:14-15](#). *Every founder is confounded by the graven image: for his molten image is falsehood, and there is no breath in them. They are vanity, and the work of errors: in the time of their visitation they shall perish.*

The next verse brings out very vividly the contrast between these false gods and the one living and true God: —

[Jeremiah 10:16](#). *The portion of Jacob is not like them: for he is the former of all things; and Israel is the rod of his inheritance: The LORD of hosts is his name.*

What a blessed name that is for God: “The portion of Jacob”! And the other side of the truth is equally blessed: “Israel is the rod of his inheritance.” God belongs to his people, and they belong to him, if we can but realize that these blessings are ours, we are building on the solid foundation of the richest possible happiness. The form of the prophecy now changes, for God was about to send his people, because of their sin, into a long and sad captivity; so the prophet says, in the name of the Lord: —

[Jeremiah 10:17-18](#). *Gather up thy wares out of the land, O inhabitant of the fortress. For thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will sling out the inhabitants of the land at this once, and will distress them, that they may find it so.*

They had fled to their fortresses for shelter, for the Babylonians were coming up against them; but no hope of deliverance was held out to them, and they were told to pack up their little bundles, to put their small stores as closely together as they could, for they had to go away into a far distant country as captives of the mighty king Nebuchadnezzar. God compares their captivity to the forcible ejection of stones from a sling; “I will slide out the inhabitants of the land at this once.” How severely God chastened his people in Jeremiah’s day! Yet, when we think of their innumerable provocations, and of how they revolted again and again against the Lord, we are not surprised that at last, the Lord sent them into captivity. Now listen to Jeremiah’s lamentation over the people whom he looks upon as already in captivity; he speaks in the name of the nation, and says: —

[Jeremiah 10:19](#). *Woe is me for my hurt! My wound is grievous: but I said, Truly this is a grief, and I must bear it.*

Ah, child of God, you also must learn to say that! There are some trials and troubles, which come upon you, against which you may not contend, but you must say, “Truly this is a grief, and I must bear it.”

[Jeremiah 10:20](#). *My tabernacle is spoiled, and all my cords are broken: my children are gone forth of me, and they are not: there is none to stretch forth my tent any more, and to set up my curtains.*

Alas, poor Israel! she was like a tent removed, with none to set her up again. There are some churches, in the present day, that are in this sad condition; the faithful fail from among them, there are no new converts, and no earnest spirits, so that the church has to say, “My tent is spoiled and all my cords are broken: my children are gone forth of me, and they are not: there is none to stretch forth my tent any more, and to set up my curtains “Yes, poor afflicted church, that may be all true, yet thy God can visit thee, and make the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children, and thou who hast lost thy dearest ones, and seemest now to have no stay left, — thy children are all taken from thee, but thy God can build thee up; is he not better to thee than ten sons; and has he not said to thee, “Thy Maker is thy Husband; the Lord of hosts is his name” ?

[Jeremiah 10:21-22](#). *For the pastors are become brutish, and have not sought the Lord: therefore they shall not prosper, and all their flocks shall be scattered. Behold, the noise of the bruit is come, —*

“Bruit” is an old Norman word; one wonders how it got in here. It might be rendered, “The noise of the tumult is come,” —

[Jeremiah 10:22-24](#). *And a great commotion out of the north country, to make the cities of Judah desolate, and a den of dragons. O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. O LORD, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing.*

What a suitable prayer this is for a sick man, for a tried believer, for the child of God in deep despondency of soul; I scarcely know any better words that any of us could use. The suppliant does not ask to go unchastised, but he says, “O Lord, correct me, but with judgment: not in thine anger; lest thou bring me to nothing.”

[Jeremiah 10:25](#). *Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not on thy name: for they have eaten up Jacob, and devoured him, and consumed him, and have made his habitation desolate.*

So he asks God, instead of smiting his own children, to smite his enemies, and knowing what we do about the Babylonians, we do not wonder that Jeremiah put up such a prayer as that.

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CHAPTER 14

Verses 1-22

In some respects, Jeremiah is one of the greatest of the ancient prophets, for he had most sorrowful task to perform. He had not to deliver a message full of Evangelical comfort, like that of Isaiah; nor had he gorgeous visions of coming kingdoms, as Ezekiel had; but he was the Cassandra of his age. Jeremiah spoke the truth, yet few believed him; his life was spent in sighing over a wicked people who rejected and despised him. He bore a heavy burden upon his heart, and tears continually bedewed his Cheeks, so that he was rightly called “the weeping prophet.” This chapter gives us an illustration of the style in which he used to pray.

[Jeremiah 14:1](#). *The word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah concerning the dearth.*

There had been no rain, so the crops had failed, and there was a famine in the land. Jeremiah describes that famine in striking poetic imagery.

[Jeremiah 14:2-6](#). *Judah mourneth, and the gates thereof languish; they are black unto the ground; and the cry of Jerusalem is gone up. And their nobles have sent their little ones to the waters: they came to the pits, and found no water; they returned with their vessels empty; they were ashamed and confounded, and covered their heads. Because the ground is chapt, for there was no rain in the earth, the plowmen were ashamed, they covered their heads. Yea, the hind also calved in the field, and forsook it, because there was no grass. And the wild asses did stand in the high places, they snuffed up the wind like dragons; their eyes did fail, because there was no grass.*

The distress in the land was so great that the city gates, where, in more prosperous times, business transactions took place, and meetings of the people were held, were deserted. There was nothing that could be done while the nation was in such sorrow, and a great cry of agony went up from the capital of the country: “The cry of Jerusalem is gone up.” The highest in the land sent their children to hunt even for a little water to drink; they went to the cisterns where some might have been expected to remain, but they found none: they returned with their vessels empty; they were as ashamed and confounded, and covered their heads.” The covering of the head was the sign of sorrow. You remember how, in the day of his distress, “David went up by the ascent of Mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered;” “and all the people that was with him covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went up.” The ground had been reduced, by the drought, to such a state of hardness that it was useless to plough it, for there was no hope of any harvest coming. Even the wild creatures of the field shared the general suffering. The hind, which is reckoned by the Orientals to be the fondest of its young, forsook its fawn, and left it to perish, because there was no food. And the wild asses, which are able to endure thirst better than other creatures can and are always quick to perceive water if there is any to be found, tried in vain to scent it anywhere. “They snuffed up the wind like dragons,”—like cobras, or serpents, or jackals, as the word may be variously rendered,— but they snuffed in vain; and their eyes became like coals in their head: they “did fail, because there was no grass.” What then? Why, the prophet turns to prayer as the only means of obtaining relief

[Jeremiah 14:7](#). *O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, do thou it for thy name's sake:*

“Thou canst not do it because of any merit of ours.”

[Jeremiah 14:7-9](#). *For our backslidings are many; we have sinned against thee. O the hope of Israel, the saviour thereof in time of trouble, why shouldest thou be as a stranger in the land and as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night? Why shouldest thou be as a man astonished, as a mighty man that cannot save? yet thou O LORD, art in the midst of us and we are called by thy name; leave us not.*

Can you not almost hear the good man praying? Notice how he begs the Lord not to be to the land like a mere stranger who passes through it, and cares nothing for it. “Why shouldest thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night?” Then he pleads with the Lord, “Why shouldest thou be as a man strong, but stunned?”—for that is the meaning of the expression he uses—“Be not thou as a mighty man astounded or stunned, who cannot save us; let it not be thought or said that we have come to such a pass that even thou canst not help us.” This was grand pleading on the prophet’s part, and he followed it up by mentioning the close connection that existed between Israel and God. Yet thou, O Jehovah, art in the midst of us, and we are called by thy name;” and then pleaded, “leave us not.” It was a grand prayer; yet, at first, this was the only answer that Jeremiah received to it:—

[Jeremiah 14:10-11](#). *Thus saith the Lord unto this people, Thus have they loved to wander, they have not refrained their feet, therefore the LORD doth not accept them; he will now remember their iniquity, and visit their sins. Then said the LORD unto me, Pray not for this people for their good.*

“You may pray, if you like to do so, for a plague to come upon them as a chastisement for their sins, but do not pray for any blessing for them.”

[Jeremiah 14:12](#). *When they fast, I will not hear their cry; and when they offer burnt offering and an oblation, I will not accept them: but I will consume them by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence.*

After being long provoked, God at last determines that he will punish the rebellious nation, and he seems, as it were, to put Jeremiah on one side, now the day of my vengeance has come, and I will show no more mercy to them.” Now note what Jeremiah does even after the Lord has said to him, “Pray not for this people for their good.”

[Jeremiah 14:13](#). *Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, the prophets say unto them, Ye shalt not see the sword, neither shall ye have famine; but I will give you assured peace in this place.*

He says, “Lord, have pity on the people, for they are misled by their prophets. Peradventure, if these false prophets had not thus deceived them, and puffed them up, they would not have been so hardened in their sin.” He tried to make some excuse for them, but the Lord would not yield to his pleading.

[Jeremiah 14:14-15](#). *Then the LORD said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart. Therefore thus saith the Lord concerned the prophets that prophesy in my name, and I sent them not, yet they say, Sword and famine shall not be in this land; By sword and famine shall those prophets be consumed.*

God says, “Yes, I will deal with the false prophets; it is true that they have misled the people, and I will punish them for their deception; but I will not excuse the people even on that ground.”

[Jeremiah 14:16](#). *And the people to whom they prophesy shall be cast out in the streets of Jerusalem because of the famine and the sword; and they shall have none to bury them, them, their wives, nor their sons, nor their daughters: for I will pour their wickedness upon them.*

That seems to be a hard answer to Jeremiah’s pleading; what is the prophet to do now? God gives him another message to deliver to the people:

—
[Jeremiah 14:17-18](#). *Therefore thou shalt say this word unto them; Let mine eyes run down with tears night and day, and let them not cease: for the virgin daughter of my people is broken with a great breach, with a very grievous blow. If I go forth into the field, then behold! the slain with the sword! and if I enter into the city, then behold them that are sick with famine! yea, both the prophet and the priest go about into a land that they know not.*

So God told Jeremiah that he might go and tell the people that he would weep continually for them. The faithful and sympathetic prophet was to be allowed constantly to shed tears on their behalf, and to feel great distress of soul because everywhere he saw signs of the heavy hand of God resting upon the guilty people. If they went outside the city, the Chaldeans slew them with the sword; and if they stopped inside, they perished by famine; or those that died not were carried away captive into a land that they knew not. What is Jeremiah to do in such a case as this? He is told that he must not

pray for the people, and God seems determined to smite them. What can love do when even the gates of prayer are ordered to be closed? Notice how, after he is told that he must not pray, he edges his way up towards the throne of grace and, at last, he does what he is told not to do. He begins thus:—

[Jeremiah 14:19](#). *Hast thou utterly rejected Judah? hath thy soul loathed Zion? Why hast thou smitten us, and there is no healing for us? we looked for peace, and there is no good; and for the time of healing, and behold trouble!*

That is not exactly praying, but it is very like it. Jeremiah is asking the Lord whether he can really have cast off his people.

[Jeremiah 14:20](#). *We acknowledge, O Lord, our wickedness, and the iniquity of our fathers: for we have sinned against thee.*

He has advanced a step farther now, to the confession of sin. If that is not really prayer, it always goes with it. It is the background of prayer, so we shall soon have some other touches in the picture.

[Jeremiah 14:21](#). *Do not abhor us for thy name's sake, do not disgrace the throne of thy glory: remember, break not thy covenant with us.*

Now he is getting actually to praying; he cannot help himself. He is told that he must not pray, but he feels that he must; he loves the people so much that he must plead for them.

[Jeremiah 14:22](#). *Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain! Or can the heavens give showers? art not thou he, O LORD our God? Therefore we will wait upon thee: for thou hast made all these things.*

O splendid perseverance of importunity,—strong resolve of a forbidden intercession! “Thou, O Lord our God, tellest us not to pray, but we cannot restrain our supplication: “Therefore we will wait upon thee.” God help us all to wait upon him! We are not so discouraged from praying as he was who spoke these words, so there is still more reason why we should say to the Lord, “Therefore we will wait upon thee.”

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CHAPTER 17

Verses 1-14

[Jeremiah 17:1](#). *The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond:*

It is so ingrained in their very nature that you might as well try to erase an inscription that is written upon steel with the point of a diamond as hope to get this perversity out of the nation; it is graven upon the tablets of their heart. What is mere habit can be altered, but what is ingrained in the heart cannot be taken away except by a, miracle of grace. It was the heart that was wrong; the fountain-head was polluted, so what could the streams be but foul.

[Jeremiah 17:1](#). *It is graven upon the table of their heart, and upon the horns of your altars;*

Their holiest things were defiled. They wrote up the names of their idol gods even upon God's altar, and so they bore a written testimony against themselves.

[Jeremiah 17:2](#). *Whilst their children remember their altars and their groves by the green trees upon the high hills.*

God forbade the setting up of altars. There was one altar at Jerusalem, and there were to be no more; but they selected spots where great trees had long grown, they chose the tops of the hills, and they built shrines for their idols there; and there God was angry with them. Oh, how readily we may turn anything into sin! How easily our choicest mercies may be made into occasions of iniquity!

[Jeremiah 17:3-8](#). *O my mountain in the field, I will give thy substance and all thy treasures to the spoil, and thy high places for sin, throughout all thy borders. And thou, even thyself, shalt discontinue from thine heritage that I gave thee; and I will cause thee to serve thine enemies in the land*

which thou knowest not: for ye have kindled a fire in mine anger, which shall burn for ever. Thus saith the LORD Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited. Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.

Oh, the blessedness of confidence in God! You see it here set out in contrast with the misery of trusting in men. Drought comes even to this tree, and times of trouble come to the believer; but the drought does not affect the tree, for it has secret, underground sources from which it sucks up its life; it spreads out its roots by the river; and blessed is that man who has a secret life, a secret strength, a secret comfort which sustains him in the trying hour. The world cannot perceive it, but he drinks it in, and lives upon it.

[Jeremiah 17:9](#). *The heart-*

That is the principal matter, it was the heart of the nation which had gone astray from God: "The heart"-

[Jeremiah 17:9-11](#). *Is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings. As the partridge sitteth on eggs, and hatcheth them not; so he that getteth riches, and not be right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool.*

The prophet likens the man who gets riches by falsehood and oppression to a bird which has many eggs, too many for her to cover, and consequently, though she sits on them, there is such a heap of eggs that they are none of them hatched; they come to nothing. I think I know some men who are very like that partridge. It would be a great mercy for them if they had only half of the eggs that they have, for all they get is the care and trouble of covering them, but no living joy comes out of them; the eggs are addled. He that has not the grace of God in his heart is just like a bird sitting upon addled eggs. Poor soul! "At his end he shall be a fool." He must therefore be something

of a fool now, for he that pursues an end which shall end in folly is a fool to have such an end before him.

[Jeremiah 17:12-14](#). *A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary. O LORD, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed and they that depart from me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the Lord, the fountain of living waters. Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for thou art my praise.*

This exposition consisted of readings from [Jeremiah 7:1-15](#); and [Jeremiah 17:1-14](#)

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CHAPTER 23

Verses 1-32

[Jeremiah 23:1](#). *Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the LORD.*

What a dreadful woe this is upon all false shepherds, — those who profess to be sent of God to instruct the people, but who are not sent of God at all, whose labours only result in the scattering of the sheep, and destroying them, instead of gathering them to Christ for their salvation!

[Jeremiah 23:2-4](#). *Therefore thus saith the LORD God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people; Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them; behold, I will visit upon you, the evil of your doings, saith the LORD. And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds, and they shall be fruitful and increase. And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them: and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith the LORD.*

If the under-shepherds do not feed the flock, God himself will do it, for his own redeemed flock shall not be torn of wolves, nor left to perish in the lands whither they are driven. That great Shepherd of the sheep will do what others fail to do; but this does not take away from them their responsibility, and it must be the most solemn responsibility that rests on mortal man to profess to be a shepherd of souls, yet not to be sent of God.

[Jeremiah 23:5](#). *Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.*

We are looking for that glorious King. Oh, that he would soon come! He is the great Monarch who shall absorb all other monarchies, for “he shall reign for ever and ever.”

[Jeremiah 23:6](#). *In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.*

What a glorious name for our King, who is made of God unto us “righteousness.” We may well rejoice to think that all the perfect righteousness of our great King and Lord shall belong to us, for this shall be his very name, “THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”

[Jeremiah 23:7-8](#). *Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that they shall no more say, The LORD liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; but, the LORD liveth, which brought up and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land.*

There are better times for Israel than Israel has ever known as yet. The glories of Egypt and of the Red Sea are yet to be eclipsed. And there are better times in store for the Church of God than she has seen as yet.

[Jeremiah 23:9](#). *Mine heart within me is broken because of the prophets;*

In Jeremiah's day there was a set of men who pretended to be prophets, yet who contradicted the Lord's servant at every point.

[Jeremiah 23:9](#). *All my bones shake; I am like a drunken man, and like a man whom wine hath overcome, because of the LORD, and because of the words of his holiness.*

Jeremiah had really received the Word of the Lord, and it seemed to overpower him; as that Word was full of terror, he felt like one who was overcome with wine.

[Jeremiah 23:10-11](#). *For the land is full of adulterers, for because of swearing the land mourneth; the pleasant places of the wilderness are dried up, and their course is evil, and their force is not right. For both prophet and priest are profane; yea, in my house have I found their wickedness, saith the LORD.*

It is an awful thing when wickedness abounds even in the house of God; and it is to be feared that, in many places, the church of the present day is not clear in this matter.

[Jeremiah 23:12](#). *Wherefore their way shall be unto them as slippery ways in the darkness:*

What an awful description of the doom of the profane prophets and priests! Slippery ways are bad enough in the light, but "their way shall be unto them as slippery ways in the darkness."

[Jeremiah 23:12-14](#). *They shall be driven on, and fall therein: for I will bring evil upon them, even the year of their visitation, saith the LORD. And I have seen folly in the prophets of Samaria; they prophesied in Baal, and caused my people Israel to err. I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing:*

It was bad enough for Samaria to go astray. There was a mixed race there, so it was no wonder that their prophets were foolish; but oh! that in Jerusalem, the city of the great King, there should be false prophets, that was worst of all. This was the style of these prophets: —

[Jeremiah 23:14-15](#). *They commit adultery, and walk in lies: they strengthen also the hands of evildoers, that none doth return from his wickedness: they are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah. Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts concerning the prophets, Behold, I will feed them with wormwood, and make them drink the water of gall: for from the prophets of Jerusalem is profaneness gone forth into all the land.*

When preachers are bad, who wonders that people are worse? If the prophets go astray, how shall those who follow them find the right road?

[Jeremiah 23:16](#). *Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they make you vain:*

That is one mark of a false prophet, he makes you feel that you are a fine fellow, that there is something good in you: “They make you vain.”

[Jeremiah 23:16](#). *They speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the LORD.*

That is another of the marks of a false prophet. Such a man as that is a great thinker; he has thought out his theology himself, he has imagined and invented it himself: “They speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the Lord.”

[Jeremiah 23:17](#). *They say still unto them that despise me, The LORD hath said, Ye shall have peace; and they say unto every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you.*

This is yet another mark of the false prophet. He always tries to smooth down the consequences of sin. “In the future state,” he says, “sin may occasion some temporary inconvenience, but all things will come right sooner or later.” That is a man sent of the devil, he is no servant of the living God. By these three tests you may prove who are the false prophets, they make you vain, they speak out of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of God, and they try to make it easy for you to sin by denying the greatness of the penalty attached to it.

[Jeremiah 23:18-19](#). *For who hath stood in the counsel of the LORD, and hath perceived and heard his word? who hath marked his word, and heard*

it? Behold, a whirlwind of the LORD is gone forth in fury, even a grievous whirlwind: it shall fall grievously upon the head of the wicked.

This is God's Word; he does not prophesy smooth things to the wicked, he does not promise slight consequences of sin, but "a whirlwind" and "a grievous whirlwind."

[Jeremiah 23:20-22](#). *The anger of the LORD shall not return, until he have executed, and till he have performed the thoughts of his heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it perfectly. I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. But if they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings.*

False prophets are futile and vain, no good result comes of all their teaching; but oh! if they had known the Word of the Lord, if they had really been sent of God, what a difference there would have been! God grant that none of us may pretend to teach others what we have never learned, or to speak for God if God has never spoken to us!

[Jeremiah 23:23-26](#). *Am I a God at hand, saith the LORD, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the LORD. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the LORD. I have heard what the prophets said, that prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed. How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophecy lies? yea, they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart;*

They profess to be prophets of their own heart, but "they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart," for that which comes out of man's heart is like the heart itself, and man's heart "is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked."

[Jeremiah 23:27-28](#). *Which think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbour, as their fathers have forgotten my name for Baal. The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream;*

Let him tell it as a dream, for it is nothing more than that. If he has dreamt it, let him say, "This is a dream that I have dreamed, but it is only a dream."

[Jeremiah 23:28](#). *And he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully.*

Let him speak it as the Word of the Lord.

[Jeremiah 23:28](#). *What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD.*

Man's thoughts, man's conceptions, at their very best, are but as chaff; only the Word of the Lord is the true wheat.

[Jeremiah 23:29-30](#). *Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces? Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, saith the LORD, that steal my words every one from his neighbour.*

Borrowed sermons — pages of other people's experience — fragments pulled from old or new divines — nothing of their own, nothing that God ever said to them, nothing that ever thrilled their hearts or swayed their souls, — God will not own such teaching as this.

[Jeremiah 23:31](#). *Behold, I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, that use their tongues, and say, He saith.*

They have not any hearts; they only use their tongues. They say, "He saith," as if God had said to them something which he has never said.

[Jeremiah 23:32](#). *Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the Lord, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the LORD.*

See how heavily God deals with the false prophets of Jeremiah's time; and he will deal with equal severity with any who preach or teach anything other than the gospel of his blessed Son, — the pure revelation which is written in this Book. God grant that none of us may be deceived by them, for his dear Son's sake! Amen.

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CHAPTER 30

Verses 1-11

[Jeremiah 30:1-2](#). *The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD God of Israel, saying, Write thee all the words that I have spoken unto thee in a book.*

Too good to be lost. The prophets said much when they did not write, and this particular chapter and the next were to be carefully written down. God here begins to deal with his guilty people in a way of love and mercy. It is a very strange chapter, one of the richest, one of the most cheering in the whole of God's Word. Therefore, write it in a book.

[Jeremiah 30:3](#). *For, lo, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the LORD: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.*

Souls get into captivity. God has ways of restoring them. Tonight I expect, and believe, that many captives will be restored by the grace of God to rest and comfort. Will you be one of them? Poor mourner, pray now that you may be. Ask of God that tonight God may bring again your captivity.

[Jeremiah 30:4-5](#). *And these are the words that the LORD spake concerning Israel and concerning Judah. For thus saith the LORD: We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace.*

“Why” say you, “I thought you began to read words of comfort. Now there is a drop.” Yes, there always is. Whenever God is going to comfort a man, he first makes him see his need of comfort. There is always stripping before there is clothing; there is always emptying before there is filling on God’s part.

[Jeremiah 30:6](#). *Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness?*

Everywhere, when the time of mercy came, it was a bad time, a dark time, a time of inward throbs, and throes, and travail.

[Jeremiah 30:7](#). *Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob’s trouble: but he shall be saved out of it.*

But he shall be saved out of it. What a flash of lightning across the black face of the cloud. “He shall be saved out of it.”

[Jeremiah 30:8-9](#). *For it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will break his yoke from off thy neck, and will burst thy bonds, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him. But they shall serve the LORD their God and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them.*

See how the chapter has got back to the comforting strain again. After the bass notes, we run up the scale. We have come to comfort again. I should not wonder if we have to go back, however, for so it is, God’s mercy is chequer work, black and white, sorrow and salvation.

[Jeremiah 30:10-11](#). *Therefore fear thou not, O my servant Jacob, saith the LORD neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will save thee from afar and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid.*

What a beautiful collection of words for a troubled heart! And they are not beautiful words only, but there is a deep, true meaning in them: “Shall be in rest and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid.” I pray God that

many here who are much afraid, and cannot be quiet, but are like the troubled sea, which cannot rest, may get into this blissful state tonight.

[Jeremiah 30:11](#). *For I am with thee, saith the LORD, to save thee:*

God may destroy the wicked, and he will, but not his people, his own beloved, His heart goes after them. "I will not make a full end of thee."

[Jeremiah 30:11](#). *Though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished.*

You will have to smart for it. If you are God's child, you will have to be brought home with many a tear and many a sigh. Your sorrow tonight is a part of a heavenly discipline, by which you shall be saved.

This exposition consisted of readings from Isaiah 55.; [Jeremiah 30:1-11](#).

Verses 1-22

[Jeremiah 30:1-2](#). *The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD God of Israel, saying, Write thee all the words that I have spoken unto thee in a book.*

We believe in verbal inspiration; and, though some people treat with contempt the very idea of words being inspired, be you sure of this, if you have not inspired words, you are not likely to get inspired men. Besides, words are to the thought what the shell is to the egg; and if you break the shell, you have destroyed the egg; somehow or other, the thought will ooze out unless it is conveyed in God's own words. Observe that the Lord does not say to Jeremiah, "Write thee all the thought that I have given thee;" but, "Write thee all the words that I have spoken unto thee in a book."

[Jeremiah 30:3](#). *For, lo, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the LORD: and I will come them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.*

And so they did, and so they shall in a yet fuller sense, for this is a promise that has fulfillments and fulfillments. Man's promises, once kept, are ended; but God's promises are perpetual; they are springing wells, which never run dry. That which he fulfilled once, he often takes the opportunity to fulfill again on a yet larger scale, as he will doubtless do to his ancient people in the latter days. You who are in spiritual captivity tonight may derive comfort from these words, "I will bring again the captivity of my people." It is the way of God to deliver the captives. What he does once, is only an index of what he is in the habit of doing. It is God's

delight to devise means by which he will bring back his banished ones. So, in due time, he will end your captivity, and you shall enjoy the blessed liberty which is the portion of his people.

[Jeremiah 30:4-5](#). *And these are the words that the LORD spake concerning Israel and concerning Judah. For thus saith the LORD We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace.*

God hears his people's voices when they cry; he knows the tone and accent which they use; and, sometimes, when he is listening to them, he hears "a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace." Possibly that may be the condition of some who are here tonight; if so, may the Lord, who heareth their cry, bring them out of their tremblings, and fears, and fill their mouth with laughter, and their tongue with singing!

[Jeremiah 30:6-7](#). *ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness? Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like if: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.*

This passage evidently alludes to a time of very great distress, when men's hearts were swollen within them as if they would burst for very grief. Not simply here and there one, but the great mass of the people seemed to be in sore trouble; even the stout-hearted ones began to feel inward pangs of affliction; yet it was then that the Lord said, "It is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it."

[Jeremiah 30:8](#). *For it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will break his yoke from off thy neck, and will burst thy bonds, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him:*

Here is a word for you tried ones. God, who sometimes permits his child to wear the yoke of the oppressor, will take that yoke away, He will snap the bands that are around thy neck, and enable thee to rise into the glorious liberty wherewith Christ makes his people free. O bondaged ones, be of good comfort, and lour for speedy deliverance through the power of the great Emancipator!

[Jeremiah 30:9-10](#). *But they shall serve the LORD their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them. Therefore fear thou not, O my servant Jacob, saith the LORD neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob*

shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid.

There are great things in reserve for God's ancient people Israel, and there are not less laid up for God's spiritual Israel, for by them shall the greatest fulfillment of the promise be realized. They shall indeed be quiet, and none shall make them afraid. Note that these are the very men who had their hands upon their loins, and whose faces were pale with fright, These are they who were ready to die of heartbreak; yet even they shall, by the rich grace of God, be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make them afraid. I wish that we could all realize the fulfillment of that promise even now; and that our gracious God would dwell with us as he is wont to abide with those who bear his name, and thus give us that blessed quiet and rest which we so much need.

[Jeremiah 30:11](#). *For I am with thee, saith the LORD, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished.*

Look abroad, and see what God has done to Israel. This is peculiarly the time of Israel's trouble, and the Jewish people were, perhaps, never worse persecuted than they now are in certain parts; yet the Lord will not allow any nation to crush them, and he will himself avenge all wrongs that they suffer. He still says to them, "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of mine eye;" and it is very noteworthy that, whenever God has used any nation as a rod to chasten the Jews,— and he has used many in that way,— he has always broken that kingdom up when he has done with it. Think of Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome; look at Spain, and see how mean and despicable that nation has become because of its cruelty to the people of God. Now, if this be true of Israel after the flesh, depend upon it that it is also true concerning God's spiritual people. Though he will correct us when we deserve chastening, it will always be in measure, and he will not make a full end of us. God has measureless wrath against the ungodly for their measureless sin; but as for his own people, he has cast their sin behind his back, and only as a wise and faithful Father does he chasten them for their profit.

[Jeremiah 30:12-14](#). *For thus saith the LORD, Thy bruise is incurable, and thy wound is grievous. There is none to plead thy cause, that thou mayest be bound up: thou hast no healing medicines. All thy lovers have*

forgotten thee; they seek thee not; for I have wounded thee with the wound of an enemy, with the chastisement of a cruel one, for the multitude of thine iniquity; because thy sins were increased.

God never gave his people leave to sin; and sin in them is worse than sin in any other people, for they sin against more light, and more love; and therefore it grieves the Lord the more, and he smites all the more heavily; and, mark you, when God smites, there is nobody who can comfort us. A quaint old writer, whose book I was reading the other day, commenting on that part of the parable where the friend, disturbed at midnight, said, "My children are on me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee," wrote something like this, "When God is in bed, there are none of his children up to help us; if he does not open the door, there are none of his saints to give us a crust; all must come from him." Therefore we must cry unto him, and say, "Awake for my help, O God; for all my lovers have forgotten me; they seek me not in the time of my distress." When God wounds us, men often desert us; and those that seemed to be most fond of us forsake us when God smites us.

[Jeremiah 30:15-16](#). *Why criest thou for thine affliction? thy sorrow is incurable for the multitude of thine iniquity: because thy sins were increased, I have done these things unto thee. Therefore all they that devour thee shall be devoured; —*

How striking is this sentence, and what a surprise it gives us as we read it! We might have thought, after the Lord had spoken as he did, that he would have given his people up to their enemies; but, instead of doing so, he says, "Therefore all they that devour thee shall be devoured;"

[Jeremiah 30:16-17](#). *And all thine adversaries, every one of them, shall go into captivity; and they that spoil thee shall be a spoil, and all that prey upon thee will I give for a prey. For I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the LORD because they called thee an Outcast, saying, This is Zion, whom no man seeketh after.*

Did you notice that word, "therefore," in the 16th verse? Can you see "therefore" in it,— any logical conclusion that could be drawn from the prophet's premises? The argument seems to be, "Because thy disease is incurable, therefore will I restore health unto thee. Because no one else can heal thy wounds, therefore I will heal them." It is a blessed thing to feel that you are incurable, for then it is that God will cure you. When there is an end of you, then you shall begin with God; but as long as you are full of self or

sin, that passage shall be fulfilled to you, “He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.”

[Jeremiah 30:18-19](#). *Thus saith the LORD Behold, I will bring again the captivity of Jacob’s tents, and have mercy on his dwelling places; and the city shall be builded upon her own heap, and the palace shall remain after the manner thereof. And out of them shall proceed thanksgiving and the voice of them that make merry: and I will multiply them, and they shall not be few; I will also glorify them, and they shall not be small.*

Well might the Lord introduce such a promise as this with the word, “Behold.” Again I remind you that these are the people who had their hands on their loins; these are they who were in sore trouble of soul, yet now they are merry, and full of gladness; and we also have learned to sing,—

My mourning he to dancing turns,
For sackcloth, joy he gives,
A moment, Lord, thine anger burns,
But long thy favor lives.

[Jeremiah 30:20-21](#). *Their children also shall be as aforesaid, and their congregation shall be established before me, and I will punish all that oppress them. And their nobles shall be of themselves, and their governor shall proceed from the midst of them; and I will cause him to draw near, and he shall approach unto me: for who is thee that engaged his heart to approach unto me? saith the LORD.*

There is One, whom we call Master and Lord, who approaches the throne of God on our behalf; One who fulfils that ancient word, “I have exalted One chosen out of the people.” Our glorious Saviour, through his humanity, is one of ourselves; and he appears before God on our behalf, blessed be his holy name!

[Jeremiah 30:22](#). *And ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.*

Happy are we if we can rejoice in this precious truth.

Verses 1-24

[Jeremiah 30:12](#). *For thus saith the LORD, Thy bruise is incurable, and thy wound is grievous.*

See here is the bass again. We have got down into the sorrowful notes all to make us sick of self and ready to receive the grace of God.

[Jeremiah 30:13-14](#). *There is none to plead thy cause, that thou mayest be bound up: thou hast no healing medicines. All thy lovers have forgotten thee:*

Out of sight, out of mind. They have forgotten thee. Oh! when God wounds, it, is a wound, indeed. When he breaks the heart who can comfort? If he does but speak, the earth trembles. He touches the hills, and they smoke.

“When he shuts up in long despair,
Who can remove the iron bar?”

[Jeremiah 30:14-15](#). *They seek thee not; for I have wounded thee with the wound of an enemy, with the chastisement of a cruel one for the multitude of thine iniquity; because thy sins were increased. Why criest thou for thine affliction? thy sorrow is incurable for the multitude of thine iniquity:*

“These are dark words,” says one. If they are incurable, what more need be said? Ah! the things incurable with men are curable with God. Sin is the malady that none can cure save God alone.

[Jeremiah 30:15-16](#). *Because thy sins were increased, I have done these things unto thee. Therefore*

Now I read this morning, and I could not help dwelling upon this “therefore.” It looks like a non sequitur, but there is a real argument, in it. Therefore, because you have now come to the worst, because you cannot help yourself, because you are ruined and undone: —

[Jeremiah 30:16-17](#). *All they that devour thee shall be devoured: and all thine adversaries, every one of them, shall go into captivity; and they that spoil thee shall be a spoil, and all that prey upon thee will I give for a prey. For I will restore health unto thee,*

Oh! the sovereignty of divine grace! how it comes in when every hope is gone! Man’s extremity is God’s opportunity. An incurable sinner and therefore, God comes to cure him. If you are brought so low that you cannot go any lower, God will put his everlasting arms underneath you. I speak to some tonight who are about to enter into peace, and joy, and rest. “I will restore health unto thee; I will heal thee of thy wounds saith the Lord.”

[Jeremiah 30:17](#). *And I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the LORD because they called thee an Outcast, saying This is Zion, whom no man seeketh after.*

They said, “There is no hope for that man, there is no relief for that woman. Therefore, God means to give up all relief. Nothing pleases him better than to undertake a desperate case God is great at a dead lift. When all the world is palsied, then is God omnipotent.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Isaiah 58:1-12](#), Jeremiah 30.

JEREMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 32

Verses 1-22

[Jeremiah 31:1](#). *At the same time, saith the LORD, will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people.*

During the Israelites' banishment to Babylon, God's covenant with them had been as it were in abeyance, but in this promise of their restoration he brings it to the front again, and he gives a peculiarly gracious turn to it: "I will be the God of all the families of Israel." What a mercy it is to have a family God, and to have our whole family in Christ! Brethren, you have a family Bible, and you have, I hope, a family altar; may your whole family belong to God!

[Jeremiah 31:2](#). *Thus saith the LORD, the people which were left of the sword found grace in the wilderness; even Israel, when I went to cause him to rest.*

Pharaoh tried to kill Israel; when he drew his sword, it looked as if the whole nation would be slain. But God got them away from Pharaoh into the wilderness, and there he caused them to rest. God still teas a people whom he will certainly save, and the adversary shall not be able to destroy them. Now comes this glorious verse:-

[Jeremiah 31:3-4](#). *The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee. Again I will build thee, and thou shalt be built,*

Jerusalem was all broken down, her houses were vacant, and her palaces were in ruins, but God's promise to her was, "Again I will build thee, and thou shalt be built." If the preacher tries to rebuild those who are spiritually broken down, his work may be a failure; but when God does it, it is effectually done.

[Jeremiah 31:4](#). *O virgin of Israel: thou shalt again be adorned with thy tablets, and shalt go forth in the dances of them that make merry.*

God can take away his people's sorrow, and fill them with exultant joy. Their flying feet shall follow the flying music, and they shall be exceeding glad. May the Lord make his people joyful now in his house of prayer!

[Jeremiah 31:5](#). *Thou shalt yet plant vines upon the mountains of Samaria: the planters shall plant, and shall eat them as common things.*

God's people shall get to work again; and they shall have the fruit of their toil, and shall rejoice before God because they do not labour in vain nor spend their strength for nought.

[Jeremiah 31:6](#). *For there shall be a day, that the watchmen upon the mount Ephraim shall cry, Arise ye, and let us go up to Zion unto the LORD our God.*

The men of Ephraim did not go up to Zion to worship, they forsook the one altar at Jerusalem; but the day will come when they will turn again to the Lord. Watchmen have to be on the look-out for enemies, but the day will come when even they shall be able to leave their watch-towers and to say, "Let us go up to Zion unto Jehovah our God." Are any of you watching just now with anxious eyes? Have you been watching all through the night? Well, you have not seen much, and your eyes ache with looking out for evil; so drop your watching now, and say one to another, "Let us go up to Zion unto the Lord our God."

[Jeremiah 31:7-8](#). *For thus saith the LORD Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nation, publish ye, praise ye, and say, O LORD, save thy people the remnant of Israel. Behold, I will bring them-*

Notice the prayer and the answer. The prayer is put into our mouths, and before we hardly have time to utter it, the answer comes: "O Lord, save thy people, the remnant of Israel. Behold, I will bring them"-

[Jeremiah 31:8](#). *From the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame,*

How can they come? Will they help one another? God himself will be eyes to the blind and feet to the lame.

[Jeremiah 31:8](#). *The woman with child and her that travaileth with child together: a great company shall return thither.*

They were not fit for traveling, yet God in his great mercy can make the feeblest of his people strong, and when he means to bring them to himself, they shall come even though it looks as if they could not come.

[Jeremiah 31:9](#). *They shall come with weeping,-*

Never mind the weeping so long as they do but come, and remember that there is no true faith without the tear of repentance in its eye: "They shall come with weeping,"-

[Jeremiah 31:9](#). *And with supplications will I lead them:*

The way of prayer is the way home to God.

[Jeremiah 31:9](#). *I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble:*

Happy are the people who have such precious promises as these. The way is to be straight, and their feet are to be so firmly planted in it that “they shall not stumble.”

[Jeremiah 31:9-11](#). *For I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn. Hear the word of the LORD, O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off and say, He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock. For the LORD hath redeemed Jacob.*

The secret of every other blessing is redemption. If God has redeemed he will save, depend upon it; the precious blood of Jesus shall ne'er be shed in vain.

[Jeremiah 31:11-12](#). *And ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he. Therefore they shall come”-*

If they are redeemed, “they shall come.” Christ did not die in vain; the redemption that he wrought must be effectual; “therefore they shall come”-

[Jeremiah 31:12](#). *And sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the LORD, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock and of the herd:*

These are all temporal mercies, and it is a great blessing to see God's goodness in them. If God blesses common mercies, they are blessings indeed; but without his blessing they may become idols, and so may become curses.

[Jeremiah 31:12](#). *And their soul shall be as a watered garden;*

What a delightful simile! It is of little use for the body to be fed unless the soul also is well nourished: “Their soul shall be as a watered garden;”

[Jeremiah 31:12-14](#). *And they shall not sorrow any more at all. Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together: for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow. And I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness,*

God will give the spiritual leaders of his people enough and more than enough, more than they can take in, he will satiate them with fatness.

[Jeremiah 31:14](#). *And my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, saith the LORD.*

What a delightful promise this is! Listen to it and carry it home, all of you who are truly the Lord's people.

[Jeremiah 31:15](#). *Thus saith the LORD A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rahel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not.*

There is here a prophetic allusion to the massacre of the infants by Herod at the time of the birth of our Lord. It was a time of sorrow indeed.

[Jeremiah 31:16-17](#). *Thus saith the LORD Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the LORD: and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. And there is hope in thine end, saith the LORD that thy children shall come again to their own border.*

As Rachel is represented as weeping for her children, so is she represented as mourning for the tribes that were carried away into captivity, yet is she comforted with the Lord's gracious assurance, 'they shall come again from the land of the enemy.' So they did, and there is to be a glorious future yet for the people of God of the ancient race of Abraham.

[Jeremiah 31:18](#). *I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus;*

There is never a penitent in this world bemoaning himself without God hearing him. Do not think that a single penitential cry ever rises unheeded from a contrite heart. That cannot be; God has a quick ear for the cries of penitents.

[Jeremiah 31:18](#). *Thou hast chastened me, and I was chastened, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke:*

"I bore the chastisement, but derived no benefit from it. I have not repented of my sin, I have not turned unto thee."

[Jeremiah 31:18](#). *Turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the LORD my God.*

If the Lord undertakes to turn us, we shall be truly turned, that is, converted.

[Jeremiah 31:19](#). *Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth.*

Are there any here recollecting the past with terror, and lamenting before God because of their sins? Then hear what God says. He seems to echo the voice of Ephraim. As Ephraim bemoans himself, God bemoans him:-

[Jeremiah 31:20](#). *Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child?*

You might expect the answer to be, “No, he has lost the rights of childhood; he has been unpleasant and provoking to God, “ yet God does not give such an answer as that to his own questions, but he says:-

[Jeremiah 31:20](#). *For since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still;*

Notwithstanding that the Lord threatened him, and sent prophets to foretell evil to him because of his sin, yet he says, “I do earnestly remember him still;”-

[Jeremiah 31:20](#). *Therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him saith the LORD.*

What a wonderful speech for God to make! Even the infinitely-blessed God represents himself as in trouble concerning penitent sinners, remembering them in pity, and longing to have mercy upon them.

[Jeremiah 31:21](#). *Set thee up waymarks, make thee high heaps: set thine heart toward the highway, even the way which thou wentest: turn again, O virgin of Israel, turn again to these thy cities.*

In crossing the desert, travelers raise little cairns of stone that they may be directed on a future occasion, across that pathless sea of sand; and so God bids them set up waymarks, and make high heaps, that they may know how to come back to him.

[Jeremiah 31:22](#). *How long wilt thou go about, O thou backsliding daughter?*

God still asks in pity, “how long will you seek here and there for comfort?”

You will never find it till you come back to your God. Emptiness is written upon everything till the heart comes to its Saviour and Lord.

Verses 1-26

[Jeremiah 31:1-3](#). *At the same time, saith the LORD, will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people. Thus saith the LORD, The people which were left of the sword found grace in the wilderness; even Israel, when I went to cause him to rest. The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.*

Was there ever a sweeter word from heaven than this, — everlasting love proved by the drawings of divine grace? I know that your hearts will be full of music if ever the Spirit of God has spoken home to your soul such

a message as this. Let us read it again. “The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.

[Jeremiah 31:4-5](#). *Again I will build thee, and thou shalt be built, O virgin of Israel: thou shalt again be adorned with thy tabrets, and shalt go forth in the dances of them that make merry. Thou shalt yet plant vines upon the mountains of Samaria: the planters shall plant, and shall eat them as common things.*

God has kind purposes of love towards his ancient people, and he will yet bring Israel again to her own land. And, spiritually, he has like purposes of love to all his elect; and they shall joy and rejoice with unspeakable delight. What though you are barren for awhile? God shall yet come to you, and you shall be fruitful.

[Jeremiah 31:6-9](#). *For there shall be a day, that the watchmen upon the mount Ephraim shall cry, Arise ye, and let us go up to Zion unto the LORD our God. For thus saith the LORD Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations: publish ye, praise ye, and say, O LORD, save thy people, the remnant of Israel. Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travaileth with child together: a great company shall return thither. They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble: for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn.*

Do not forget the first meaning of this passage in its reference to Israel, but suck in also the consolation which comes from it to all who are believers in Christ. The Lord will certainly bring all his chosen ones to himself. Blind as they are, — wandering as they have been, — they shall come back to him; they shall come back with tears of repentance, and with refreshments of mercy: “by the rivers of water.” They shall come back to their God, who says, “I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn.”

[Jeremiah 31:10-11](#). *Hear the word of the LORD, O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock. For the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he.*

Redemption lies at the bottom of every favor that we receive from God. He blesses us because he has redeemed us. He has bought us with so great a price that we are too dear for him ever to lose us. Because he has bought his flock, therefore will he fetch it away from the enemy.

[Jeremiah 31:12-14](#). *Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the LORD, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock and of the herd: and their soul shall be as a watered garden; and they shall not sorrow any more at all. Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together: for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow. And I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness, and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, saith the LORD.*

Why, these very words are full of marrow and fatness! The promise is inexpressibly sweet; what must the fulfillment of it be? Oh, for faith to lay hold upon it! Yet there is a note of sorrow mingled with the pealing of the joy-bells: —

[Jeremiah 31:15-16](#). *Thus saith the LORD A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rahel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not. Thus saith the LORD Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the LORD and they shall come again from the land of the enemy.*

“Your lost babes shall live; their very bodies, mouldering in the earth, shall rise again. Be not grieved or vexed overmuch; for ‘they shall come again from the land of the enemy.’ “

[Jeremiah 31:17](#). *And there is hope in thine end, saith the LORD, that thy children shall come again to their own border.*

There is another sorrow, — a deeper sorrow than grief over children, that is, sorrow for sin: —

[Jeremiah 31:18](#). *I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, —*

And there was an end of it, —

[Jeremiah 31:18](#). *As a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke:*

Since thy chastisements have been of little service to me, lay thine hand upon me: —

[Jeremiah 31:18-19](#). *Turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the LORD my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented;*

Repentance is a turning from sin unto the Lord.

[Jeremiah 31:19](#). *And after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh:*

In very grief of heart, as if I could not smite myself enough for having sinned.

[Jeremiah 31:19](#). *I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth.*

Now when a man talks like that, how does God speak?

[Jeremiah 31:20](#). *Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still:*

“Not only do I remember him, but ‘I do earnestly remember him still.’ “

[Jeremiah 31:20](#). *Therefore my bowels are troubled for him;*

“I cannot bear to see his misery.”

[Jeremiah 31:20](#). *I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the LORD.*

Oh, what blessedness there is in this gracious promise!

[Jeremiah 31:21-26](#). *Set thee up waymarks, make thee high heaps: set thine heart toward the highway, even the way which thou wentest: turn again, O virgin of Israel, turn again to these thy cities. How long wilt thou go about, O thou backsliding daughter? for the LORD hath created a new thing in the earth, A woman shall compass a man. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; As yet they shall use this speech in the land of Judah and in the cities thereof, when I shall bring again their captivity; The LORD bless thee, O habitation of justice, and mountain of holiness. And there shall dwell in Judah itself, and in all the cities thereof together, husbandmen, and they that go forth with flocks. For I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul. Upon this I awaked, and beheld; and my sleep was sweet unto me.*

I should think it was. If a man could dream like that, he might well wish to go to sleep again. To dream of everlasting love, of gracious drawings, of heavenly restorations, of sin forgiven, sorrow removed, and desire satisfied, well may the prophet, say, “My sleep was sweet unto me.” May we, when we are awake, learn what the prophet heard in his sleep!

Verses 1-28

[Jeremiah 31:1](#). *At the same time, faith the LORD, will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people.*

How divinely he talks, — as only God can talk. These people had rejected him, yet he says, “They shall be my people,” not only some of them, but all of them: “I will be the God of all the families of Israel.” Behold the wonderful power of divine grace upon the hearts of rebellious sinners. There are no “ifs” and no “buts” here; it is “I will” and “they shall.” God knows how to work out his own purposes of love and mercy.

[Jeremiah 31:2](#). *Thus saith the Lord, The people which were left of the sword found grace in the wilderness; even Israel, when I went to cause him to rest.*

If we ever do get true rest of soul, God must cause us to rest, as David said, “He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.” The rest of the heart is a miracle of divine power.

[Jeremiah 31:3](#). *The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.*

There is the source of everything that is good and gracious: “everlasting love.” When God has once set that love upon his people, anything and everything that is for their good may come out of it; all temporal good and all eternal blessings will come out of everlasting love. Oh, that we might each one of us have grace to appropriate these blessed words to himself: “I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.” They were given to Israel of old, but the spiritual Israel possesses all the privileges of the natural Israel, and much more.

[Jeremiah 31:4](#). *Again I will build thee, and thou shalt be built,*

Whatever God does is done effectually; there is never any failure in his work.

[Jeremiah 31:4](#). *O virgin of Israel: thou shalt again be adorned with thy tablets, and shalt go forth in the dances of them that make merry.*

They had wept and mourned, but they were to dance; they had been very sad and disconsolate, but they were to take down their harps from the willows, and even to have their tablets or timbrels again.

[Jeremiah 31:5](#). *Thou shalt yet plant vines upon the mountain of Samaria: the planters shall plant, and shall eat them as common things.*

God makes the luxuries of grace to be common things to his people. Fare that once seemed so rare as to be enjoyed only on high days and holidays shall become everyday meat to his people when their Lord reveals himself to them.

[Jeremiah 31:6](#). *For there shall be a day, that the watchmen upon the mount Ephraim shall cry, Arise ye, and let us go up to Zion unto the LORD our God.*

For many a year Israel had gone to Bethel to worship the calves, or stayed at home to adore the shrine of Ashtaroah; now they were to go to Zion to serve Jehovah. See what the grace of God can do even for idolaters. If any of us have been bowing down to our idols, may we this day turn to the living God; may the power of his grace lead us to go heartily and unanimously to worship the Lord our God.

[Jeremiah 31:7-8](#). *For thus saith the LORD Sing with gladness, for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations: publish ye, praise ye, and say, O LORD, save thy people, the remnant of Israel. Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travaileth with child together: a great company shall return thither.*

Whatever God does, he does thoroughly. When he shall restore his ancient people, he will not leave the weak ones behind, and if, today, we are enjoying his presence, the most afflicted and the most infirm among us shall know what the joy of the Lord means. The Lord grant it, and we will praise his holy name.

[Jeremiah 31:9](#). *They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them:*

Weeping and prayer go well together. There is no prayer like a wet prayer saturated with the tears of repentance.

[Jeremiah 31:9](#). *I will cause them to walk by the rivers of water in a straight way, —*

Hear this, ye mourners. God will supply your need with rivers of waters, and he will make you to walk in a straight way. Sometimes we are perplexed because the road seems to wind in and out like a labyrinth, but God can lead us in a straight way: “I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way,” —

[Jeremiah 31:9](#). *Wherein they shall not stumble: for I am a father to Israel and Ephraim is my firstborn.*

They had forgotten their relationship to Jehovah, but he still remembered that they were his children.

[Jeremiah 31:10-11](#). *Hear the word of the LORD, O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off and say He that scattered Israel will gather*

him and keep him as a shepherd doth his flock. For the LORD hath redeemed Jacob and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he.

They were the Lord's chosen people even when they were in captivity in Babylon. He had scattered them because of their sin, but he would gather them in his mercy.

[Jeremiah 31:12-14](#). *Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion and shall flow together to the goodness of the LORD, for wheat and for wine and for oil, and for the young of the flock and of the herd: and their soul shall be as a watered garden; and they shall not sorrow any more at all. Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance both young men and old together: for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them and make them rejoice from their sorrow. And I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness, and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness saith the LORD.*

What a blessed change this was for those who had sorrowfully cried, "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" And we rejoice in a still greater change when the Lord brings us into spiritual liberty.

[Jeremiah 31:15-17](#). *Thou saith the LORD A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping; Rahel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not. Thus saith the LORD Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tear: for thy work shall be rewarded saith the LORD and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. And there is hope in thine end, saith the LORD, that thy children shall come again to their own border.*

A mother's sorrow over her lost babes is very great and long-enduring, but if she is a Christian, she shall meet them again in the land of the blessed, and shall be parted from them no more for ever.

[Jeremiah 31:18](#). *I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus;*
What a wonderfully expressive word that word "bemoaning" is!

[Jeremiah 31:18-19](#). *Thou hast chastised me and I was chastised as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the LORD my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth.*

Hear what the Lord says about these bemoaning ones, these sin-loathing ones: —

[Jeremiah 31:20](#). *Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child?*

Or we may render it, “Is this Ephraim my dear son? Is this my pleasant child?” He is all that now that he begins to hate his sin.

[Jeremiah 31:20](#). *For since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still:*

Think of this, you who forget your God, ye backsliders, wanderers from your Father’s house.

[Jeremiah 31:20-21](#). *Therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the LORD. Set thee up waymarks, make thee high heaps:*

Raise cairns along the road at various point to let other travelers know the way in which they should go.

[Jeremiah 31:21-22](#). *Set thine heart toward the highway, even the way which thou wentest: turn again, O virgin of Israel, turn again to these thy cities. How long wilt thou go about, O thou backsliding daughter? for the LORD hath created a new thing in the earth, A woman shall compass a man.*

Whereas the enemy had compassed Jerusalem round about, now Jerusalem was to be the besieger, and to compass her enemies, and defeat them. Some interpreters think this is an allusion to the birth of the Saviour, that “new thing in the earth” — the incarnation of the Son of God.

[Jeremiah 31:23-25](#). *Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; As yet they shall use this speech in the land of Judah and in the cities thereof, when I shall bring again their captivity; The LORD bless thee, O habitation of justice, and mountain of holiness. And there shall dwell is Judah itself, and in all the cities thereof together, husbandmen, and they that go forth with flocks. For I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul.*

This prophecy is to be fulfilled in the restoration of Israel to Palestine; until that happens, the promise bears a spiritual meaning to all the children of God. O weary soul, thou shalt be satiated, that is more than being satisfied; thou shalt have as much of holiness and joy as thou canst hold! Plead his promise now, O sorrowful soul, and may God fulfill it to thee!

[Jeremiah 31:26](#). *Upon this I awaked, and beheld; and my sleep was sweet unto me.*

Well might it be. Poor Jeremiah, who so often wept over the woes of Israel, was the very man to be refreshed when he heard from God that he

would visit his people in mercy, and bring them back to their own land. Happy dreamer, who dreams such a blessed dream as this, a dream that came true in due time.

[Jeremiah 31:27-28](#). *Behold, the days come saith the LORD, that I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man, and with the seed of beast. And it shall come to pass, that like as I have watched over them, to pluck up, and to break down, and to throw down, and to destroy, and to afflict; so will I watch over them, to build, and to plant, saith the LORD.*

What a black list of words we first have here! God's way of dealing with his people when they wander away from him is very stern. They must be brought back, but it will be over a very rough road. The Lord says that he "watched over them, to pluck up, and to break down, and to throw down, and to destroy, and to afflict;" and in the same measure he now declares that he will watch over them to do them good. As our tribulations abound, so also shall our consolations abound by Christ Jesus. If you have been bitterly convinced of sin, you shall be sweetly convinced of pardon. The deeper God digs the foundation, the higher he means to build the house. Those who are brought to him in great affliction very often afterwards know more of Christ and more of the love of God than any others.

Verses 18-26

[Jeremiah 31:18](#). *I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus;*

—
It is God who is here speaking. There is never a moan, or a sob, or a cry, or a sigh, but God hears it. The Lord is very quick of hearing for the sorrows of penitent sinners; there is no mistake about this matter, for he says, "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus;" —

[Jeremiah 31:18](#). *Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, —*

"No good came of it. I smarted, but I was not benefited: 'Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised,'" —

[Jeremiah 31:18](#). *As a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou; art the LORD my God.*

There was never a heart that spake thus, unless grace had been secretly at work with it; and depend upon it, if God has brought us to this point, that we are ready to declare him to be our God, and are anxious to be the subjects of his converting grace, it is because God has looked upon us in his wondrous love. If thou desirest to be turned towards God, thou art already

in a measure turned towards him. The desire to feel is a kind of feeling, the longing to believe has some measure of faith in it. Be comforted by this thought, yet be not content to rest where thou art, but go on till thou hast all the blessing that the Lord is waiting and willing to bestow upon thee. Happy is the man who is saying to God at this moment, “Turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God.”

[Jeremiah 31:19](#). *Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed yea, even confounded because I did bear the reproach of my youth.*

“When a man has “sown his wild oats,” and God in mercy helps him to come back from such a dreadful field as that, he recollects what he has been, and he is ashamed of himself; sometimes, he is more than half ashamed to mingle with God’s people, for he is afraid that they will have nothing to do with such a wretch as he has been; but he is, most of all, ashamed to come near to his God, because of the reproach of his youth. Yet listen to the Lord’s gracious words concerning him: —

[Jeremiah 31:20](#). *Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord.*

Here we seem to look into the very heart of God; and he is represented to us as though he had contending passions within him. He speaketh angrily one day, but he doth earnestly remember mercy the next day. God changes not, yet his dealings with men must change, because their state varies so much. He sometimes speaks in great wrath while they hold to their sin, but love lies even at the bottom of that wrath; and anon he changeth his tone, and speaketh comfortably, and putteth away the sinner’s sin when he sees that his anger has wrought the due result, and the sinner quits his sin to come to his God. Some of you understand this treatment, for you have experienced it; but you cannot comprehend the fullness of mercy and love that is in the heart of God towards the repenting sinner.

[Jeremiah 31:21-22](#). *Set thee up waymarks, make thee high heaps: set thine heart toward the highway, even the way which thou wentest: turn again, O virgin of Israel, turn again to these thy cities. How long wilt thou go about, O thou backsliding daughter?*

How long will you be seeking comfort where you cannot find it, and pleasure where nothing but misery can come?

[Jeremiah 31:22-23](#). *For the Lord hath created a new thing in the earth, A woman shall compass a man. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; As yet they shall use this speech in the land of Judah and in the cities thereof, when I shall bring again their captivity; The LORD bless thee, O habitation of justice, and mountain of holiness.*

Jerusalem was cursed because of sin; but God declared that, in his great mercy, he would make it to be a place of blessing, and men should speak of it as the “habitation of justice, and mountain of holiness.”

[Jeremiah 31:24-26](#). *And there shall dwell in Judah itself, and in all the cities thereof together, husbandmen, and they that go forth with flocks. For I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul. Upon this I awaked, and beheld; and my sleep was sweet unto me.*

He that can sleep and dream as Jeremiah did, may well say that his sleep was sweet to him. May God grant to us, whether we sleep or wake, to be always with him! Then our time shall be indeed sweet unto us.

Verses 22-37

[Jeremiah 31:22](#). *For the LORD hath created a new thing in the earth, A woman shall compass a man.*

Here is a prophecy of the birth of Immanuel, God with us, born of a woman by the supernatural power of the Holy Ghost. Mary was indeed blessed among women, and we rejoice in that Man who was thus miraculously born to be the Saviour, Christ the Lord.

[Jeremiah 31:23-30](#). *Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; As yet they shall use this speech in the land of Judah and in the cities thereof, when I shall bring again their captivity; The LORD bless thee, O habitation of justice, and mountain of holiness. And there shall dwell in Judah itself, and in all the cities thereof together, husbandmen, and they that go forth with flocks. For I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul.*

There are good times in store for Israel; Jerusalem shall then be the “habitation of justice, and mountain of holiness.”

[Jeremiah 31:26](#). *Upon this I awaked, and beheld; and my sleep was sweet unto me.*

Jeremiah woke up with a pleasant impression of his vision upon him, and well he might, for was there ever a more blessed one than that of which we have just read?

[Jeremiah 31:27-28](#). *Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man, and with the seed of beast. And it shall come to pass, that like as I have watched over them, to pluck up, and to break down, and to throw down, and to destroy, and to afflict; so will I watch over them, to build, and to plant, saith the LORD.*

All the ingenuity of heaven seems to be taxed to bless believers; and just as man sought out many inventions for evil, God in his infinite love and mercy seeks out many inventions for the good of his people.

[Jeremiah 31:29-30](#). *In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge. But every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge.*

We live under a personal dispensation, there is no such thing as hereditary godliness or salvation by proxy. Every man must for himself repent, and for himself believe. Vain and foolish is the idea that, because we have had Christian parents, therefore we also are Christians.

[Jeremiah 31:31-32](#). *Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD.*

What bliss it is to know about this new covenant! Let us notice its tenor.

[Jeremiah 31:33](#). *But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts;”-*

Not on the tables of stone, not on the walls of the church, but “ I will write it in their hearts; “-

[Jeremiah 31:33](#). *And will be their God, and they shall be my people.*

You may have heard it said that Christ will not leave his people, but that his people may leave him; but in this promise the second contingency is provided for as well as the first.

[Jeremiah 31:34-37](#). *And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no*

more. Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of hosts is his name: If those ordinances depart from before me saith the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever. Thus saith the LORD, If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the LORD.

What a God of infinite mercy he is!

This exposition consisted of readings from [Lamentations 3:1-33](#); and [Jeremiah 31:22-37](#)

Verses 27-37

[Jeremiah 31:27-33](#). *Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man, and with the seed of beast. And it shall come to pass, that like as I have watched over them, to pluck up, and to break down, and to throw down, and to destroy, and to afflict; so will I watch over them, to build, and replant, saith the Lord. In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge. But every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grape. his teeth shall be set on edge. Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord: but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.*

This is the central truth of all Scripture, it is the basis of all Scripture. When Paul desires to set forth the covenant of grace, he appeals to this passage. Twice, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, he bases an argument upon it, and after quoting it, adds, "Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us." Brethren and sisters in Christ, under the first covenant we are ruined; there is no salvation for us but under this new covenant, wherefore let us read to our joy and comfort what the promises and provisions of that new covenant are.

[Jeremiah 31:34](#). *And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.*

Pardoned sin, as well as the change of nature, is implied in the writing of the law upon the heart. Oh, what a privilege it is to be among these covenanted people! How shall we know whether we belong to them? The seal of the covenant is faith in Christ; I mean the personal seal upon the heart and conscience. Thou believest in Jesus Christ as thy Saviour, thou art trusting alone to his atoning sacrifice, then God is in covenant with thee, for Jesus is the Mediator of the new covenant, and he who hath Christ hath the Surety of the covenant, and he shall have in due time every blessing which that covenant guarantees.

[Jeremiah 31:35-37](#). *Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of hosts is his name: if those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever. Thus saith the LORD If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the LORD.*

Now Israel still standeth as a people separate from all others, and there is still before the literal seed of Israel a great and glorious future; but as for the spiritual Israel, who worship God in the Spirit, and have no confidence in the flesh, God will sooner blot out the sun and moon than cast away his people, or any one of them. They shall all be his people, and he shall be their God; he will preserve them, and he will keep his covenant with them for ever and for ever, blessed be his holy name, the name of Jehovah, the God of the covenant which cannot be broken!

Verses 29-37

[Jeremiah 31:29-30](#). *In these days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge. But every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge.*

God was going to deal with the Israelites individually, personally; and that is how he will deal with us.

[Jeremiah 31:31](#). *Behold,*

Here is something worth beholding; read this great promise with tears in your eyes: —

[Jeremiah 31:31-33](#). *The days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the Land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto than, saith the LORD: but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.*

It is all wills and shalls; it is all covenant life; — no longer the law graven upon the tables of stone, but the law written on the heart; — no more the Lord's command without man's power and will to obey it; but God will renew our nature, and change our disposition, so that we shall love to do what once we loathed, and shall loathe the sins that we once loved. What a wonderful mass of mercies is included in the covenant of grace!

[Jeremiah 31:34](#). *And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, know the Lord: for they shall all know me, —*

“All thy children shall be taught of the Lord.” All believers, whatever else they may not know, do know their Lord: “they shall all know me,” —

[Jeremiah 31:34](#). *From the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD:*

How will they learn to know the Lord? Well, it will be in a very wonderful way; —

[Jeremiah 31:34](#). *For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.*

Let me read that again, and may come poor wandering children of God hear the promise, and be glad that it applies to them: “ I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

[Jeremiah 31:35-37](#). *Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of hosts is his name: if these ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever.*

Thus saith the LORD If heaven above can be measured, and the foundation of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the LORD.

Verses 31-34

[Jeremiah 31:31-33](#). *Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.*

The old covenant was written on tables of stone; but the Lord said, concerning the new covenant, “I will put my law in their inward parts.” The old law was hidden from sight when it was written a second time, and placed in the ark of the covenant; and God says of his new law, “I will write it in their hearts.” They were always rebelling against God, and wandering away from him; but in this new, gracious covenant, he says, “I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”

[Jeremiah 31:34](#). *And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD:*

God gives to all his people a knowledge of himself. “Whatever else they know or do not know,” saith the Lord, “they shall all know me.” Though they differ as to their growth in grace, yet “they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord.”

[Jeremiah 31:34](#). *For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.*

If God has pardoned your sins, you will be sure to know him; there will be no mistake about that point. Men shrink back, and hide away from an angry God punishing sin, for they do not care to know him; but when he comes forth, dressed in the silken robes of love, to bestow free pardons upon the chief of sinners, then they know him. God grant that all of us may have this blessed knowledge! Now kindly turn over the leaves of your Bibles until you come to then 36th chapter of the Book of Ezekiel, and the

25th verse, where you can read still further about this same gracious new covenant of Jehovah.

[JEREMIAH CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 32

Verses 1-27

[Jeremiah 32:1-5](#). *The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord in the tenth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, which was the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar. For then the king of Babylon's army besieged Jerusalem : and Jeremiah the prophet was shut up in the court of the prison, which was in the king of Judah's house. For Zedekiah king of Judah had shut him up, saying. Wherefore dost thou prophesy, and say, Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall take it; and Zedekiah king of Judah shall not escape out of the hand of the Chaldeans, but shalt surely be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon, and shall speak with him mouth to mouth, and his eyes shall behold his eyes; and he shall lead Zedekiah to Babylon, and there shall he be until I visit him, saith the Lord: though ye fight with the Chaldeans, ye shall not prosper.*

So you see that Jeremiah was shut up in prison at the time here mentioned. Zedekiah, the king of Judah, had treated him very harshly, because of his faithful utterance of the Word of the Lord. He was a true servant of Jehovah, yet he suffered much at the king's hand. One very remarkable event, which happened at that time, is here recorded.

[Jeremiah 32:6-8](#). *And Jeremiah said, The word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Behold, Hanameel the son of Shallum thine uncle shall come unto thee, saying, Buy thee my field that is in Anathoth: for the right of redemption is thine to buy it. So Hanameel mine uncle's son came to me in the court of the prison according to the word of the LORD, and said unto me, Buy my field, I pray thee, that is in Anathoth, which is in the country of Benjamin: for the right of inheritance is thine, and the redemption is thine; buy it for thyself. Then I knew that this was the word of the LORD.*

The Lord had told him beforehand that it would be so; and, therefore, in due time, his cousin came to him with the offer of this plot of land in the country of Benjamin.

[Jeremiah 32:9-10](#). *And I bought the field of Hanameel my uncle's son, that was in Anathoth, and weighed him the money, even seventeen shekels of silver. And I subscribed the evidence, and sealed it, and took witnesses, and weighed him the money in the balances.*

This was, in every respect, a very extraordinary transaction. Remember that the Chaldeans were already besieging Jerusalem, and they were all over the land, carrying fire and sword into every part of it. Jerusalem was straitly shut up, so that none of the inhabitants could get out of the city; yet here is Jeremiah, himself a prisoner, buying land which was virtually worth nothing whatever; but he believed so firmly that the Chaldeans would yet permit the Jews to live unmolested in that land that he paid down the purchase money for the field, and saw to the legal execution of the deed of transfer, just as you or I might have done if we were purchasing a plot of land in our own country. This is a notable instance of the triumph of faith over unfavourable surroundings, and also of the prophet's obedience to the Word of the Lord.

[Jeremiah 32:11-12](#). *So I took the evidence of the purchase, both that which was sealed according to the law and custom, and that which was open: and I gave the evidence of the purchase unto Baruch the son of Neriah, the son of Maaseiah, in the sight of Hanameel mine uncle's son, and in the presence of the witnesses that subscribed the book of the purchase, before all the Jews that sat in the court of the prison.*

Jeremiah did all this openly. What they may have thought to be an absurd action, he did not do in private; but in the presence of them all. True faith in God does not go in for hole-and-corner transactions. Faith can do its business in the light of the sun. Faith believes God under all circumstances, and believes that the truest common sense is to obey his Word. Therefore she is not ashamed of what she does; neither shall she ever have cause to be ashamed or confounded, world without end. There is a living God; and if we do what he bids us, good must come of it. No harm shall happen to the man who confidently rests in the Most High.

[Jeremiah 32:13-17](#). *And I charged Baruch before them, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Take these evidences, this evidence of the purchase, both which is sealed, and this evidence which is open; and put them in an earthen vessel, that they may continue many days. For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land. Now when I had*

delivered the evidence of the purchase unto Baruch the son of Neriah, I prayed unto the LORD, saying, Ah LORD GOD!

Faith cannot live without prayer. When she has performed her most heroic deeds, she turns to God and humbly asks for renewed strength; for oh! my brethren, the best of men are but men at the best; and those who have the most faith never have any to spare. Jeremiah says, “I prayed unto the Lord, saying, Ah Lord God!” It looked, at first sight, as if the prophet was going to utter some mournful complaint, or to express some doubt or misgiving concerning the purchase of the land; but it was not so. Having allowed that exclamation to escape from him, his faith came to the rescue, and he continued: —

[Jeremiah 32:17](#). *Behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee:*

Is not that a grand sentence? “There is nothing too hard for thee.” He that could make the heaven and the earth can do anything. Read, in the Book of Genesis, the story of the creation, and see how “He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast;” and then judge as to what can ever be a difficulty to the Almighty. Surely you must say to him, as Jeremiah did, “There is nothing too hard for thee.”

[Jeremiah 32:18](#). *Thou shewest lovingkindness unto thousands, and recompensest the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them; the Great, the Mighty God, the LORD of hosts, is his name, —*

See how these godly men, in their times of trouble, delighted in the great names and glorious attributes of God. There are, nowadays, many namby-pamby, fashionable religionists, wrapped in luxury, who have only a little god; they never seem to know “the Great, the Mighty God;” but Jeremiah, with the smell of the prison still clinging to him, talks grandly: “the Great, the Mighty God, the Lord of hosts, is his name,” —

[Jeremiah 32:19-21](#). *Great in counsel, and mighty in work: for thine eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men: to give every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings: which hast set signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, even unto this day, and in Israel, and among other men; and hast made thee a name, as at this day; and hast brought forth thy people Israel out of the land of Egypt with signs, and with wonders, and with a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with great terror;*

Those ancient Jews, in the time of their trouble, always looked gratefully back to the wonders wrought by Jehovah in Egypt. That great deed of God, when he smote the might of Pharaoh, was always present to the Hebrew mind; and the people, in every season of tribulation, refreshed themselves with the remembrance of it. Well, then, dear friends, as they sang the song of Moses, shall not we sing the song of the Lamb? Will not we go back in thought to the glorious triumphs of our Redeemer, and recount again and again, for the encouragement of our faith, what Christ did for us upon the tree, even as the Jews thought often, for the strengthening of their confidence, of their wondrous deliverance from Egypt by the high hand and the stretched out arm of Jehovah?

[Jeremiah 32:22-24](#). *And hast given them this land, which thou didst swear to their fathers to give them, a land flowing with milk and honey, and they came in, and possessed it; but they obeyed not thy voice, neither walked in thy law; they have done nothing of all that thou commandedst them to do: therefore thou hast caused all this evil to come upon them: behold the mounts, —*

The margin renders it, “the engines of shot,” which we see, by the next chapter, were powerful enough to throw down the houses in Jerusalem.

[Jeremiah 32:24-25](#). *They are come unto the city to take it; and the city is given into the hand of the Chaldeans, that fight against it, because of the sword, and of the famine, and of the pestilence; and what thou hast spoken is come to pass; and, behold, thou seest it. And thou hast said unto me, O LORD GOD, Buy thee the field for money, and take witnesses; for the city is given into the hand of the Chaldeans.*

I suppose that, although Jeremiah, with unquestioning faith, had done as God had commanded him, yet afterwards, when he was alone in his prison cell, he began to think the whole matter over; and though he may not have had any actual doubts, yet he probably had some anxieties as to the issue of the whole affair. He could not quite understand it, so he wisely put it before the Lord. Some of you, who have truly trusted God, may yet be just now perplexed with anxiety of one kind or another. Well, then, tell it all out before the Lord; go at once into his presence, and spread the case before him, as Jeremiah did.

[Jeremiah 32:26-27](#). *Then came the word of the Lord unto Jeremiah, saying, Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?*

That question we will try to answer presently.

Verses 6-41

[Jeremiah 32:6-7](#). *And Jeremiah, said, The word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Behold, Hanameel the son of Shallum thine uncle shall come unto thee, saying, Buy thee my field that is in Anathoth: for the right of redemption is thine to buy it.*

God gave his servant an intimation of what was about to happen, so that he might know how to act. It did seem a very strange thing to come to a poor prophet in prison, and to ask him to buy a piece of land when the Chaldeans were in possession of it, and when there seemed to be no hope that he would ever see it. One said, "I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it;" but Jeremiah could not do this, for he was shut up in prison, and the enemy had possession of the field he was to buy. Still, the thing was of the Lord, and therefore it was right; and there is many an action which in itself might seem absurd, but which, nevertheless, is to be performed because it is according to the will of God.

[Jeremiah 32:8](#). *So Hanameel mine uncle's son came to me in the court of the prison according to the word of the LORD, and said unto me, Buy my field, I pray thee, that is in Anathoth, which is in the country of Benjamin: for the right of inheritance is thine, and the redemption is thine; buy it for thyself. Then I knew that this was the word of the LORD.*

Should a minister be concerned about the buying of land? Yes, if God bids him buy it. He is not to be entangled with the affairs of this life; but Jeremiah certainly could not be entangled with this field.

[Jeremiah 32:9](#). *And I bought the field of Hanameel my uncle's son, that was in Anathoth, and weighed him the money, even seventeen shekels of silver.*

They always paid by weight to make sure that the amount was correct.

[Jeremiah 32:10-11](#). *And I subscribed the evidence, and sealed it, and took witnesses, and weighed him the money in the balances. So I took the evidence of the purchase, both that which was sealed according to the law and custom, and that which was open:*

The transaction was all in proper legal form. We are not to be neglectful in business because we are the servants of the Lord; but in all things we should act as men of prudence and common sense.

[Jeremiah 32:12-14](#). *And I gave the evidence of the purchase unto Baruch the son of Neriah, the son of Maaseiah, in the sight of Hanameel mine*

uncle's son, and in the presence of the witnesses that subscribed the book of the purchase, before all the Jews that sat in the court of the prison. And I charged Baruch before them, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; take these evidences, this evidence of the purchase, both which is sealed, and this evidence which is open; and put them in an earthen vessel, that they may continue many days.

They had no iron safes in those days; so their practice was to put their documents into earthen vessels, and bury them deep in the earth, where they reckoned they would be secure.

[Jeremiah 32:15](#). *For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land.*

Therefore, as an act of faith in God, the prophet bought this meadow.

[Jeremiah 32:16](#). *Now when I had delivered the evidence of the purchase unto Baruch the son of Neriah, I prayed unto the LORD, saying,*

Jeremiah completes the business, puts the securities into safe keeping, and now he prays. It is always well to be free from care before you pray. Let nothing remain to be done, if it be possible, and then get alone, and let your heart be free to speak with God. I do not suppose that Jeremiah prayed any the less or any the worse because he had attended to this business transaction. A man who lives near to God ought to be able to go from his counting-house to his closet with a happy heart.

[Jeremiah 32:17-19](#). *Ah Lord GOD! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee: thou shewest lovingkindness unto thousands, and recompensest the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them: the Great, the Mighty God, the LORD of hosts, is his name, great in counsel, and mighty in work: for thine eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men: to give every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings:*

Whenever you are troubled, think much of God; speak much of him. This is true adoration. It will be a great help to your own spirit. Your own littleness will be forgotten in the greatness of your God.

[Jeremiah 32:20-24](#). *Which hast set signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, even unto this day, and in Israel, and among other men; and hast made thee a name, as at this day; and hast brought forth thy people Israel out of the land of Egypt with signs, and with wonders, and with a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with great terror; and hast given*

them this land, which thou didst swear to their fathers to give them, a land flowing with milk and honey; and they came in, and possessed it; but they obeyed not thy voice, neither walked in thy law; they have done nothing of all that thou commandedst them to do: therefore thou hast caused all this evil to come upon them: behold the mounts,

The earthworks thrown up about Jerusalem completely surrounded it and the Chaldeans were hard at work breaking down the walls to capture the city while the people were dying of famine and disease.

[Jeremiah 32:24-25](#). *They are come unto the city to take it; and the city is given into the hand of the Chaldeans, that fight against it, because of the sword, and of the famine, and of the pestilence: and what thou hast spoken is come to pass; and, behold, thou seest it. And thou hast said unto me, O Lord GOD, Buy thee the field for money, and take witnesses; for the city is given into the hand of the Chaldeans.*

Observe, it is hardly a prayer that Jeremiah utters; it is just a statement of his condition, and yet that is real prayer. When you do not know what to ask of God, state your difficulty; for that is the very best thing you can do. When you cannot see any way out of the maze, never mind; it is for God to show you the clue. There is often much sanctified common sense in laying the difficulty before the Lord, spreading the letter before him, and leaving it there. When you cannot ask for deliverance in this way or that, it will be sufficient just to state the case as Jeremiah did.

[Jeremiah 32:26-27](#). *Then came the word of the LORD unto Jeremiah, saying, Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there anything too hard for me?*

This is a grand question, an unanswerable question.

[Jeremiah 32:28-31](#). *Therefore thus saith the LORD Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the Chaldeans, and into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and he shall take it: and the Chaldeans, that fight against this city, shall come and set fire on this city, and burn it with the houses, upon whose roofs they have offered incense unto Baal, and poured out drink offerings unto other gods, to provoke me to anger. For the children of Israel and the children of Judah have only done evil before me from their youth: for the children of Israel have only provoked me to anger with the work of their hands, saith the LORD. For this city hath been to me as a provocation of mine anger and of my fury from the day that they built it even unto this day; that I should remove it from before my face,*

Jerusalem was such a sinful city that it must be destroyed. The very roofs of the houses had been defiled by the sacrifices offered to idols. If these words were true of Jerusalem, surely they are also true in great measure of London. It has been a provocation of God's anger, "from the day that they built it even unto this day."

[Jeremiah 32:32](#). *Because of all the evil of the children of Israel and of the children of Judah, which they have done to provoke me to anger, they, their kings, their princes, their priests, and their prophets, and the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.*

They seemed, from the very highest to the lowest, determined to provoke the Lord, to show how little they cared for the Most High.

[Jeremiah 32:33](#). *And they have turned unto me the back, and not the face:*

Like men who wished to insult a king in his very court.

[Jeremiah 32:33](#). *Though I taught them, rising up early and teaching them, yet they have not hearkened to receive instruction.*

It is a great aggravation of an offense against God when he has taught us, and yet we "have not hearkened to receive instruction."

[Jeremiah 32:34-35](#). *But they set their abominations in the house, which is called by my name, to defile it. And they built the high places of Baal, which are in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire unto Molech; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin.*

If God had commanded them to offer up their children, they would have stood aghast at such cruelty; but they willingly sacrificed them to Molech in opposition to his will.

[Jeremiah 32:36-37](#). *And now therefore thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning this city, whereof ye say, It shall be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence; Behold, I will gather them out of all countries, whither I have driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath; and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely:*

God is angry, and yet gracious. The rest of the chapter is full of tenderness and love. It is enough to make our eyes fill with tears as we note how God speaks concerning those who had rebelled against him.

[Jeremiah 32:38](#). *And they shall be my people, and I will be their God:*

This is indeed a covenant of grace; it is not dealing with men after their sins, but according to the inexhaustible bounty of eternal love.

[Jeremiah 32:39-40](#). *And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.*

There is here a promise of double bliss. The Lord will not turn from his people, and they shall not turn from him. What more could God do than he here promises? It looks like a trial of strength between sin and grace. Sin was like a mountain; but the Lord's love was like the flood, which prevailed till even the mountains were covered.

[Jeremiah 32:41](#). *Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart and with my whole soul.*

See how God puts his whole heart to the work when he is blessing his people. When he forgives sin, it is with his whole heart and soul. May we, with our whole heart and soul, repent of our sin; and then, with all our heart and soul, serve the Lord! Amen.

Verses 30-42

[Jeremiah 32:30](#). *For the children of Israel and the children of Judah have only done evil before me from their youth: for the children of Israel have only provoked me to anger with the work of their hands, saith the LORD.*

Here were people who had done nothing else but evil. God had been very good to them, but they had been very bad to him. From their youth, and without a break, they had continued to rebel.

[Jeremiah 32:31](#). *For this city hath been to me as a provocation of mine anger and of my fury from the day that they built it even unto this day; that I should remove it from before my face,*

Jerusalem, which ought to have been a holy city, had been so impure that it had been a standing provocation to God from the day it was built.

[Jeremiah 32:32](#). *Because of all the evil of the children of Israel and of the children of Judah, which they have done to provoke me to anger, they, their kings, their princes, their priests, and their prophets, and the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.*

They seem to have been all alike. With scarcely an exception, from the highest class to the lowest, they were always disobeying God.

[Jeremiah 32:33](#). *And they have turned unto me the back, and not the face: though I taught them, rising up early and teaching them, yet they have not hearkened to receive instruction.*

This is a fearful indictment. When men refuse to learn better, turn their back upon the King of kings, and will have nothing to do with him, surely the time for vengeance has come.

[Jeremiah 32:34-35](#). *But they set their abominations in the house, which is called by my name, to defile it. And they built the high places of Baal, which are in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire unto Molech;*

There was nothing so terribly bad but they would do it; there was nothing so unnatural, so detestable, but they must needs practice it.

[Jeremiah 32:35-38](#). *Which I commanded them not, neither came it into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin. And now therefore thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning this city, whereof ye say, It shall be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence; Behold, I will gather them out of all countries, whither I have driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath; and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely: And they shall be my people, and I will be their God:*

Is not this a wonderful passage? After all this sin, and all this provocation, when we expect the thunder and lightning of divine judgment, behold, there is nothing but the sweet voice of pitying love: “They shall be my people, and I will be their God.” Oh, the wonders of divine grace! See what the covenant of grace does for guilty men.

[Jeremiah 32:39-40](#). *And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: And I will make an everlasting covenant with them,*

“With them” — with these very people who had provoked him, and served Molech, and bowed before idol gods, and put the Lord to shame, and angered him.

[Jeremiah 32:40-41](#). *That I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from*

me. Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart and with my whole soul.

A whole-hearted God, blessing those upon whom he looks with an eye of grace. It is a wonderful thing. If he had set his whole heart to destroy them, it would have seemed natural; but God is far above any conception of ours; and so, in the midst of guilt extraordinary and almost immeasurable, behold love equally extraordinary and grace altogether measureless.

[Jeremiah 32:42](#). *For thus saith the LORD Like as I have brought all this great evil upon this people, so will I bring upon them all the good that I have promised them.*

Oh, for grace to lay hold upon this everlasting covenant, even the sure mercies of David; and to be saved thereby!

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CHAPTER 33

Verses 15-26

[Jeremiah 33:15](#). *In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land.*

In the latter days, at the glorious appointed time, Jesus Christ will grow up like a Branch out of the stem of Jesse. The dynasty of David now seems like a tree cut down, whose stock is buried under the ground, but “the Branch of righteousness” shall appear in due time, and Jesus, the Son of David, “shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land.”

[Jeremiah 33:16](#). *In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith they shall be called, The LORD our righteousness.*

What a wonderful unity there is between Christ and his Church! She actually takes his name: “The Lord our righteousness.”

[Jeremiah 33:17-18](#). *For thus saith the LORD David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel; Neither shall the priests the Levites want a man before me to offer burnt offerings, and to kindle meat offerings, and to do sacrifice continually.*

This shows that the covenant was not a literal and fleshly one, made with David and his seed according to the flesh, or with the priests and their

seed according to the flesh. There is a Kingdom that can never be moved, and our Lord sits on that throne; there is a Priesthood which is everlasting, it is held by that great High Priest who hath offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, and who abides a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

[Jeremiah 33:19](#); [Jeremiah 33:22](#). *And the word of the LORD came unto Jeremiah, saying, Thus saith the LORD If ye can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season; Then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne; and with the Levites the priests, my ministers. As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, neither the sand of the sea measured: so will I multiply the seed of David my servant, and the Levites that minister unto me.*

So that they are at this day the seed of Jesus, the Son of David, who shall count them? And the company of those whom he hath made to be kings and priests unto God, who but he can number them?

[Jeremiah 33:23-26](#). *Moreover the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying, Considerest thou not what this people have spoken, saying, The two families which the LORD hath chosen, he hath even cast them off? thus they have despised my people, that they should be no more a nation before them. Thus saith the LORD If my covenant be not with day and night, and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth; Then will I cast away the seed of Jacob, and David my servant, so that I will not take any of his seed to be rulers over the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: for I will cause their captivity to return, and have mercy on them.*

This shall be literally fulfilled in the latter days, I doubt not, but it is even now being fulfilled to the spiritual seed of Jacob and David. The covenant of grace is made sure to all the seed, even to as many as have believed on Christ's name.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Genesis 8:15-22](#); and [Jeremiah 33:15-26](#).

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CHAPTER 3

Verses 1-33

I am about to read a portion of Holy Scripture which may seem very strange to some of you, but it belongs to a part of the congregation, and I hope it may be the means of giving them comfort. I read it as a picture of the suffering of a soul under a sense of sin. I think it is a most graphic portrait of a heart that is aroused and made to feel its lost estate. If there are any such here, they will be sure to see themselves in the picture.

[Lamentations 3:1](#). *I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath.*

It is a mistake that most souls make when in trouble, to suppose that no others ever felt as they do. John Bunyan describes Christian as being very much comforted by hearing someone quoting Scripture as he went through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, for then he perceived that there were others in like case with his own. Do not think, poor troubled soul, that no one ever was so broken in pieces as you are; your path of sorrow is a well-trodden one.

[Lamentations 3:2](#). *He hath led me, and brought me into darkness, but not into light.*

A Hebrew method of saying that it was a thick darkness without any light, either star-light or moon-light. You who have passed through this state of conviction know what it means;--no comfort from ordinances, no comfort from God's Word, no comfort from your daily mercies. Every stream of comfort seems dried up to you, and sin lies heavily upon you.

[Lamentations 3:3](#). *Surely against me is he turned; he turneth his hand against me all the day.*

As if, when a man is about to strike, he smites not with his open hand but turns his hand, so the prophet says God did with him. He felt that he was being smitten with the heaviest blows that God seemed able to give.

[Lamentations 3:4](#). *My flesh and my skin hath he made old; he hath broken my bones.*

As men through excessive grief sometimes appear to grow prematurely aged, so the prophet says he had done through grief. He felt as if his bones were broken. The sore vexations of his spirit had dashed the solid pillars of the house of Manhood from their place.

[Lamentations 3:5](#). *He hath builded against me, and compassed me with gall and travail.*

That is to say, as the besiegers erected a mound against a city, and threw up earthworks, so, the prophet says, God seemed to have thrown up earthworks from which he might fire off the great guns of the law against him.

[Lamentations 3:6](#). *He hath set me in dark places, as they that be dead of old.*

As though he had to live in a tomb, where neither life nor light could come to him.

[Lamentations 3:7](#). *He hath hedged me about, that I cannot get out: he hath made my chain heavy.*

“My way seems blocked up, nothing prospers with me.” As the convict sometimes drags about his chain, and has a ball at his foot, so the prophet felt as if God had clogged him with a heavy chain, so that he could not move because of its terrible weight.

[Lamentations 3:8](#). *Also when I cry and shout, he shutteth out my prayer,*
Which was the worst trial of all.

[Lamentations 3:9](#). *He hath enclosed my ways with hewn stone; he hath made my paths crooked.*

It was believed that hewn stones made the strongest wall as the joints would the more closely fit into one another. Jeremiah seems to speak as if God had taken care and trouble to build, not as men do, roughly with common stones, but with polished and well-shapen troubles built like strong barriers in his way.

[Lamentations 3:10](#). *He was unto me as a bear lying in wait, and as a lion in secret places.*

He felt as if the justice of God was about to spring upon him. He was afraid to move, lest the couchant lion should leap upon him, and tear him in pieces. John Bunyan, in his *Grace abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, describes in his own experience precisely what the prophet here speaks of.

[Lamentations 3:11-13](#). *He hath turned aside my ways, and pulled me in pieces: he hath made me desolate. He hath bent his bow, and set me as a mark for the arrow. He hath caused the arrows of his quiver to enter into my reins.*

And all this while, to aggravate his grief, he found no comfort anywhere.

[Lamentations 3:14](#). *I was a derision to all my people; and their song all the day.*

It is just so with a man who is under a sense of sin. His companions ask him why he is so melancholy; he has an attack of the mopes, they say. They do not want his society, they will chase him from their midst. I marvel not that they want not his company, for well do I know that he wants not theirs, but this adds much to his grief, to find that they make derision and laughter of his woe.

[Lamentations 3:15](#). *He hath filled me with bitterness, he hath made me drunken with wormwood.*

What a strong expression the prophet uses! As a drunken man hath lost his wits, and staggereth he knoweth not where, even as is a sinner when he really begins to taste the bitterness of sin. He does not act as if he were endowed with reason; despair and sorrow have driven his senses away.

[Lamentations 3:16](#). *He hath also broken my teeth with gravel stones, he hath covered me with ashes.*

The Easterns usually baked their cakes on the hearth, and very frequently there would be in the cakes pieces of grit, perhaps large lumps of cinder, and sometimes small gravel stones, which would break the teeth. "So," the prophet seems to say, "when I went to try to get some nourishment by the eating of bread, I was disappointed; my teeth were broken with gravel stones." I remember when I used to go up to the house of God to try to get comfort; but, instead thereof, I came away more wretched than I went, for sin, that great devouring dragon, still followed me everywhere.

[Lamentations 3:17-21](#). *And thou hast removed my soul far off from peace: I forgot prosperity. And I said, My strength and my hope is perished from the LORD: remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall. My soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me. This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope.*

Notice the gracious change that has taken place, as if the sun had risen after the blackness and gloom of the night. Now the birds of joy begin to sing, and the flowers of hope begin to open their golden cups.

[Lamentations 3:22](#). *It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassion fail not.*

Bad as our state is, we are not yet in hell; we are not yet beyond the reach of hope.

[Lamentations 3:23](#). *They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.*

We had new mercies this morning, and we have had fresh mercies this evening. God has not forgotten us. The very breath in our nostrils is a proof of his goodness to us; let us, therefore, dear friends, still hope for yet further favors from him.

[Lamentations 3:24-25](#). *The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him. The LORD is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him.*

Can you get a hold of this blessed truth, any of you troubled ones who are here? Broken-hearted sinner, can you get a grip of this comforting assurance? If so, there will soon be peace for you.

[Lamentations 3:26-27](#). *It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD. It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.*

For this yoke, though it may seem to be very heavy for a time, when it has humbled us, and brought us to Christ, will bring us innumerable blessings.

[Lamentations 3:28-33](#). *He sitteth alone and keepeth silence, because he hath borne it upon him. He putteth his mouth in the dust if so be there may be hope. He giveth his cheek to him that smiteth him: he is filled full with reproach. For the LORD will not cast of for ever: but though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies. For he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men.*

Unless he has some gracious motive for it, he never afflicts or grieves them, and when he doth act thus, it is as when a father smites his child. It is because it must be done and not because he loves to do it. See, then, the great mercy of God. May it lead the sinner to repentance, yea, and lead us all to put our trust in the Lord!

This exposition consisted of readings from [Lamentations 3:1-33](#); and [Jeremiah 31:22-37](#).

Verses 1-36

The first part of this chapter is one of the saddest in the whole Book of God; yet I expect it has ministered as much consolation as some of the brightest pages of Holy Writ, because there are children of God who are the subjects of great suffering and sorrow, and when they turn to such a passage as this, they see that one of the Lord's own prophet has gone that way

before them; and when they see the footprints of another of God's people in the dark and gloomy valley that they are themselves traversing they are encouraged. Besides, the chapter does not end as it begins. There is daylight for the poor sufferer after all, so we shall read the sad utterances of the prophet in the hope that, if we have ever known experiences similar to his, we may learn where to find comfort even as he did.

[Lamentations 3:1-2](#). *I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath. He hath led me, and brought me into darkness, but not into light.*

This seems to be the hardest part of our lot,-that God should lead us into darkness: "He hath led me, and brought me into darkness." Yet dear brethren, that is, on the other hand, the sweetest thing about our trial; because, if the darkness be in the place where God has led us, it is best for us to be in the dark. A child in the dark should derive much comfort from the thought, "My father brought me here, and he loves me so much that he would not bring me where I should be in danger, he must have had some good end and object in view in what he has done." Surely, there is something comforting to the tried child of God in that thought.

[Lamentations 3:3-5](#). *Surely against me is he turned; he turneth his hand against me all the day. My flesh and my skin, hath he made old; he hath broken my bones. He hath builded against me, and compassed me with gall and travail.*

"I am like a besieged city that has strong forts built all round it to shut it in on all sides."

[Lamentations 3:6-7](#). *He hath set me in dark places, as they that be dead of old. He hath hedged me about, that I can not get out: he hath made my chain heavy.*

Ah, dear friends, it is easy for some people to read such a passage as this, but there are others who have read it with aching brows and eyes red with weeping; and often, I doubt not, as they have read the prophet's descriptions of just such sorrows as they are themselves feeling, they have said, "Then after all, we are not alone in our griefs, and we may yet be delivered even as Jeremiah was"

[Lamentations 3:8](#). *Also when I cry and shout, he shutteth out my prayer.*

What a sorrow is this,--to feel that even prayer itself is unavailing! Yet this suppliant was no graceless sinner, he was a dear child of God, one of the noblest of the Lord's ancient prophets, one of the most faithful of his ministers. You must not think, because sometimes your prayers seem to be

unheard or unheeded, and you are allowed to continue in sorrow, that therefore the Lord does not love you. “Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth;” and that word “scourgeth” is a very strong one, meaning much more than just an ordinary whipping.

[Lamentations 3:9](#). *He hath inclosed my ways with hewn stone,*

“The Lord has shut me right up, as if he had built a wall around me on every side.”

[Lamentations 3:9-13](#). *He hath made my paths crooked. He was unto me as a bear lying in wait, and as a lion in secret places. He hath turned aside my ways, and pulled me in pieces: he hath made me desolate. He hath bent his bow, and set me as a mark for the arrow. He hath caused the arrows of his quiver to enter into my reins.*

The King’s arrows had wounded him to the very quick. Perhaps some of you may know what it is to go to the Bible, and yet to find no comfort in it for the precious promises have seemed to be too good to be true to you, and you seem to have hunted out every dark and threatening passage at once, and you have said, “Ah, that belongs to me!” You have written bitter things against yourself, and have thought that surely you were the target at which God was shooting his sharpest arrows.

[Lamentations 3:14-17](#). *I was a derision to all my people; and their song all the day. He hath filled me with bitterness, he hath made me drunken with wormwood. He hath also broken my teeth with gravel stone, he hath covered me with ashes. And thou hast removed my soul far off from peace: I forgat prosperity.*

“It seems so long since I have had any prosperity that I have forgotten it. I have become so accustomed to trouble and sorrow that it seems as if I had never known what joy was.” The original is even more sad, “I forget good.”

[Lamentations 3:18-21](#). *And I said, My strength and my hope is perished from the LORD: Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall. My soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me. This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope.*

And as long as your afflictions, poor troubled souls, have really humbled you, you may have hope. Recall to your mind the fact that God’s chastising blows have brought you down to his feet in humble submission, and ended all your boastings, and therein you may have hope.

[Lamentations 3:22](#). *It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.*

See where Jeremiah gets his comfort; he seems to say, "Bad as my case is, it might have been worse, for I might have been consumed, and I should have been consumed if the Lord's compassions had failed." Ah, brethren and sisters, and we too might have been in hell at this very moment! Amidst the hottest flames of that hopeless place we might have been enduring the wrath of God, but we are not there, and blessed be his name for that! "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not." He still has compassion upon us; if he had not, he would have given us up altogether; but there is love in his heart, even while there is a frown upon his brow, and while his hand is smiting us, his heart is loving us still.

[Lamentations 3:23](#). *They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.*

If every day brings its trouble, every day also brings its mercy. Up to this day, at all events, we have not perished. The Lord has chastened us, but he has not crushed us. We have been cast down, but we have not been destroyed. "Great is thy faithfulness." No man can say that so truly as the one who has known what it is to prove that great faithfulness in great affliction. But when there has been a great trial, the believing soul has cast itself upon the ever-faithful God, and so has been able to set its seal to this truth, "Great is thy faithfulness."

[Lamentations 3:24](#). *The LORD is my portion, saith my soul;*

What! With his mouth full of gravel stones, and made drunken with wormwood, overwhelmed with sorrow, yet he says, "the Lord is my portion." Oh, yes, beloved, whatever else we have lost, we have not lost our God. The thieves have robbed us of our little spare cash, but they could not get at the gold that we have in the bank; They could not break into the great treasure-house of everlasting love. John Bunyan says, "Little-Faith lost his spending-money, but the thieves could not find his jewels." Nor can they find ours; they are all safe. "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul;" —

[Lamentations 3:24](#). *Therefore will I hope in him.*

If I cannot cast the anchor of hope anywhere else, I may "hope in him;" and what better hope do I want than that?

[Lamentations 3:25](#). *The LORD is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him.*

Do not be in a hurry; do not expect to be delivered out of your trouble the first time you begin to cry unto God. Oh, no: “the Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him.”

[Lamentations 3:26](#). *It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation, of the LORD.*

God’s time is always the best time. To deliver you just now might be to deprive you of the benefit of the trouble. You must bear it till it produces “the peaceable fruit of righteousness.” When the doctor puts on a blister, we are not to take it off the next minute. No; patience must have her perfect work, that we “may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.”

[Lamentations 3:27-28](#). *It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. He sitteth alone and keepeth silence, because he hath borne it upon him.*

When it makes a man get alone, to contemplate and meditate, affliction is already doing him good.

[Lamentations 3:29](#). *He putteth his mouth in the dust; if so be there may be hope.*

That is the way to find it;-not lifting your mouth up to defy the Lord, or to murmur at him, nor yet opening your mouth in boastfulness; but putting your mouth in the dust, that is the way to find hope. A humble, penitent, resigned, silent, submissive spirit will soon find hope.

[Lamentations 3:30-31](#). *He giveth his cheek to him that smiteth him: he is filled full with reproach. For the Lord will not cast off for ever:*

Oh, get a grip of that blessed truth! I pray you, O ye sons of trouble, lay hold of it, and never let it go! The Lord may, to all appearance, cast off for a little while, but he will not cast off for ever.

[Lamentations 3:32-34](#). *But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies. For he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men. To crush under his feet all the prisoners of the earth,*

That is not God’s way of acting. Tyrants may do so, but the tender, compassionate God, our gracious, loving Father, will never do that. If you lie in the dust before him, he will not tread on you.

[Lamentations 3:35-36](#). *To turn aside the right of a man before the face of the most High, To subvert a man in his cause, the Lord approveth not.*

Again I say, that is not God’s way of acting.

Verses 1-66

We are about to read a chapter which is very full of sorrow; while you are listening to it, some of you may be saying, “We are not in that condition.” Well then, be thankful that you are not, and while you hear of the sorrows of others, bless God for the joys you yourself experience. At the same time, remember that there is a way of sorrow which leads at last to rest and peace. There is truth in the words of the poet Cowper, —

“The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown.”

If you have never known the sorrows of the weeping prophet, or anything like them, I am not sure that you should congratulate yourselves, for there is a brokenness of heart that is worth more than the whole world, there is a crushed and bruised spirit in which the Lord delights, and which is a token for good to the one who possesses it.

[Lamentations 3:1-2](#). *I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath. He hath led me, and brought me into darkness, but not into light.*

Some of us recollect when we used to go into our own room, and shut the door, and read such a chapter as this, and say, “Here is a description of my true condition.” We were once broken in pieces, torn asunder, through a terrible sense of sin. Our thoughts were like a case of knives perpetually pricking us, and, at such a time, these were our words as well as the words of Jeremiah, “He hath led me, and brought me into darkness, but not into light.”

[Lamentations 3:3-4](#). *Surely against me is he turned; he turneth his hand against me all the day. My flesh and my skin hath he made old: he hath broken my bones.*

Conviction of sin seems to dry up the very sap of our life till we become withered with age. Worse than the agony of a broken bone is the pain of a broken heart. When the Holy Spirit convinces of sin, believe me, it is no child’s play; in the case of some of us, it was sore wounding.

[Lamentations 3:5](#). *He hath builded against me, —*

“As if he deliberately built walls to stop up my way, and erected castles from which to attack my soul, ‘He hath builded against me,’” —

[Lamentations 3:5](#). *And compassed me with gall and travail.*

“He has shut me up in a circle of bitterness.”

[Lamentations 3:6-7](#). *He hath set me in dark places, as they that be dead of old. He hath hedged me about, that I cannot get out: he hath made my chain heavy.*

Like a prisoner in his dungeon, who has to wear manacles and fetters.

[Lamentations 3:8](#). *Also when I cry and shout, he shutteth out my prayer.*

That is the worst trial of all, for there is comfort in prayer; but when even that seems denied you, into what a terrible state of sorrow is your heart brought!

[Lamentations 3:9-11](#). *He hath enclosed my ways with hewn stone, he hath made my paths crooked. He was unto me as a bear lying in wait, and as a lion in secret places. He hath turned aside my ways, and pulled me in pieces: he hath made me desolate.*

You who remember that experience, bless God that you have passed through it, that you have gone over that rough road into the place of peace and rest in Christ. You who have never known this path, it will be well for you when you do, trying as you may find it.

[Lamentations 3:12](#). *He hath bent his bow, and set me as a mark for the arrow.*

“Every sermon I hear seems a shot at me, every text of Scripture seems an arrow aimed at me.”

[Lamentations 3:13](#). *He hath caused the arrows of his quiver to enter into my reins.*

“They are not merely shot at me, but they have actually hit me; they have wounded me; they have pierced me in vital parts.”

[Lamentations 3:14-17](#). *I was a derision to all my people; and their song all the day. He hath filled me with bitterness, he hath made me drunken with wormwood. He hath also broken my teeth with gravel stones, he hath covered me with ashes. And thou hast removed my soul far off from peace: I forgot prosperity.*

“It seems so long ago since I was prosperous that I forget what it was like. I have been so troubled that I do not remember what it was to be at ease.”

[Lamentations 3:18-21](#). *And I said, My strength and my hope is perished from the LORD: Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall. My soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me. This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope.*

Notice that, in all his sorrow, this man still had hope. His soul was humbled, and therefore he had hope. I think that, in the New Zealand language, the word for hope is “swimming thought” — the thought that

swims when everything else is drowned. Oh, what a mercy it is that hope can live on when all things else appear to die!

[Lamentations 3:22](#). *It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.*

Hear that, troubled heart; you are not yet destroyed, you are still in the land of the living, — as we say “on praying ground and pleading terms with God.” “It is of Jehovah’s mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.”

[Lamentations 3:23-24](#). *They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him.*

“With all my troubles, and losses, and griefs, I still have a God; therefore will I hope in him.”

[Lamentations 3:25](#). *The LORD is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him.*

Even though it be out of the depths of the utmost distress that you seek God, you shall find him to be good to you. He is hard to none, unkind to none. Only go thou, and test him and try him, and thou shalt find that it is even as I say.

[Lamentations 3:26-27](#). *It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD. It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.*

And it is not bad for him if he keeps on bearing it in his old age. Our shoulders ever need the yoke; we are such uncertain creatures that we cannot bear too much freedom, even from sorrow.

[Lamentations 3:28-31](#). *He sitteth alone and keepeth silence, because he hath borne it upon him. He putteth his mouth in the dust; if so be there may be hope. He giveth his cheek to him that smiteth him: he is filled full with reproach. For the Lord will not cast off for ever:*

What music there is in that line! He may put thee away for a while, and seem to leave thee; but “the Lord will not cast off for ever.” God may seem to put us away from him, but it is written, “He hateth putting away.” There is no divorcement between Christ and the soul that is once espoused to him. Their separation shall not be perpetual, for nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

[Lamentations 3:32-33](#). *But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies. For he doth not*

afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men.

Now notice in the 55th verse, what came to the prophet after all this sorrow.

[Lamentations 3:55-56](#). *I called upon thy name, O LORD, out of the low dungeon. Thou hast heard my voice: hide not thine ear at my breathing, at my cry.*

Sometimes our prayers get to be so very weak that they are only a breathing; yet we must never forget that, “Prayer is the breath of God in men, returning whence it came,” and “Praying breath is never spent in vain.”

[Lamentations 3:57-58](#). *Thou drewest near in the day that I called upon thee: thou saidst, Fear not. O Lord, thou hast pleaded the causes of my soul;*

What a comfort it is that Christ in heaven is our great Advocate, and that he has pleaded the causes of our soul before the throne of God!

[Lamentations 3:58](#). *Thou hast redeemed my life.*

He who is our Advocate is also our Redeemer, and therefore we are doubly safe. Glory be to his name!

Verses 52-58

[Lamentations 3:52-55](#). *Mine enemies chased me sore, like a bird, without cause. They have cut off my life in the dungeon, and cast a stone upon me. Waters flowed over mine head; then I said, I am cut off. I called upon thy name, O LORD, out of the low dungeon.*

He said, “I am cut off,” yet he called upon the name of the Lord out of the low dungeon into which his enemies had cast him. What a mercy it is that God’s servants are often as graciously inconsistent as Jeremiah was just then! They are afraid that the Lord will not hear them, yet they continue to pray unto him. They are afraid that they are cast off for ever, yet they will still use the privilege of a child of God, and cry unto him, though they doubt whether they have a child’s right to do so. Go on, beloved, with that blessed inconsistency, and the Lord will bless you in it.

[Lamentations 3:56](#). *Thou hast heard my voice: hide not thine ear at my breathing, at my cry.*

Is not that a beautiful description of prayer, when the soul cannot find words, nothing but a “breathing”? Did I say nothing but a breathing? Why, that is the very essence of prayer.

“Prayer is the breath of God in man,

Returning whence it came.”

Vocal sounds in prayer can be given forth by hypocrites. Our children have their dolls or their little animals that they press to make them squeak, but there is no life in them; so there may be a sound, yet no life, but I never heard of anything that really breathed, and yet had not life. And when your soul breathes itself out before God in prayer, although it cannot utter any articulate sound by reason of the sorrow of your heart, there is spiritual life in you.

[Lamentations 3:57](#). *Thou drewest near in the day that I called upon thee:*

Oh, sweet experience! Cannot you, beloved, say that these words suit you as much as they did Jeremiah? I am inclined to say to him, “They are mine, Jeremiah, they certainly were yours, but I am sure that they are equally mine.”

[Lamentations 3:57-58](#). *Thou saidst, Fear not. O Lord, thou hast pleaded the causes of my soul; thou hast redeemed my life.*

Blessed be his holy name for ever and ever!

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CHAPTER 16

Verses 1-63

In this very remarkable chapter, God describes his ancient people Israel under the figure of an infant which had been cast away, but which he had cared for and tended, and upon which he had lavished much love, making it the object of his choice, on which his very heart was set. Yet this specially-favored one had gone astray, and committed all manner of wickedness; but for all that, the love of God had not been withdrawn. The whole chapter is a graphic picture of the way in which Israel and Judah went after false gods, and forsook the only living and true God.

[Ezekiel 16:1-2](#). *Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations,*

This is a very necessary command, for unless men know their disease they will not apply to the great Physician. Only he who knows that he is poor will be willing to accept of alms. It is, therefore, a needful part of the duty of God's servants to make sinners know their evil ways: "Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations."

[Ezekiel 16:3](#). *And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto Jerusalem; Thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan; thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite.*

Abraham, the father of the nation, came from beyond the flood; but here, because of the sin of the people, God attributes their birth to the place of their settlement rather than to that chosen and noble man. They had lived so long in Canaan that they had grown to be Canaanites. Their habits were so evil that there was little choice between the Israelites and the Amorites and Hittites whom God had smitten in his wrath. So the Lord says: "Thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan; thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite." Then, in the fifth verse, he describes the condition of the nation when it was in Egypt, when nobody cared for it:-

Verses 6-16.

[Ezekiel 16:5](#). *None eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out in the open field, to the loathing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born.*

You remember that Pharaoh tried to destroy all the male children of the captive Israelites. No mortal eye had any pity upon the downtrodden race in the house of bondage; but God looked down from heaven in love, and pity, and grace.

[Ezekiel 16:6-7](#). *And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live. I have caused thee to multiply as the bud of the field, and thou art come to excellent ornaments: thy breasts are fashioned, and thine hair is grown, whereas thou wast naked and bare.*

Israel came out of Egypt exceedingly multiplied, a great people; and when they settled down in Canaan they still increased till they became a numerous and powerful nation. Remember that all this description applies to us spiritually. There was a day when we seemed polluted, and cast away, and left to perish; but God in great mercy passed by, and said unto us, “Live.”

[Ezekiel 16:8-9](#). *Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I sware unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine. Then washed I thee with water; yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil.*

How wondrously the Lord did all this for us! Our washing, and our anointing, we never can forget.

[Ezekiel 16:10](#). *I clothed thee also with brodered work, and shod thee with badgers' skin, and I girded thee about with fine linen, and I covered thee with silk.*

All that God could do for Israel, he did. That poor poverty-stricken nation increased and multiplied till, in the days of David and Solomon, it was of high repute among the nations, and exceedingly rich and wealthy. Even so has God dealt with us; he “hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” We who, a little while ago, were cast out as helpless and worthless, he hath greatly enriched with heavenly treasure.

[Ezekiel 16:11-13](#). *I decked thee also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thy hands, and a chain on thy neck. And I put a jewel on thy forehead, and earrings in thine ears, and a beautiful crown upon thine head. Thus wast thou decked with gold and silver; and thy raiment was of fine linen, and silk, and brodered work;*

The work of the Lord Jesus and the work of the Holy Spirit have made marvelously glorious “brodered work” for our spiritual adornment. Well

does good Dr. Watts sing,-“

How far the heavenly robe exceeds,

What earthly princes wear!

These ornaments, how bright they shine!

How white the garments are!

Strangely, my soul, art thou array'd By the great Sacred Three!

In sweetest harmony of praise Let all thy powers agree.”

[Ezekiel 16:13-14](#). *Thou didst eat fine flour, and honey, and oil: and thou wast exceeding beautiful, and thou didst prosper into a kingdom. And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it was perfect through my comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord GOD.*

Doubtless, these words apply to Israel; but they are still more appropriate to us when we are covered with the righteousness of Christ, and made beautiful in his beauty.

[Ezekiel 16:15-16](#). *But thou didst trust in thine own beauty, and playedst the harlot because of thy renown, and pouredst out thy fornications on every one that passed by; his it was. And of thy garments thou didst take, and deckedst thy high places with divers colours, and playedst the harlot thereupon: the like things shall not come, neither shall it be so.*

As soon as ever the Israelites grew rich and powerful, they began to build altars to the false gods. The very treasures that God had given them, they desecrated to the making of idols; and God calls' this a spiritual harlotry, turning aside from the one true God, who was the Husband of the nation, to follow after false gods. It is an ill sign in any of us when God's blessings are themselves made into idols. If thou beginnest to worship thy wealth, thy health, thy children, thy learning, or anything that God has given thee, this is exceedingly provoking to the Most High; it is a breach of the marriage covenant between thy soul and God. The rest of the chapter is rather for private reading than for the public assembly. It gives a truly awful picture of the sin of Israel, and heaps up most dreadful descriptions of the way in which the people turned aside from God. I confess that, after reading to the end of this chapter, I am astonished to think that it should close as it does. It is an amazing instance of the immutable love of God, Turn to the 60th verse.

Verses 60-63.

[Ezekiel 16:60](#). *Nevertheless-*
Blessed “nevertheless”!

[Ezekiel 16:60-61](#). *Nevertheless I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant. Then thou shalt remember thy ways, and be ashamed,*

Infinite mercy makes men ashamed of their sinfulness. Great pardon produces both humility and holiness. The ungodly think that, for God to forgive great sin will be to give a license to it, but the Lord knows that it is not so. He understands that the greatness of his forgiving love will be the cause of the pardoned sinner's hatred of sin: "Then thou shalt remember thy ways, and be ashamed,"-

[Ezekiel 16:61-63](#). *When thou shalt receive thy sisters, thine elder and thy younger: and I will give them unto thee for daughters, but not by thy covenant. And I will establish my covenant with thee; and thou shalt know that I am the LORD: That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord GOD.*

Pardon from God for great sin is a silencer to all our pride. We never dare open our mouths again because of our shame; yet the blessed silence of a grateful heart makes true music before the throne of God, and when the Lord opens our lips, then our mouth shall show forth his praise.

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CHAPTER 33

Verses 1-20

[Ezekiel 33:1-4](#). *Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, speak to the children of thy people, and say unto them, When I bring the sword upon a land, if the people of the land take a man of their coasts, and set him for their watchman: If when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people; Then whosoever*

heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning; if the sword come, and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head.

In that case the watchman is quite clear; he has done his duty, he has sounded an alarm, and a fitting alarm, upon the trumpet; he has sounded it immediately, without loitering or delaying. He has not been afraid of giving uneasiness to men; he has done his duty, fearless of remark, and he is clear. Happy also is he in knowing that, by heeding the trumpet's warning blast, many have escaped the threatened danger. Still, even then it seems that there are some who hear the trumpet, and will not take the warning. That is the sad part of our service; it makes the most successful ministry to be fringed with black. It cannot be all joy for him who wins the most souls for God; for at times he can sympathize with his brethren, the prophets, in their sorrowful enquiry, "Who hath believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Listen to this, you who hear the gospel, and yet do not repent; if you heed not the warning, your blood will be upon your own head.

[Ezekiel 33:5-6](#). *He heard the sound of the trumpet, and took not warning; his blood shall be upon him. But he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul. But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand.*

This is a very solemn truth. It not only concerns me, and the many ministers of Christ who are here, but it is for all of you who know the Lord, for you also are set as watchmen to your families, to your neighbours, to the class which you teach, or which you should teach, in the Sunday-school. May God grant that we may, each one of us, be delivered from other men's sins, for we may become partakers with them in their iniquity unless we bear our testimony against them, and give them warning of the consequences of their evil-doing!

[Ezekiel 33:7](#). *So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel;*

It is not merely the people who took a man of their coasts, and set him for their watchman; but, "I have set thee." Oh, the solemn ordination of a true servant of Christ! It is not by laying on of hands of man, nor by a pretended descent from the apostles; it is a call from God.

[Ezekiel 33:7](#). *Therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me.*

That is the way to preach, to get the sermon from the mouth of God, and then to speak it as the mouth of God. Dear teachers, wait upon God for that which you are to teach; take it warm with love out of the very mouth of God, and then speak it for God out of your own mouth. Good will surely come of such teaching as that.

[Ezekiel 33:8](#). *When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand.*

Even as God required Abel's blood at the hand of Cain, and pronounced him cursed because he was guilty of that blood, so will he require the blood of perishing men at the hands of those set over them, and a curse shall come upon them if they be found negligent.

[Ezekiel 33:9-10](#). *Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul. Therefore, O thou son of man, speak unto the house of Israel; Thus ye speak, saying, If our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how should we then live?*

This is as much as to say, "We cannot get away from our sins; there is no hope of our living." When men get into the iron cage called "Despair", there really seems to be no hope that they will turn from their sin. There is no hope in themselves; their only hope is in the Lord.

[Ezekiel 33:11-12](#). *Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel? Therefore, thou son of man,*

Notice how often God calls Ezekiel "the son of man." He had many wonderful visions; but he was to be kept humble by being constantly reminded that he was nothing more than a "son of man." He was to be kept sympathetic with the people; they were men, and he was one of them: a "son of man. It seems hard that any mother's son of ours should die and perish; the thought that he will perish for ever, is terrible indeed to one who recognizes his union with the race as a "son of man."

[Ezekiel 33:12](#). *Say unto the children of thy people, The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression: as for the*

wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall thereby in the day that he turneth from his wickedness; neither shall the righteous be able to live for his righteousness in the day that he sinneth.

It is not merely what we have been, but what we are, and what we shall be, that will have to be taken into account. If we have been righteous in our own esteem, what if we turn from it? If we have been sinful, yet if, by God's grace, we turn from it, the past shall be blotted out.

[Ezekiel 33:13](#). *When I shall say to the righteous, that he shall surely live; if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousnesses shall not be remembered; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it.*

There is no salvation for any man without final perseverance, and if that final perseverance were not secured to us in the covenant of grace, there would be no salvation even for the brightest believer, or the most sparkling professor. What are our lights in themselves? Will they not soon burn dim unless the secret oil of God's grace shall keep them bright? Whatever point any of you have reached, do not begin to put your confidence in that. If you had seemed to be righteous through a lifetime of seventy years, yet, unless the grace of God kept you even to the end, you must perish. The mercy is that we have many precious promises concerning the eternal safety of all who are in Christ, and God will not fail to fulfill every one of them.

[Ezekiel 33:14-17](#). *Again, when I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right; If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die. None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him: he hath done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live. Yet the children of thy people say, The way of the Lord is not equal: but as for them, their way is not equal.*

Sinners are very fast in judging God. Oh, that they would judge themselves! It is not the Lord who is unjust; it is the balances and weights of men that are unjust. Oh, that they did but know it!

[Ezekiel 33:18-20](#). *When the righteous turneth from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, he shall even die thereby. But if the wicked turn from his wickedness, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall live thereby.*

Now let us read at the thirtieth verse.

Verses **30-33**.

[Ezekiel 33:30-31](#). *Also, thou son of man, the children of thy people still are talking against thee by the walls and in the doors of the houses, and speak one to another, every one to his brother, saying, Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the LORD. And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness.*

This is another of the great sorrows of the prophetic calling, that however accurately we report the Lord's message, however earnestly we try to drive it home to the consciences of our hearers, it must often be said, "They sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness."

[Ezekiel 33:32](#). *And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not.*

Preaching seems to such people to be only a song, or a piece of acting for their amusement; but it is not so. They that can find sport in the things of God, will find it dull sport in hell when they shall be for ever driven away from the presence of God, and from the glory of his power.

[Ezekiel 33:33](#). *And when this cometh to pass, (lo, it will come,) then shall they know that a prophet hath been among them.*

But then it will be too late for them to know it; for they will have missed their opportunity of profiting by the message that the prophet delivered to them. God grant that it may not be so with any one of us, for his abounding mercy's sake! Amen.

[EZEKIEL CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 34

Verses **11-25**

[Ezekiel 34:11-12](#). *For thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek*

out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.

What a glorious promise! Christ's elect run hither and thither, in the darkness of their ignorance, into sin of every kind, but he will find every one of them out. There is no jungle so thick but Christ will track his own through it; There are no bogs of sin so dangerous but Christ will traverse them and find every lamb of his flock. And if through your backslidings, O people of God, you have wandered far from him, yet he perceives you with that eye which sees in the dark as well as in the light; and he will follow after you and bring you back. Blessed be his name!

[Ezekiel 34:13](#); [Ezekiel 34:15](#). *And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel. I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God.*

A beautiful image of that peace of mind, that complete repose, that perfect content, that sweet satisfaction, that divine fullness, which is the work of the Spirit of God in the hearts of believers when they are gathered to Christ.

[Ezekiel 34:16](#). *I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment.*

It is a sweet thing, then, to be one of the needy ones of the flock because you see all the promises run that way, but, if we feel ourselves to be very strong and great, we are in a dangerous state, for then there is no promise for us. The only word concerning us is — “I will destroy the fat and the strong.”

[Ezekiel 34:17-18](#). *And as for you, O my flock, thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I judge between cattle and cattle, between the rams and the he goats. Seemeth it a small thing unto you to have eaten up the good pasture, but ye must tread down with your feet the residue of your pastures? and to have drunk of the deep waters, but ye must foul the residue with your feet?*

Truly there are some vainglorious Christians who not only will not receive the gospel themselves, but actually find fault with it, insinuate

doubts into the minds of others, and prevent the simple-minded people of God feeding on the pasture-which the Lord provides for them. See one of the evils of being great and strong in your own esteem; you are pretty sure then to despise the very pasture which was quite good enough for you when you were weaker and feebler. That very truth of Jesus Christ which was marrow and fatness to you, when you were hungry, comes to be despised as the manna was by the children of Israel when they called it “light bread.” There is no savour in it that you should desire it. Blessed blessed hunger that makes the word of God to be always sweet.

[Ezekiel 34:19-25](#). *And as for my flock, they eat that which ye have trodden with your feet; and they drink that which ye have fouled with your feet. Therefore thus saith the Lord God unto them; Behold, I, even I, will judge between the fat cattle and between the lean cattle. Because ye have thrust with side and with shoulder, and pushed all the diseased with your horns, till ye have scattered them abroad; Therefore will I save my flock, and they shall no more be a prey; and I will judge between cattle and cattle. And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the LORD have spoken it. And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods.*

What perfect assurance for Christ’s flock when, in the very place where the wolf once ranged, they shall be able to lie down and sleep in perfect safety. Happy people, with all their weakness, who have divine strength to be their protection. O my soul, seek no other strength than this, but learn thou the apostle’s logic and his true Christian philosophy so that, like him, trusting in the Mighty Shepherd, you will be able to say “When I am weak, then am I strong.”

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 23, [Isaiah 40:9-11](#), [Ezekiel 34:11-25](#).

Verses 11-27

[Ezekiel 34:11](#). *For thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out.*

Here is a divine One come to seek and to save. The shepherds had neglected and scattered the flock. Now God takes it out of their hands, and he says, “I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out.”

[Ezekiel 34:12](#). *As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.*

He has a chosen people redeemed unto himself by blood, and though they have wandered in the cloudy and dark day of their depravity and ruin, yet will he seek for them with ceaseless care, and bring them back with mighty power, until he has put them into his fold again.

[Ezekiel 34:13](#). *And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country.*

This shall yet be done to Israel after the flesh; it is being done to Israel after the spirit, to whom these promises in their fullness belong. By the mountains of his immutable promise, by the rivers of his Spirit's influences, shall his people be fed.

[Ezekiel 34:14](#). *I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel.*

When God works, he does nothing by halves, nothing scantily. There shall be a pasture, and it shall be fat; his people shall feed; they shall feed until they lie down in the pasture through very satiety; through the plenitude of his feeding they shall rest.

[Ezekiel 34:15](#). *I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God.*

Happy sheep that have such a guardian! Happy believer if you are realizing today the full meaning of this, "I will feed my flock." Only God can do it, but he can do it very effectually until the heart is satisfied with favor, and full of the blessing of the Lord.

[Ezekiel 34:16](#). *I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment.*

Men that are proud and lifted up shall meet with no blessing, but such as feel their poverty, their weakness, their nothingness, shall be the favored ones of God. Cannot some of you poor lost ones, driven-away ones, broken ones, and sick ones, lay hold upon this promise? You may see daylight

through it, however dark your condition may be. God saith, “I will,” and you may depend upon it. He will make it good. There is never an “I will” of Jehovah that shall fall to the ground.

[Ezekiel 34:17-18](#). *And as for you, O my flock, thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I judge between cattle and cattle, between the rams and the he goats. Seemeth it a small thing unto you to have eaten up the good pasture, but ye must tread down with your feet the residue of your pastures? and to have drunk of the deep waters, but ye must foul the residue with your feet?*

Sometimes when God’s people get very strong in themselves, they grow proud, and they find great fault; precious truth is not good enough for them unless it is very daintily spoken; they have eaten, and now they tread down the pasture and spoil it for others. This may seem a very small offense, but the great Shepherd does not think so; he looks with indignation upon these fat and strong, who foul the waters with their feet.

[Ezekiel 34:19-21](#). *And as for my flock, they eat that which ye have trodden with your feet; and they drink that which ye have fouled with your feet. Therefore thus saith the Lord God unto them: Behold, I, even I, will judge between the fat cattle and between the lean cattle. Because ye have thrust with side and with shoulder, and pushed all the diseased with your horns, till ye have scattered them abroad.*

There is a way of doing that. Some are so big, so harsh, so wrapt up in themselves, that if they meet with a fellow-Christian in trouble, who has less confidence than themselves, who seems to be less useful than themselves, they are all for pushing, and poking, and driving, and doing I do not know what. Mind what you are at, when you meddle with the poor people of God. There are some doctrinal views, some pretensions to perfection, which just amount to this.

[Ezekiel 34:22-23](#). *Therefore will I save my flock, and they shall no more be a prey; and I will judge between cattle and cattle. And I will set up one shepherd over them.*

You know his name. “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and I give unto my sheep eternal life.” You know that voice; it makes you glad to think he is so near you. “I will set up one shepherd.” That is glorious. He is of God’s setting up; Who can put him down again?

[Ezekiel 34:23](#). *And he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd.*

The house of David shall still shepherd the people of God in the person of great David's greater Son, whom we adore.

[Ezekiel 34:24-25](#). *And I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the Lord have spoken it. And I will make with them a covenant of peace,*

With you that were lost, that were driven away, that were sick, that were broken.

[Ezekiel 34:25](#). *And will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land:*

So he will. There were once more wolves than sheep; now there are more sheep than wolves; and the day shall come when the saints shall possess the land. "The meek shall inherit the earth." Meanwhile, in the ways of God, "no lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon." "And they shall dwell safely in the wilderness," where they seemed to be quite defenseless; there they shall be safe, and they shall "sleep in the woods," in the very lairs of the wild beasts. There shall they be so safe that they shall feel safe, and shall even go to sleep. So "he giveth his beloved sleep." "And I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing," for God does not bless men that they may keep the blessing to themselves. If he blesses them he makes them a blessing, and their surroundings become a blessing.

[Ezekiel 34:25-27](#). *And they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods. And I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing. And the tree of the field shall yield her fruit, and the earth shall yield her increase, and they shall be safe in their land, and shall know that I am the Lord, when I have broken the bands of their yoke, and delivered them out of the hand of those that served themselves of them.*

Oh! what a blessed day when all our yokes are broken by God's own hand. We have worn them long enough — the sinful yoke, the legal yoke, the yoke of fear of man, a yoke heavy to bear — when they are all gone, and we can sing, "Thou hast loosed my bonds."

Verses 11-31

The former part of the chapter contains a prophetic denunciation against the evil shepherds, — the men who fed not the flocks, but fed themselves, — who fouled, with their filthy feet, the waters where the flocks did drink, and trod upon the soft grass that otherwise might have afforded pasture for

the sheep. After pronouncing judgment upon them, the Lord turns his thoughts to his sheep, and gives this precious promise, —

[Ezekiel 34:11](#). *For thus saith the Lord GOD Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out.*

The shepherds did not do this; they left the sheep to wander, and they were lost upon the mountains; but where men fail, God proves himself all-sufficient. My hearer, are you sitting under an unprofitable ministry? Then look to the Chief Shepherd, and not to the man who is unfaithful as an under-shepherd.

[Ezekiel 34:12](#). *As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.*

It does not matter where the place is, the Lord will find out his sheep. If it be the castle of Giant Despair, he will find them there; if it be the worst dungeon in Doubting Castle, he will discover them there; they may have wandered upon the mountains of Despondency and Dejection; they may have been lost in the gorges of some dark valley of Desperation; but the Lord says, “I will both search my sheep, and seek them out.” And, mind you, he does not seek without finding. He discovers them, for he knows where they are. Oh, is not that a “cloudy and dark day” wherein we wander from God, and know not how to return unto him? But clouds and darkness are banished when we see the light of his face.

[Ezekiel 34:13-15](#). *And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel. I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord GOD.*

There is a blessed state of rest. God’s flock are not only to be fed, but they are to lie down while they feed. You have sometimes noticed a flock, at noontide, when the sun is hot, lie down upon the grass, and feed while they rest; that is what God’s people are to do. They are to lie down in tranquility of spirit; they are to lie down in a state of placid submission to his will, in a state of perfect security, — a state, not of idleness from the Master’s service, but still a state in which they know there is nothing for them to do

for their own security, since Christ has accomplished the whole of their salvation. "I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God." It is not every one of God's people that has attained to this blessed experience, to be able to lie down in quiet confidence and rest.

"Thousands in the fold of Jesus,
This attainment ne'er can boast;
To his name eternal praises:
None of these shall e'er be lost."

Deeply graven on his heart their names remain. If ye are his sheep, yet even if ye have never come to lie down in peace, if ye cannot say, "I know and am confident," and cannot rest while you feed; it is still comforting for you to feel that all Christ's sheep are his sheep, whether they are lying down or standing up, or even wandering from him.

[Ezekiel 34:16](#). *I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, —*

Ah, one little thinks, perhaps, that there should be such a thing as a poor sheep driven away; but it is sometimes true! A legal preacher drives Christ's sheep away from Christ. A seeking soul would fain come to Jesus; but he is told that he must be something, and do something, before he can come. The poor sinner would trust in Jesus, but he is told first to get such-and- such a state of heart, he is told, "You are not the man who should be encouraged to come to Christ; you must have some deeper experience before you come." But, blessed be God, the Good Shepherd says, if Satan has driven you away, or a legal preacher has driven you away, "I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away," —

[Ezekiel 34:16](#). *And will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment.*

Those who boast of being fat and strong, who glory in themselves, these God will destroy; but the poor, weak, sick souls shall be fed with kindness tempered with judgment.

[Ezekiel 34:17-18](#). *And as for you, O my flock, thus saith the Lord GOD Behold, I judge between cattle and cattle, between the rams and the he goats. Seemeth it a small thing unto you to have eaten up the good pasture, but ye must tread down with your feet the residue of your pastures? and to have drunk of the deep waters, but ye must foul the residue with your feet?*

Oh, how many there are, even of God's sheep, that foul the waters very much! They come up to God's house, where, perhaps, they get some sweet morsel in the sermon; but there are some things in it with which they do not quite agree. They are walking home with some young Christian, and he is thinking how blessedly he felt under the sermon; while, perhaps, that old professor is grumbling all the time, and stirring up the waters with his feet. If the pasture is not good enough for you, you should let the lambs eat of it, without treading it down; others like it, though you may not; and if you do not like it, you can always leave it! But what is the use of finding fault with it, and treading it under your feet, and not letting others eat of it? It is a great crime, saith God: "Seemeth it a small thing" to tread it down under your feet, to spoil the spiritual enjoyment of your brethren? It seems, to some, of very little consequence what harm they do to God's weak ones; but it is not so, it is a great sin to tread down with your feet the residue of your pastures, so you cavillers and critics had better beware.

[Ezekiel 34:19-21](#). *And as for my flock, they eat that which ye have trodden with your feet; and they drink that which ye have fouled with your feet. Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD unto them; Behold, I, even I, will judge between the fat cattle and between the lean cattle. Because ye have thrust with side and with shoulder, and pushed all the diseased with your horns, till ye have scattered them abroad; —*

I wish some people would not thrust so much with side and shoulder in their controversies with their brethren. It may be all very well for a man to be honest and faithful, and push with his horns; but there are some diseased ones who cannot stand rough usage when they are only coming in all simplicity to drink at the fountain of life.

[Ezekiel 34:22-23](#). *Therefore will I save my flock, and they shall no more be a prey; and I will judge between cattle and cattle. And I will set up one shepherd over them, —*

There is only one Shepherd now. As for the rest of us, we are only under-shepherds; there is only one Shepherd, our Lord Jesus Christ; we are simply the men he employs to see after his sheep a little; but he is the Great Shepherd, and when he shall appear, we also shall appear with him in glory. "I will set up one shepherd over them," —

[Ezekiel 34:23-25](#). *And he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the Lord have*

spoken it. And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods.

Those who have seen the watching of flocks by night in the East, could give you quite a picture of the meaning of this verse. Sometimes the shepherds will sit down in the midst of bushes and briars that may grow at the side of the wood, and taking some of them for firewood, they will light a fire in the night; and when the wolves come around them, the sheep are quite safe. I have read of this in books of travel; and what a beautiful thing. It seems to sit, with the full moon shining down on the forest, and the fires alight, feeling that, notwithstanding all the wolves, the sheep are quite safe with the shepherds there to protect them! So is it with God's people; they must always expect, while they are in the wood of this world, to have a scratch now and then from the briars and thorns; but "they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods." God will always take care of his own, for "the Lord knoweth them that are his."

[Ezekiel 34:26](#). *And I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing.*

My earnest prayer is that this church may be a great blessing to all who are around us, and I firmly believe it will be so, by God's grace.

[Ezekiel 34:27](#). *And the tree of the field shall yield her fruit, and the earth shall yield her increase, and they shall be safe in their land, and shall know that I am the LORD, when I have broken the bands of their yoke, and delivered them out of the hand of those that served themselves of them.*

The Jews will know that God is the Lord when they shall return to their own land. The poor tired sinner, best of all knows that God is God when he gets the bands of his neck broken off him. By nature, we all have bands about our necks; it is only God who takes them off. Pilgrim, you know, lost his burden when he looked at the cross; it rolled away down into the sepulcher; and if you had asked him then, "Is God, God?" "Yes," he would have said, "otherwise, I should not have had the bands of my neck loosed." No man who has had the bands taken off him, will ever doubt that there is a God. Let him experience that holy calm which springs from the fact of his having been set at gospel liberty, and he will say, "This is the work of God; no man, no human power could have done it." I can never be an Arminian as long as I feel myself a sinner. I am obliged to come back to this: Lord, I

must be saved by sovereign grace, or not at all. A single day's experience is enough to take all the self-conceit out of a Christian, if the Lord should leave him to his own unaided strength. We best know that God is God when we have had the bands broken off our necks. How many are there sitting here with bands on their necks; — slaves, wearing the yoke upon their shoulders? They cannot see it, but it is there, nevertheless. Who is there who can say, "My bands are broken from my neck"?

"My sins are drown'd, as in a flood,
Of Jesus' pure and matchless blood.'

"I am finally discharged; the bands are broken off my neck, verily, God is God."

[Ezekiel 34:28-29](#). *And they shall no more be a prey to the heathen, neither shall the beast of the land devour them; but they shall dwell safely, and none shall make them afraid. And I will raise up for them a plant of renown, —*

Jesus is "a plant of renown," because you may go to him at all times, and you will always find fruit on him. That is more than you can say of any other plant. You may go to him, and you will always find the sort of fruit you want; is he not "a plant of renown"? You will find healing virtue in his leaves, and satisfying fruits hanging in clusters upon him. He is "a plant of renown," because his father planted him; because he has food enough for all his saints, and a gracious variety for all their tastes; because he will blossom through eternity; because of the multitude who sit under his shadow, and rejoice therein, He is "a plant of renown" to his people, for under his shadow they are begotten and brought forth; the greatest transactions of their lives have taken place beneath the shadow of that old tree, "the plant of renown."

[Ezekiel 34:29-30](#). *And they shall be no more consumed with hunger in the land, neither bear the shame of the heathen any more. Thus shall they know that I the LORD their God am with them, and that they, even the house of Israel, are my people, saith the Lord God.*

Thus shall they know it. Do you know it? Has God told it to you? Have you the witness of the Spirit within your spirit that you are born of God? My hearers, never be satisfied till you get this; for you will never be truly at rest until you know that you are God's people, and until you can each one say, "My God, my God, thou art my God."

[Ezekiel 34:31](#). *And ye my flock, the flock of my pasture, are men, and I am your God, saith the Lord GOD.*

“However much I may have uplifted you, you are only men, after all; but I am not a man, I am your God,” saith the Lord.. And we rest more upon what God is, than upon what man is, for he “is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask, or think.”

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Ezekiel Chapter 35

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER 36

Verses 16-38

[Ezekiel 36:16-19](#). *Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, when the house of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their own way and by their doings: their way was before me as the uncleanness of a removed woman, Wherefore I poured my fury upon them for the blood that they had shed upon the land, and for their idols wherewith they had polluted it: And I scattered them among the heathen, and they were dispersed through the countries: according to their way and according to their doings I judged them.*

When God comes forth to deal with men according to their deserts, there will always be times of dire distress. The land of Israel was made into a wilderness; the habitations of men were burnt by fire, the inhabitants fell by the sword, or they were carried away captive, and untold miseries became the lot of God’s revolting people.

[Ezekiel 36:20](#). *And when they entered unto the heathen, whither they went, they profaned my holy name, when they said to them, These are the people of the LORD, and are gone forth out of his land.*

For the heathen did not remember the sin of Israel; they only saw that they had been cast out of their land by their God, so they blamed Jehovah, and not his guilty people. Thus, God’s holy name was doubly profaned.

[Ezekiel 36:21](#). *But I had pity for mine holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the heathen, whither they went.*

If the Lord could see no ground of mercy in them, yet, so full of mercy is he, that he would find a reason for exercising pity for his own name's sake. If lovingkindness cannot come to them by any other means, then it shall come for God's name's sake.

[Ezekiel 36:22-24](#). *Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went. And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD, saith the Lord God, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land.*

He says that he will do this for his holy name's sake. If the heathen profaned that name because they saw Israel scattered, they should be made to eat their own words when God gathered Israel again to their own land.

[Ezekiel 36:25-26](#). *Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.*

What grand language this is! How different it is from the stern commands of the law! The law says, "Make your hearts clean; put away the evil of your doings;" but the gospel covenant of grace says, "A new heart also will I give you, and I will cleanse you from all your iniquities."

[Ezekiel 36:27-30](#). *And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. I will also save you from all your uncleannesses: and I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you. And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that ye shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen.*

What splendor of love is this to a people who, mind you, had done nothing whatever to deserve it,—who were just as undeserving as in the day when the Lord smote them, and scattered them among the heathen! For no

reason whatever but his own free grace, and for the glory of his holy name would God do these extraordinary deeds of love. What a wondrous God he is! Rightly do we sing,—

“Who is a pardoning God like thee?

Or who has grace so rich and free?”

[Ezekiel 36:31-32](#). *Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe ourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations, Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel.*

There was nothing for them to boast of in all the mercies they received. No merit of their own had brought them back the corn and oil; it was all of God’s infinite sovereign grace because he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and he will have compassion on whom he will have compassion. How royally he talks—like such a King as he is—the Sovereign Lord of all!

[Ezekiel 36:33-35](#). *Thus saith the Lord GOD In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities if will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be builded. And the desolate land shall be tilled, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by. And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are become fenced, and are inhabited.*

As much as they noticed before the chastising hand of God, so much shall even the heathen be compelled to perceive the great goodness of God in restoring the land to all its former glory.

[Ezekiel 36:36-37](#). *Then the heathen that are left round about you shall know that I the LORD build the ruined places, and plant that that was desolate: I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it. Thus saith the Lord God; I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them;—*

The blessing shall come, but not without prayer for it,—not without a hopeful expectancy of it,—not without a faithful belief in it: “I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them;”—

[Ezekiel 36:37-38](#). *I will increase them with men like a flock. As the holy flock, as the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts;*

Like the multitudes of lambs that were brought up to Jerusalem at the time of the passover, such should be the number of the chosen people once

again.

[Ezekiel 36:38](#). *So shall the waste cities be filled with flocks of men: and they shall know that I am the LORD.*

The result of all this wondrous mercy was to be, that they were to be ashamed of their former sins, and loathe their past iniquities, and so know the Lord as to turn from their evil ways, and live unto him.

Verses 21-38

The prophet had been bringing many heavy charges against God's people, had been thundering out the most tremendous threatenings against them. God was angry with them on account of sin. The chapter is full of dreadful utterances, enough to make one tremble as he reads them. And on a sudden the note altogether changes, and the prophet of thunder becomes the prophet of consolation. Free grace follows like a clear shining after the rain.

[Ezekiel 36:21-28](#). *But I had pity for mine holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the heathen, whither they went. Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the LORD GOD I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went. And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the Lord, saith the Lord GOD, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land.*

Here, indeed, is matchless grace that these very people who for their sins were banished from their land, and who in their exile added to their sin by the way in which they blasphemed God — those very people are to be brought back, and the mercy of God is so to be displayed in them that, in the very people who blasphemed God's name, God shall be held in honour.

[Ezekiel 36:25-26](#). *Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.*

Now notice that all this was spoken to persons who had no desire for these blessings. If they had had a desire for them, their hearts could not be considered to be stony, but they were set against God; they were his

enemies; and yet he makes this solemn declaration in the sovereignty of his grace that he will give them a new heart and a right spirit. There may be some in this house tonight, and I pray there may, who are strangers to the God of Israel, who, if they know aught concerning his Son only know enough to oppose him. May God's eternal omnipotence work in them mightily that a new heart and a right spirit may be given them tonight according to that ancient word, "I am found of them that sought me not." He can come and make them a people that were not a people. Oh! that his grace would do so now.

[Ezekiel 36:27](#). *And I will put my spirit within you,*

Not only a new spirit, but my Spirit. God himself shall come and dwell in those hearts which once were a receptacle for the devil.

[Ezekiel 36:27-28](#). *And cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.*

He who talks in this sovereign way is God himself. He first made the world as he pleased, and in the second new creation he doeth as he will, having power over us as the potter has over his clay. This is promised to the Jewish people, but it is also fulfilled in multitudes of others where God in the same sovereign way works out the purposes of his love.

[Ezekiel 36:29](#). *I will also save you from all your uncleannesses: and I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you.*

Temporal mercies shall follow where spiritual mercies are given.

[Ezekiel 36:30-36](#). *And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that ye shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen. Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations. Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord GOD, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel. Thus saith the Lord GOD In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be builded. And the desolate land shall be tilled, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by. And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are become fenced, and are inhabited. Then the heathen that are left round about you shall know*

that I the LORD build the ruined places, and plant that that was desolate: I the LORD have spoken it, and I will do it.

Prayer will always go with the divine working. Where God means to save, he sets men praying. Those who are saved intercede for others, and others who as yet are unsaved feel the need of the blessing and begin to cry for it, and the blessing comes. As the black cloud forebodes the shower, so doth the gathering spirit of prayer always foretoken the coming blessing. Heaven and earth may pass away, but the memorial of Jehovah always is “The God that heareth prayer.” He is the God whose arm is always moved by the prayer of man. Did not Moses stand between them and vengeance, so that God said, “Let me alone,” as if he had said, “I cannot destroy them while you pray”? Did not Elijah open and shut the windows of heaven by his prayer? Nothing is impossible to those who know how believingly to inquire of God.

[Ezekiel 36:37](#). *Thus saith the Lord GOD I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock.*

Take up this promise, members of this Church, and urge it before God that he would give us not few additions, but many, very many. “I will increase them with men like a flock.”

[Ezekiel 36:38](#). *As the holy flock, as the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts;*

When a great number of lambs would be brought up to Jerusalem for them to keep the Passover with, a great and countless company. Oh! that such additions may be given to the Church!

[Ezekiel 36:38](#). *So shall the waste cities be filled with flocks of men: and they shall know that I am the LORD.*

This exposition consisted of readings from [Psalms 50:14-23](#); [Ezekiel 36:21-38](#).

Verses 25-32

[Ezekiel 36:25](#). *Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.*

“You would not cleanse yourselves; you even went back to your idols again, and so defiled yourselves still more; but I will cleanse you. I have a wondrous stream, such as no river or spring on earth can ever produce. It wells up from the heart of Jesus; and this shall cleanse you from all your filthiness, and from all your idols.”

[Ezekiel 36:26-27](#). *A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.*

The old covenant told us what to do, and commanded us to do it; but the new covenant enables us to do it; yea, it works in us that obedience which we never could have rendered to the old law, but which the new covenant gives to us.

[Ezekiel 36:28-31](#). *And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. I will also save you from all your uncleannesses: and I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you. And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that ye shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen. Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loath yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations.*

How sweetly the mercy of God melts the human heart! How graciously the goodness of God produces repentance! That blessed result was never produced by the terrors of the law; but it is continually being brought forth by the lovingkindness of the Lord as manifested in the covenant of his grace.

[Ezekiel 36:32](#). *Not for your sakes do I this, saith the LORD GOD, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel.*

The covenant is all of grace, you see; mercy is shown to the unworthy,- not for their own sakes, but for God's own glory's sake. Oh, how sweet it is to have a share in this blessed covenant! Now turn to the Epistle to the Hebrews, the 8th chapter, and 7th verse, where you have still more concerning the new covenant.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Jeremiah 31:31-34](#); [Ezekiel 36:25-32](#); and HEBREWS 8:7-13

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CHAPTER 37

Verses 1-28

[Ezekiel 37:1](#). *The hand of the LORD was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the LORD,*

God's servants learn nothing until they have an experience similar to that of Ezekiel. They must be led by the Spirit of the Lord, and they must have their eyes and mouths opened by him, and then they can both see the vision, and tell the vision to others.

[Ezekiel 37:1](#). *And set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones,*

Like a huge grave, or charnel-house, or battle-field where the slain had not been buried. No servant of God would go without being sent to such a place, yet it was needful that Ezekiel should be there in order that he might understand and speak the message of God.

[Ezekiel 37:2](#). *And caused me to pass by them round about:*

He had to make a thorough survey of this grim and ghastly charnel-house.

[Ezekiel 37:2](#). *And, behold, there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry.*

They had lain there so long that the wind had dried up the juices of the marrow-bones, and they were turned to dust.

[Ezekiel 37:3](#). *And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live?*

God did not ask this question for his own information, but for the prophet's. The Lord wanted him to realize the difficulties of the work to which he was called that he might be driven the more completely to rely upon God, and not upon himself.

[Ezekiel 37:3-4](#). *And I answered, O Lord GOD, thou knowest. Again he said unto me, Prophecy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD.*

We have heard of a Romanist who had, as a penance from his priest, to go and water a dry stick. Ezekiel's task of preaching to dry bones seemed to be as useless as that; yet, if God bids us do the same, we need no other justification for doing it. What is foolish in the sight of reason is wisdom in the judgment of faith.

[Ezekiel 37:5-6](#). *Thus saith the Lord GOD unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live: And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the LORD.*

He had to tell these bones the unconditional purposes and promises of God: “I will,” and “ye shall;” and this is the way in which God works out his eternal purposes concerning the sons of men. He bids his servants proclaim his message, and then he fulfills his own purposes and promises.

[Ezekiel 37:7](#). *So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise,*

A rustle, —

[Ezekiel 37:7](#). *And behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone.*

Here was divine power bringing the bones to their proper position in the various bodies, and forging the separated anatomy to re-form itself.

[Ezekiel 37:8](#). *And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but there was no breath in them.*

So there was no very great improvement so far; there were only dead bodies instead of dry bones; there was something more to look at, but nothing more agreeable, and really no more of life than there was before.

[Ezekiel 37:9](#). *Then said he unto me, Prophecy unto the wind, prophecy, son of man,*

“Prophecy unto the wind.” That seems a very absurd thing to do, but there are no absurdities where God gives his commands.

[Ezekiel 37:9-10](#). *And say to the wind, Thus saith the lord GOD Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied as he commanded me,-*

Ezekiel was very obedient; he only wanted to know his Lord’s will, and then he raised no question, but did at once just as he was told to do: “So I prophesied as he commanded me.” It is a prime qualification in a servant of God that he should do exactly as he is bidden—not to think how he would like to do it, nor to follow the plan that his own wisdom suggests, but just to do as he is told, as Ezekiel did: “So I prophesied as he commanded me,” —

[Ezekiel 37:10-11](#). *And the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army. Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts.*

“There is no hope for us; we are dead, and worse than dead. Our case is hopeless; there is no possibility of restoration for us.”

[Ezekiel 37:12](#). *Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the lord GOD Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel.*

There was to be a house of Israel after all. The nation seemed to be dead and buried, but God would revive and restore it. This is a promise which may apply to a church when she gets into a very low spiritual state, and it looks as if she could never do any more good: “Behold, O my people, I will open your graves.” And to you, dear friends, who are very heavy of heart, full of despair, and who seem as if you were as good as dead and buried, God speaks in this promise. Therefore believe his Word as though it had been directed to you personally, “Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel.”

[Ezekiel 37:13](#). *And ye shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves,*

Great deliverances and almighty quickenings reveal God to us, and make us know how gloriously great Jehovah is.

[Ezekiel 37:14](#). *And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the LORD have spoken it, and performed it, saith the LORD.*

When the Jews get back to Canaan again,-as they will do,-they will then not only know that Jehovah is God, but also that Jesus Christ is the true Messiah. May the Lord hasten that blessed consummation in his own time!

[Ezekiel 37:15-16](#). *The Word of the LORD came again unto me, saying, Moreover, thou son of man,*

Notice how the Lord constantly calls the prophet “son of man.” When God uses his servants much, and greatly honours them, he always takes care to keep them humble by reminding them of what they are in themselves. So, Ezekiel, you have prophesied to the dry bones, and they have lived through your prophecy but it was not by your own power that you did this. You are nothing but a son of man, God must have all the glory of this wondrous work.

[Ezekiel 37:16](#). *Take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions: then take another stick,-*

Or, rod, —

[Ezekiel 37:16](#). *And write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions:*

They were divided into separate companies, they first wandered away from God, and then they wandered away from one another.

[Ezekiel 37:17](#). *And join there one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in thine hand.*

As he held them in his hand, they were to grow into one; and, when all the churches get into the hand of Christ, there will be perfect unity between them. Things that are near to the same thing are near to one another; but, until the Lord shall come, and take his divided Judah and Ephraim into his own hand, there will be no true unity between them; but there will be then.

[Ezekiel 37:18-19](#). *And when the children of thy people shall speak unto thee, saying, Wilt thou not shew us what thou meanest by these? Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hand.*

No church will long continue in the enjoyment of the blessing of unity unless it continues in nearness to Christ. Communion with Christ means the communion of Christians with one another; we can only get true union and true communion in that way.

[Ezekiel 37:20-22](#). *And the sticks whereon thou writest shall be in thine hand before their eyes. And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land: And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all:*

When Christ cometh, there shall be this true unity in Israel. Where Christ has already come, there is this true unity in his Church; and as Christ cometh to all of us, he will take away the evil that divides us from himself, and divides us from the rest of the people, and so we shall be one in his hand.

[Ezekiel 37:23](#). *Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but I will save them out of all their dwellingplaces, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall they be my people, and I will be their GOD.*

This applies first to Israel literally, and then spiritually to all the chosen. What a weighty and comprehensive promise it is! We are to be saved from our idols, to be saved from the most loathsome sins: “detestable things”; to be saved from our household sins: “I will save them out of all their dwellingplaces wherein they have sinned.” Where do we go, my brethren, without finding sin? Sin in our bed, and sin at the board, sin in the shop, and sin in the street, sins when we are in company, and sins when we are alone in the field, sins everywhere; yet the Lord Jesus Christ is able to meet us in every place, and to cleanse us.

“So shall they be my people, and I will be their God.” What a wonderful declaration this is, -we are the Lord’s people, he is our God! We are his portion, and he is one portion. Oh, that every one of us might have a share in this double blessing!

[Ezekiel 37:24](#). *And David my Servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them.*

Oh, for the one king to reign over the one people, who shall keep the one law, and walk in holiness and humility before the one Lord!

[Ezekiel 37:25](#). *And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children’s children for ever: and my servant David shall be their prince for ever.*

Surely God does not treat the saints now worse than he treated Israel in the days of old; so we may go to him in prayer for our children and for our children’s children.

[Ezekiel 37:26](#). *Moreover, I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them:*

Oh, that blessed word everlasting! A salvation which is not everlasting is not worth having; any promise that is not fulfilled, any grace that can fail, is not God’s promise or God’s grace.

[Ezekiel 37:26-27](#). *And I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people.*

In the 23rd verse, the Lord’s promise was, “They shall be my people, and I will be their God,” and here, grace seems to ring the changes by reversing the order: “I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” God is

evidently so pleased with this declaration that he repeats it, only turning the sentences round the other way.

[Ezekiel 37:28](#). *And the heathen shall know that I the LORD do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore.*

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[Daniel 1:1](#). *In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it.*

Sin always brings its punishment. King Jehoiakim did evil in the sight of the Lord, so God used Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, to be the rod in his hand to scourge his sinful people and their wicked king.

[Daniel 1:2](#). *And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand,*

It was not merely that Nebuchadnezzar was strong enough to overcome the Jews; but God handed over his people into Nebuchadnezzar's hand. The enemy cannot touch the Church of God without the divine permission.

[Daniel 1:2](#). *With part of the vessels of the house of God: which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the vessels into the treasure house of his god.*

See how holy things, once used for the noblest purposes, become of no further service when the Spirit of God is gone from the Church. You know that when the Philistines captured the ark of God, and put it in the temple of Dagon, the fish — god fell down broken before the ark. Nothing of this kind happened in Babylon. The holy vessels were put into the heathen temple, and no miraculous result followed, for God cares nothing for golden vessels in and of themselves. When sin has polluted his people, their precious things are nothing to him. They may go where men please to carry them. All their value lies in God accepting the service rendered through them. So, brother, you may keep up your attendance at the Lord's supper, and your preachings, and your gatherings for worship; but they will all be nothing without the Spirit of God. See how the Lord's supper is turned into the sacrifice of the mass, and how baptism is represented as the channel or medium of regeneration, when once the Spirit of God has gone from the divinely-appointed ordinances. Besides these holy vessels, Nebuchadnezzar took the best of the people of the land, and carried them away captive. He singled out the rich and the noble, those who had education and other attainments, while he left the poorest of the land behind. Sometimes those who are the most exalted will have the most suffering.

[Daniel 1:3-4](#). *And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes; Children —*

Or, youths, —

[Daniel 1:4](#). *In whom was no blemish, but well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans.*

Nebuchadnezzar was, in many respects, an enlightened ruler. He looked upon this as one of the best things that he could do for his court and vast empire, that he should pick out the best of the young men of every nation, who should bring their national knowledge with them; and then, being sprightly in body and nimble in mind, should be trained to become counselors, or advisers of the court, or be prepared to fill important offices as they became vacant.

[Daniel 1:5](#). *And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank:*

Treating them exceedingly well, thinking, perhaps, that the very food they ate might help to tone their minds for the work to which he had called them. He wished to make them into true Chaldeans, so he ordained that they must eat of the meat he ate, and drink of the wine he drank.

[Daniel 1:5](#). *So nourishing them three years,*

Putting them to college, as it were, for three years, —

[Daniel 1:5-6](#). *That at the end thereof they might stand before the king. Now among these were of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah:*

You know these men's names. You will recognize them when you hear them in their altered form.

[Daniel 1:7](#). *Unto whom the prince of the eunuchs gave names:*

This was to Chaldeanize them, to take away from them everything Jewish.

[Daniel 1:7](#). *For he gave unto Daniel the name of Belteshazzar; and to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Mishael, of Meshach; and to Azariah, of Abednego.*

Now these young men's Jewish names had, each one of them, the name of God wrought into their texture. I need not stay to bring it out; but there is a signification about each name connecting it with God. You hear in two of them the sound of El, which is a name of God; and in the other two, the termination Iah, which brings out the name Jehovah. The new names that were given to them appear to have been connected with idols; at all events,

it was so with Belteshazzar and Abed-nego, or Abednego. The intent was to make Babylonians of them.

[Daniel 1:8](#). *But Daniel purposed in his heart —*

I always like to come across a “but” when there is any scheme of this kind on. When the plan is to seduce men from right, then it is a happy thing to have a but, but, but, “But Daniel purposed in his heart,” determined, settled, fixed it,

[Daniel 1:8](#). *That he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s meat, nor with the wine which he drank:*

Daniel here mentions only himself; but the three others were one with him in the resolve and the request. He was the leader. Sometimes there would be no Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, if there was not a Daniel. The other three might never have had the strength of mind, if it had not been for the Daniel, who dared to stand alone; but having such a brave leader, they dared to stand with him. We often owe much to spiritually-minded men, who are able to help others to take a right course.

[Daniel 1:8-9](#). *Therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself. Now God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs.*

It was like the case of Joseph and Potiphar. Daniel’s gentle disposition, his loving ways, his open and frank spirit, had won upon the prince of the eunuchs, so that he not only regarded him with favor, but even had a tender love for him. God has the hearts of all men under his control, and he may give his people favor where they least expect it.

[Daniel 1:10](#). *And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your meat and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse liking than the children which are of your sort? then shall ye make me endanger my head to the king.*

What a reign of terror there is in a despotic country, where kings can do as they will! For the smallest offense, a man’s head may be in danger.

[Daniel 1:11-12](#). *Then said Daniel to Melzar whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink.*

I like it that the Holy Ghost uses their old names whenever it is proper that they should be used. May we never lose our old names! I mean, our new names, for they have grown old with some of us now. May we ever be

known as the servants of God, and not as Chaldeans! The prince of the eunuchs gave Daniel a kind of hint, that, if the officer under him chose to take the responsibility of altering the food and drink, he might do so, and the prince would not interfere with the experiment. So Daniel turns to Melzar, and says to him, "Prove thy servants for a suitable time. Let us have pulse to eat, and water to drink." He put his request in an extreme light, in order to be quite sure that nothing brought to him would come from the king's table.

[Daniel 1:13](#). *Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants.*

"If we do fall off, and grow thin, and look pale and ill through this coarse food, as you think it, well then, alter it; and if, on the other hand, we should be as well as those who have eaten the king's meat, and drunk the king's wine, then let us keep to our pulse and water."

[Daniel 1:14](#). *So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days.*

A round number, standing for a sufficient period to afford a fair test.

[Daniel 1:15](#). *And at the end of days their countenances appeared fairer — and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat.*

I doubt not that the satisfaction of heart which they had in keeping themselves undefiled tended to give them a good digestion, and thus they were more likely to be well than were the others.

[Daniel 1:16-17](#). *Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat, and the wine that they should drink; and gave them pulse. As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom:*

God can help us in our study. We may pray as much over what we have to learn as over what we have to do. I believe that, often, a difficult problem can be best solved by prayer. All true knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom are the gifts of God.

[Daniel 1:17-19](#). *And Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams. Now at the end of the days that the king had said he should bring them in, then the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: therefore stood they before the king.*

They were made to be his attendants, his advisers, these very men who had been so absurd as not to eat the food from the royal table, so obstinate as to consider that they would defile themselves if they did. It is these absurd and obstinate people who cannot be bent, but must be straight; the upright men, who shall stand before kings, for God is with them.

[Daniel 1:20](#). *And in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king enquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm.*

They communed with God, and that was better than being magicians or stargazers. Men of God are ten times better than all that lot put together.

[Daniel 1:21](#). *And Daniel continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus.*

Those two words summarize the whole of Daniel's history: Daniel continued." May God give to each of us here grace to continue as Daniel did!

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Daniel Chapter 2

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

Daniel Chapter 3

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CHAPTER 6

Verses 1-28

[Daniel 6:1-3](#). *It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom; And over these three presidents; of whom Daniel was first: that the princes might give accounts unto them, and the king should have no damage Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm.*

Kings are never satisfied. The empire of Darius was always growing, and a chapter or two farther on we find that he had a hundred and twenty-seven provinces. There is no end to the greediness of man, and what does he get by it after all? One pair of hands can only do one man's work; he only gains more toils, and he has now to distribute the cares of his State among others. Then how good it is for any man when he is guided to a right, honest, and hearty helper! Such was the lot of Darius. How advantageous, too, it may be for the people of God when a man like Daniel is put in the high places of the land! Doubtless he was exalted, not only for his own sake, but that he might be as a brazen shield and bulwark for the people of God in that foreign land. No extortions would now be committed on the Jewish race, for they had a friend at court. Blessed be God, we have a friend at court too, one who will take up our cause, and speak for us to the King of Kings

[Daniel 6:4](#). *Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault;*

Who can stand before envy? High places furnish very uncomfortable seats, for even if God exalt a man, men will try to pull him down; but he is an honourable man indeed who puts his enemies to their shifts before they can find anything against him.

[Daniel 6:4-7](#). *Forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him. Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God.*

Then these presidents and princes assembled together to the king, and said thus unto him, King Darius live for ever. All the presidents of the

kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the councilors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions. We do not know with what ingenious arguments they moved the king's mind to pass this, but we think we can conceive them. He had just conquered Chaldea; they would, therefore, say, "It will be an excellent test of the obedience of your new subjects if you touch them upon the point of their religion; try whether they will for thirty days abstain from addressing their deities." Perhaps, too, since Darius had a colleague on the throne, the younger Cyrus, who was much more popular than he. They may have egged him on by hinting that Cyrus was much too vain, and that, therefore, if he would not allow anyone to address a petition, even to Cyrus, for thirty days, it would tend to show who was really loyal to Darius, and it would also test the temper of Cyrus. I cannot tell how they did it, but somehow or other they managed to lead the foolish old man to carry out their designs.

[Daniel 6:8](#). *Now, O king, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not*

The Babylonians entrusted their king with absolute power; hence he could will this or that as he chose. The Persians believed their kings to be possessed of perfect wisdom; and hence they never allowed a law to be changed, for that would be to suppose that the king who made it had made a mistake, a thing which could by no possibility ever occur. There is an amusing instance given by a modern traveler, who tells us that a few years ago one of the later Persian kings said he would never remove from the tent in the plain until the snow had gone from some mountains to which he pointed. It happened to be a very late summer, and the snow was long in melting, and his gracious majesty had to keep his place in his tent, while his troops were perishing with fever in a low marsh-district, until they procured men to sweep the snow from the tops of the mountains in order that he might be able to move. It is inconvenient for men to play the God; they cannot do it without bringing serious difficulty and danger upon themselves. So did Darius on this occasion. I never like men who, when they speak a hasty word, say they cannot alter it. Rash vows are better broken than kept; you had no right to say you would do the thing; much less have you any

right to do it when you have said you would do it. However, the law of the Medes and Persians could not be altered.

[Daniel 6:9-10](#). *Wherefore king Darius signed the writing and the decree. Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into the house;*

That is right; the less we have to do with man, and the more we have to do with God the better. He did not go to the king to complain, but he went into his house to tell his God about it.

[Daniel 6:10](#). *And his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem,*

That much-loved city, though now in ruins.

[Daniel 6:10](#). *He kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.*

‘Twas bravely done. A man in a meaner position might have carried out his devotions in private without sin, but not so Daniel. He is a representative man: he must not play the coward; it is incumbent upon him to be more especially and deliberately public in all that he does, for if he be seen to slink in never so small a degree, then all the saints will lose heart.

[Daniel 6:11-13](#). *Then these men assembled, and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God. Then they came near, and spake before the king concerning the king's decree; Hast thou not signed a decree, that every man that shall ask a petition of any God or man within thirty days, save of thee, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions? The king answered and said, The thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not. Then answered they and said before the king, That Daniel,*

Here is impudence! But they called Jesus Christ “this fellow.” Why? Daniel was the chief of the presidents, the prime minister of the king, and yet they say, “That Daniel.” Ill-hearts generally have ill-mouthing, and what can you expect but ill-words out of ill-mouthing?

[Daniel 6:13](#). *That Daniel, which is of the children of the captivity of Judah,*

That captive, that slave, that serf — so they seemed to put it, forgetting that he was their master by virtue of his high office.

[Daniel 6:13-14](#). *Regardeth not thee, O king, nor the decree that thou hast signed, but maketh his petition three times a day. Then the king, when he heard these words, was sore displeased with himself,*

There was a little conscience left. Calvin does not like the man at all. He says, What right had he to sign a decree hastily, which might take away the lives of the best men in his dominion? And his repentance does not seem to be a repentance of the act, but only of the consequences.

[Daniel 6:14](#). *And set his heart on Daniel to deliver him: and he laboured till the going down of the sun to deliver him.*

Here was a great king, made himself out to be a god, and yet he cannot have his own way. When that famous potter, who was a true Christian, was brought before the king, the king said to him, “Unless you change your views, I shall be compelled to have you burned.” “Ah!” said Bernard de Palissy, “you are a king, and yet say, ‘I shall-be compelled,’ and I am a poor potter, but no man can make me use those words; I will be compelled to do nothing against my conscience.” Oh! the holy bravery of men who are saved! When Bonner had one of the martyrs before him, he said, “I will convince you; a blazing faggot will convince you.” “A fig for your faggot,” said the man, “or a wagon-load of them; I can stand and burn better than you can wear your miter.” So the saints of God are strong, and can bid defiance to the adversary through divine grace.

[Daniel 6:15](#). *Then these men assembled unto the king, and said unto the king, Know, O king, that the law of the Medes and Persians is, That no decree nor statute which the king establisheth may be changed.*

This is the reason of his deliverance, not his innocency, but his faith; we are told by Paul that it was faith that shut the mouths of lions.

[Daniel 6:16-24](#). *Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions. Now the king spake and said unto Daniel, Thy God, whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee. And a stone was brought, and laid upon the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords; that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel. Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting: neither were instruments of music brought before him: and his sleep went from him. Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions. And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel: and the king spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions? Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever. My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him*

innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt. Then was the king exceeding glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God. And the king commanded, and they brought those men which had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions, them, their children, and their wives;

Which was a piece of injustice, the throwing in of their wives and children, though we cannot say as much of the throwing of them in.

[Daniel 6:24](#). *And the lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces or ever they came at the bottom of the den.*

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Daniel Chapter 7

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

Daniel Chapter 8

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CHAPTER 9

Verses 1-11

[Daniel 9:1-2](#). *In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans; In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.*

Daniel was himself a prophet, but he studied the inspired prophecies of Jeremiah. If such a man need read Scripture, how much more ought we! Whatever light we may suppose to dwell within us, we shall do well to walk by the mere sure word of prophecy.

[Daniel 9:3-5](#). *And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes: And I prayed unto the LORD my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments; We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments:*

Daniel certainly had rebelled less than any of his countrymen, and yet he is the first to make confession on their behalf. So, my brethren, when we have confessed our own sins, and have found mercy, then we should begin to be intercessors for others. We should make confession for the sins of our families, for the sins of our city, for the sins of our country. If no longer need we plead for salvation for ourselves because we have obtained it, let us give the full force of our prayers for the benefit of others.

[Daniel 9:6](#). *Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.*

It greatly increases sin when we sin against warnings sent from God. Daniel confesses this.

[Daniel 9:7-9](#). *O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee. O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee. To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him;*

What a gracious verse that is! Surely it might be printed in letters of gold, and every trembling, penitent sinner might look at it till at last beams of light should dart into the darkness of his despair.

[Daniel 9:10-11](#). *Neither have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in his ways, which he set before us by his servants the prophets. Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against him.*

Verses 1-13

[Daniel 9:1-2](#). *In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans; In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.*

And, therefore, discovering that the end of the captivity had nearly come, he set himself to plead mightily with God that now he would turn the hand of his love upon the destroyed and desolate city of Jerusalem. Notice that Daniel recollected the exact date when the captivity was to end; and when you and I have had a term put to any trial or chastisement from God, we ought to remember it, and record it among our special memoranda. I am afraid it is not always so. We do not forget when a great sorrow overtook us; we can, probably, recollect when some dear one died; we remember the very day of the week and month when that happened; but are we equally tenacious of the memory of God's lovingkindness? I am afraid not; yet it should be so. We should be able to write about it as definitely as Daniel did when he said, "In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes;" and then mention the time when we had some peculiarly choice communion with God, or when we were led to cry out in more than usually earnest prayer, or when we had a specially gracious answer from our God.

[Daniel 9:3](#). *And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes;*

"I set my face unto the Lord God." This expression is full of meaning. When men resolutely set their faces to prayer, bending their whole mind that way, seeking God, with their faces towards him, not in pretense, but in deep and solemn earnestness, then it is that they succeed with their supplication. Daniel speaks of "prayer and supplications," by which we may understand that he prayed much amid prayed often, setting apart a regular and considerable portion of his time for the holy exercise. He was a very busy man, for he was the first of the presidents over the hundred and twenty princes; yet, for all that, or because of that, he would have his time for communion with God; and he was wise in so acting, for any portion of our time that is stolen from prayer is also stolen from ourselves. The old saying is true, "Prayer and provender hinder no man's journey."

[Daniel 9:4](#). *And I prayed unto the LORD my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments;*

You must have noticed how, in prayer, holy men of old were wont to vary the names of God. Here, we find Daniel addressing him as “the great and dreadful God;” but that title was not chosen at haphazard, for the prophet felt that, as Jerusalem had remained so long a desolation, the terrible aspect of God’s character was more conspicuous even than the tender one; yet he coupled with it that gracious truth, “keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments.”

[Daniel 9:5-6](#). *We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments: Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.*

Daniel confesses the sins of the nation, and he spares no proper epithets in describing them: “We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled.” He saw at least a shade of different meaning in each word that he employed. These are not vain repetitions; Daniel multiplied his expressions because he had an intense sense of the sinfulness of sin and the guilt of his people. Observe, too, how he notes the aggravation of their sin in their refusal to listen to the messages which God had sent to them by his servants. If there is anything in the world that can make sin to be more than ordinarily sinful, it is when sin is persisted in notwithstanding the manifest warnings of God.

[Daniel 9:7](#). *O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee.*

This verse might be just as truly spoken now as in the first year of Darius, the Mede, for we also can say, “O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee;”-we cannot find it anywhere else; and the other part of the verse is equally true, for unto us belongs confusion of faces, as it did to the men of Daniel’s day.

[Daniel 9:8-9](#). *O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee. To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him;*

What a precious assurance this is! Just in proportion to your sense of sin, will you value it. If you feel that confusion of face belongs to you, you will also rejoice to know that mercies and forgivenesses belong to the Lord, and that he is waiting to bestow them upon all who seek his face in penitence and faith.

[Daniel 9:10-11](#). *Neither have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets. Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against him.*

It was a part of that old covenant that, if they sinned against the Lord, they should be scattered among all the peoples of the earth, and their sufferings exactly tallied with what God had threatened. This fact is used by the prophet in some measure as a source of consolation, for he argues that, if God is true to the black side of the covenant, he will also be faithful to the bright side of it; and it is so, he who faithfully fulfils his threatenings will just as faithfully keep his promises.

[Daniel 9:12-13](#). *And he hath confirmed his words, which he spoke against us, and against our judges that judged us, by bringing upon us a great evil: for under the whole heaven hath not been done as hath been done upon Jerusalem. As it is written in the law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us: yet made we not our prayer before the LORD our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand thy truth.*

Oh, sad hardness of heart and impenitence that, though Jerusalem had been so sorely smitten, yet the people turned not unto God in prayer!

Verses 14-23

[Daniel 9:14-21](#). *Therefore hath the LORD watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us: for the LORD our God is righteous in all his works which he doeth; for we obeyed not his voice. And now, O Lord our God, that hast brought thy people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and hast gotten thee renown, as at this day; we have sinned, we have done wickedly. O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee,*

let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain: because for our sins and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people are become a reproach to all that are about us. Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake. O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name. And whiles I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God for the holy mountain of my God; Yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation.

That is the time when prayer is always heard, when the lamb is offered, and his blood is sprinkled, and blessed be God, the sacrifice in which we trust has been offered once for all. The Christ, who has gone into heaven as a lamb that had been slain, has, by his one offering, made perpetual oblation unto the Most High on our behalf. So pray when we will, we may expect an answer. See how quick it was in Daniel's case: "Whiles I was speaking in prayer," the angel Gabriel, in the form of a man, appeared unto him, and brought him the answer to his petition.

[Daniel 9:22-23](#). *And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding. At the beginning of thy supplications the commandant came forth, and I am come to shew thee; for thou are greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision.*

And then he told him of the Messiah who was coming, of all that would happen to him, of the week of respite, and then of the final consummation when God would permit the foreign prince to come and destroy the city and the sanctuary, and to pour upon them the desolations which he had determined to inflict upon them.

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CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

Hosea

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Hosea Chapter 1

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CHAPTER 2

Verses 5-23

In this chapter God compares Israel to a woman who had been unfaithful to her husband in the very worst and most wicked manner.

[Hosea 2:5](#). *For their mother hath played the harlot: she that conceived them hath done shamefully: for she said, I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink.*

She attributed to false gods the gifts which God had given to her. This was great ingratitude to God, and a high insult to his holy majesty.

[Hosea 2:6](#). *Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths.*

That is what God does to sinners whom he means to save. He will not let them take their own course. He gives them thorny trials which hedge up their way. He puts an obstacle in their path, perhaps some sickness or poverty. When men are desperate in wickedness, God has a way of stopping them. Even in their mad career, his mighty grace comes in, and says, "So far shalt thou go, but no further."

[Hosea 2:7](#). *And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them:*

Thus sinners go after the pleasures of the world, and the pleasures run away from them. They make one thing their god, and then another; and they put out all their strength to attain the object of their ambition; and God thwarts them. In infinite love, he baffles all their endeavors because he means to bring them to himself.

[Hosea 2:7](#). *Then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now.*

That is what he brings us to; weary of the world, ay, weary of life itself, We get worn out in the ways of evil, and then we say, "I will go to God." What a blessed conclusion to come to! However terrible the whip with which he scourges us, it does us good. The fierce billow that washes the mariner upon the rock of safety, is a blessing to him.

[Hosea 2:8-9](#). *For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal. Therefore will I return, and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will recover my wool and my flax given to cover her nakedness.*

God claims the blessings of providence as his own; and when he sees his people misuse them, he says, “I will recover them. She is giving them to Baal. She is using them for an evil purpose; I will take them away.”

[Hosea 2:10-11](#). *And now will I discover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and none shall deliver her out of mine hand. I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her new moons, and her sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts.*

When God deals with men, he uses no half measures. If they have been very happy in the ways of sin, and he intends to save them from their evil courses; he will take away all their joy. They shall henceforth have none of the merriment in which they indulged. He will give them better happiness by-and-by; but for the time being it shall be true, “I will cause all her mirth to cease.”

[Hosea 2:12](#). *And I will destroy her vines and her fig trees, whereof she hath said, These are my rewards that my lovers have given me: and I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field shall eat them.*

Her most precious things shall be destroyed; or, if they are allowed to exist, they shall become a cause of fear and trouble. Oh, how often have I seen this verified in the experience of men and women whom God has saved by his almighty grace!

[Hosea 2:13](#). *And I will visit upon her the days of Baalim, wherein she burned incense to them, and she decked herself with her earrings and her jewels, and she went after her lovers, and forgot me, saith the LORD.*

They burnt no incense at Jerusalem; they refused to offer sacrifice there; but they went to this hill and to that, to worship the different images of Baal, and said, “These are our gods.” Therefore, God says that he will make them sick of their idolatry. They shall grow tired of thus polluting his holy name, and degrading themselves by worshipping things made of wood and stone.

[Hosea 2:14](#). *Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her.*

Oh, glorious verse! She that went so far astray, God will come, and draw her back from the path of sin. He will get her alone; he will bring her into a place of grief and sorrow, a wilderness; and then he will come near, and speak sweet words of comfort into her ear. "I will allure her," as the bird-catchers whistle to the birds, and draw them to the net, so will I allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, the place of loneliness, the place of want; and "I will speak to her heart," so the Hebrew has it, for God knows how to speak, not only into the ear, but into the heart.

[Hosea 2:15](#). *And I will give her her vineyards from thence,*

He will give back what he took away. He will seal with lovingkindness the real kindness which made him deal roughly with her at first.

[Hosea 2:15](#). *And the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt.*

Oh, backslider, God can give you back your early joy, your early love, ay, and your early purity; and he can make you sing as at the beginning! Wherefore, be of good comfort, and come to your Lord; come even now, with all your sins about you, and he will receive you.

[Hosea 2:16](#). *And it shall be at that day, saith the LORD, that thou shalt call me Ishi; and shalt call me no more Baali.*

"Baali" means "my lord" in the sense of domination; but God will not seem to us any more like a domineering governor, as we once thought him; but we shall call him "Ishi", "my husband." There shall be such nearness of love, such confidence of hope, between the restored soul and her God, that she shall call him no more Baali, but Ishi.

[Hosea 2:17](#). *For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name.*

Oh, the love of God! He does not want us to recollect our old ways. I do not like to hear people talk about their old habits, except they do it very tenderly, with many a tear and many a sigh, and tell the story to the praise and glory of divine grace. God takes the old names out of our lips; we forget them, we have done with them, we bury the dead past, and we live in newness of life.

[Hosea 2:18](#). *And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground:*

So that the insects should not devour the crops, and the foxes should not spoil the vines, and the birds should not steal the seeds, so will God take care of his people still. It does seem that, when we once get right with God, we get right with everything; when we are at peace with him, then neither beast, nor fowl, nor creeping thing can do us harm.

[Hosea 2:18](#). *And I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely.*

They had been much troubled by war. It had killed their children, destroyed their homes, and made them poor and wretched. Now God says, "I will break the bow and the sword and the battle." How often God gives a heavenly calm to us when we are once washed in the blood of Christ, and covered with his righteousness! I remember how the storm within my heart was hushed into a deep calm as soon as I had seen my Lord, and had yielded my heart to him. Oh, you that are in storms tonight, I pray that God may bring you to himself, and give you "peace, perfect peace!" And then what more will the Lord do?

[Hosea 2:19](#). *And I will betroth thee unto me for ever;*

What, this woman that had gone so far into evil? Can a man receive such an one back? No; but God can. He says there shall be a new betrothal, a new marriage: "I will betroth thee unto me for ever." Blessed word!

[Hosea 2:19-20](#). *Yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the LORD.*

Thou shalt know Jehovah; thou shalt know that there is none like him, passing by iniquity, transgression, and sin; and faithful to his people even when they are unfaithful to him. Is there any god like our God? Have you ever tasted his grace? Do you know his pardoning love? Have you ever been brought back to him? Have you been restored to his favor? Then I am sure you can say, "There is none like unto Jehovah."

[Hosea 2:21-22](#). *And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the LORD, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel.*

God would send rain when it was wanted. He would be all ear to hear on behalf of his people. He would not only hear them, but hear the very earth they tilled, and the heavens above their heads, as if nature itself began to pray when the child of God learned that holy art.

[Hosea 2:23](#). *And I will sow her unto me in the earth;*

He would make the people to be like the seed which he himself would sow, and cause to spring up, and abide.

[Hosea 2:23](#). *And I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy;*

I would like to read that again. Somebody has, perhaps, come in here tonight, who has never obtained mercy. Perhaps you have been seeking it, and you have not found it. Hear God's promise, and lay hold upon it: "I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy."

[Hosea 2:23](#). *And I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God.*

See, it is all in "shalls" and "wills." God is speaking, God omnipotent, omnipotent over men's hearts. He is not saying, "I will if they will," but "I will, and they shall," for he hath the key of free agency; and when he turns it in the lock, without violating the free will of man, he makes him willing in the day of his power to the praise of his divine supremacy, for God is God when he saves as much as when he reigns; yes, his reigning grace is the very glory of his nature, and this we love and adore. Grant us a taste of it! Amen.

Verses 6-23

[Hosea 2:6](#). *Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths.*

God will cause sin to be painful; he will make the way of it difficult; he will do everything to prevent the sinner running in it: "She shall not find her paths."

[Hosea 2:7](#). *And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them;*

They cannot find satisfaction in sinful pleasure; that which once they easily obtained, they shall no longer be able to procure.

[Hosea 2:7](#). *And she shall seek them, but shall not find them: then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now.*

Am I addressing a backslider? Has God hedged up your way? Is there a whisper in your heart which reminds you of better days and happier times? Oh, stifle not that whisper! Let it be heard within your spirit; if it be but a gentle voice, listen to it till it increases in force, and sounds like the very

voice of God in your soul; it will be for your present and eternal good if you do so.

[Hosea 2:8](#). *For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal.*

It is a sad sin when we take God's mercies, and use them in rebellion against him. Just think of it, — the very gifts which Jehovah gave to these people, they presented in sacrifice to Baal; and there are men, who are in comfortable circumstances, who spend their wealth for sin. They have health and strength, and they use them in the service of their own evil passions. The very gifts with which God has enriched them become weights to sink them deeper and deeper in the gulf of transgression. Ah, this is terrible! God has often brought men down to poverty, to sickness, to death's door, in order that they might be weaned from their sin. He saw that they were going to hell full-handed, and he judged it better that they should go to heaven empty-handed. He knew that, if they had health, they would misuse it, so he stretched them on the bed of sickness, that they might turn to him. God has severe remedies for desperate cases; he will do all that mercy and wisdom can suggest to prevent men from being their own destroyers.

[Hosea 2:9-11](#). *Therefore will I return, and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will recover my wool and my flax given to cover her nakedness. And now will I discover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and none shall deliver her out of mine hand. I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her new moons, and her sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts.*

There is no more merriment now; the old songs have lost their sweetness, and the old games have lost their charm.

[Hosea 2:12](#). *And I will destroy her vines and her fig trees, whereof she hath said, These are my rewards that my lovers have given me: and I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field shall eat them.*

So that the joys of sin shall become miseries, as if vineyards were suddenly trained into dense forests wherein lions and wolves might make their lairs. There are some people who can understand this in a spiritual sense; some, perhaps, who have been made to realize it in their own experience.

[Hosea 2:13](#). *And I will visit upon her the days of Baalim, wherein she burned incense to them, and she decked herself with her earrings and her jewels, and she went after her lovers, and forgot me, saith the LORD.*

It is terrible when God comes to visit upon men the days of their sin,- when for every night of sin they shall have a night of anguish. — when for every pleasure that they took in sin they shall feel the scourge of conscience till they have measured out the weary round. “She went after her lovers, and forgat me, saith the Lord.” This was said by him who never forgot her, by him whose love was true and faithful to her when she thus went away from him, and defiled herself and dishonoured his holy name. Now read the next verse; and be astonished, —

[Hosea 2:14](#). *Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her.*

You might have thought the Lord was going to say, “Therefore, behold, I will destroy her.” Nothing of the kind: “I will fascinate her to myself; I will draw her away from all her idol lovers, and I will speak comfortably unto her.”

[Hosea 2:15](#). *And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt.*

“I will pluck this Israel of mine out of all her sin; I will give her back the purity and the happiness of her early days: ‘She shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt.’” You must have noticed how often God speaks of that coming out of Egypt. He says, in another place, “I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness.” Here the Lord promises to give back to Israel the joy she had when she was young, and espoused herself to her God.

[Hosea 2:16](#). *And it shall be at that day, saith the LORD, that thou shalt call me Ishi; and shalt call me no more Baali.*

“Thou shalt call me, My man, my husband,” — a name of sweet endearment, “and shalt call me no more Baali,” that is, “my lord, my lordly husband,” for the Lord’s love shall not be galling to thee, but it shall sweetly and gently rule thee. Oh, what a sweet change this is, when we no longer tremble before God with slavish fear, but love him with intense affection, and see in him our soul’s Husband in whom is all our delight!

[Hosea 2:17](#). *For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name.*

The word Baalim had been profaned, they had applied it to other lords; and when they used it concerning Jehovah, it sounded harsh, as if he, too,

was a tyrant master.

[Hosea 2:18](#). *And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground:*

Everything is in covenant with me if I am in covenant with God; there is nothing so high that it can hurt me, there is nothing so low that it can injure me, there is nothing so great that it need distress me, there is nothing so little that it shall torment me.

[Hosea 2:18](#). *And I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely.*

Oh, the security of God's people when they get into their right position towards God!

[Hosea 2:19](#). *And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies.*

What a glorious promise is this! It is marvellous that our wayward, wanton, wicked souls should be brought back by infinite mercy, and then that God should be so enamoured of us as to declare, "I will betroth thee unto me for ever."

[Hosea 2:20](#). *I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the LORD.*

It is said three times that he will betroth us unto himself, as if the Lord knew that we should hardly be able to believe it.

[Hosea 2:21-22](#). *And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the LORD, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; And the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil and they shall hear Jezreel.*

So that there shall be no famine to try God's people; their prayers shall be abundantly answered, and all their needs shall be supplied.

[Hosea 2:23](#). *And I will sow her unto me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God.*

Oh, blessed Scripture! May the Lord write it on all our hearts! Amen.

Verse 14-15

You remember that, a fortnight ago, we read the second chapter of the prophecy of Hosea, and I preached from the fourteenth verse. I am going to

continue that subject tonight, so we will read two verses of the same chapter over again. I am sure we shall never exhaust it, and you will not be weary of hearing it. We will begin with the text from which I then spoke to you.

[Hosea 2:14-15](#). *Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt.*

Now I want you to hear how she did sing in the days of her youth, in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt. Turn to the fifteenth chapter of the Book of Exodus, where we have the joyful song of the emancipated chosen nation.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Hosea 2:14-15](#); and [Exodus 15:1-21](#).

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CHAPTER 10

Verses 1-6

[Hosea 10:1](#). *Israel is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself:*

Not to his God. It matters not how much fruit we bear — if it is for self, we are really fruitless. A thing which is good in itself may lose all its goodness because stained with a selfish motive. We are to live unto God; and we must always be watchful about this; otherwise we may be doing much, and doing nothing. “Israel is an empty vine. He bringeth forth fruit unto himself.”

[Hosea 10:1](#). *According to the multitude of his fruit he hath increased the altars; according to the goodness of his land they have made goodly images.*

It is a very sad thing when, the more men received from God, the more they sin. But just in proportion as the land of Israel was fat and fertile, in that proportion did they set up altars unto false gods, and provoke the true God, who had given them these mercies. It is an ill thing when men grow rich, and offer sacrifice to their own vanity — when men gather learning, and only use it to debate with against the simple teachings of God — when just as God blesses, men cease to bless him!

[Hosea 10:2](#). *Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty:*

A half-heart is no heart at all; and when men seem to go after God, and at the same time to go after their idols, they are not going after God. Their religion is vain. The good side is but a pretense; the evil side is the real thing.

[Hosea 10:2](#). *He shall break down their altars, he shall spoil their images.*

Let us take heed then, dear friends, that we make nothing into an idol. The shortest way to lose the dearest object of your affections is to make an idol of him. “He shall break down their altars. He shall spoil their images.” Sometimes this is done in great mercy to God’s people, for there is no greater evil than for a heart to be happy in idolatry. Sometimes it is done in judgment upon the ungodly. They will not have the true God, and the false god shall be false to them. “He shall break down their altars, he shall spoil their images.”

[Hosea 10:3](#). *For now they shall say, We have no king, because we feared not the LORD what then should a king do to us?*

Their king was slain, but if he had lived, what would be the good of him without God? What is the good of any temporal blessing if God be not in it? It is the husk with the kernel gone; and if we are able to enjoy the husk, it looks as if we were swine, and swine are being fattened for the slaughter.

What is the use of anything that we possess to us if God be divorced from it? I put the question again. If you are a true child of God, all the corn and wine in the world cannot feed you. Your bread must come from heaven.

[Hosea 10:4](#). *They have spoken words,*

That which they spoke was not truth. We cannot speak without words, but it is an evil thing when our speech is nothing but words. Words, words, words! — no heart, no truth. “They have spoken words.”

[Hosea 10:4](#). *Swearing falsely in making a covenant: thus judgment springeth up as hemlock in the furrows of the field.*

God keep us from untruthfulness, and especially from a want of truth towards himself. Do not you think that oftentimes, both in prayer and praise, it might be said, “They have spoken words — nothing more”? There has been a falsehood in the most solemn transaction towards God.

Woe unto you, dear friends, if that should turn out to be the case. Ye may cheat your fellow men if ye have a heart for it, but you never will be able to cheat your God. He is not mocked. “They have spoken words,” says he.

[Hosea 10:5](#). *The inhabitants of Samaria shall fear because of the calves of Bethaven:*

Why, those calves are their trust. They rely upon those images of false gods — those images which they set up in the place of the true God. Pretending thereby to worship him, they trusted in these; and now they shall become their fear. He who will have a confidence apart from God will find his confidence soured into a fear before long. Your greatest ground of distress will be that which was once the ground of your reliance apart from God.

[Hosea 10:5-6](#). *For the people thereof shall mourn over it, and the priests thereof that rejoiced on it, for the glory thereof, because it is departed from it. It shall be also carried unto Assyria for a present to king Jareb:*

The spiteful king.

[Hosea 10:6](#). *Ephraim shall receive shame, and Israel shall be ashamed of his own counsel.*

These golden calves excited the desires of the king of Assyria, and he took them away. These gods were baits, to their enemies, instead of basis for their confidence. They were carried away captive of the people with them — their god captive — their god melted down to make images, or to make money for the king of Assyria! Ah! what shame did God pour upon idolaters! And what shame he will pour upon us if we have any confidence except the unseen God, and if we rely anywhere but upon the eternal covenant of his immutable grace. Oh! brothers and sisters, let us try to flee away from that which is so tempting to sense — confidence in an arm of flesh, and let our sole and alone trust be in him that made the heavens and the earth, and in his Son, Jesus Christ.

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CHAPTER 11

Verses 1-12

Hosea 11:1. *When Israel was a child,*

When the nation was yet young, and had scarcely started on its march among the peoples of the earth: “When Israel was a child,” —

Hosea 11:1. *Then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.*

God's love does not depend upon the standard of our spiritual attainments. While we are yet children in grace, the Father's love is set upon us, as it was upon Israel in its beginnings as a nation.

Hosea 11:2. *As they called them, so they went from them;*

Such was the perversity of this child-nation, whom nevertheless God loved that though galled by Jehovah, he went away, and refused to obey the divine call. The Israelites in Egypt "hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage;" and, even after their great deliverance, they were constantly turning aside from the path pointed out by Moses, who bade them be faithful to their God.

Hosea 11:2. *They sacrificed unto Baalim, —*

They offered sacrifice to many Baals, first to one and then to another, for men will readily change their idols when they know not the true God.

Hosea 11:2-3. *And burned incense to graven images. I taught Ephraim also to go, —*

This child-nation was taught by God how to walk; —

Hosea 11:3. *Taking them by their arms;*

As nurses hold up their little children when for the first time they try to stand or toddle along.

Hosea 11:3. *But they knew not that I healed them.*

This was a singular thing, and it shows the great blindness of man, that he does not know his own Physician. It was so with Israel: "They knew not that I healed them." Surely, brethren, it seems impossible that we should not know our Divine Healer; yet our blindness is extreme by nature, and leads to many a folly.

Hosea 11:4. *I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love: and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them.*

As men do to their cattle when they have been ploughing, and they come to the end of the day's work, then the bit is removed, or the yoke is lifted off the shoulder, and fit fodder is provided for the cattle that they may be refreshed. This is what God did to his people Israel; he brought them out of Egypt, where they had to perform hard tasks, caused them to rest from their labours, and gave them both material and spiritual meat to eat; yet nevertheless they were ungrateful to him. We say that ingratitude is the worst of sins; but, alas, it is one of the commonest of evils, and we ourselves are ingrates to our God.

Hosea 11:5. *He shall not return into the land of Egypt, but the Assyrian shall be his king, because they refused to return.*

If we try to escape from our trouble without hearing the voice of God in it we shall run into another; if, by our own plotting and scheming, we escape from Egypt, then the Assyrian shall be our king, and there is small choice between Assyria and Egypt. It is always best to take with submission the sorrow that God appoints, lest, by fleeing from the bear the serpent bite us, and so we go from bad to worse.

Hosea 11:6. *And the word shall abide on his cities, and shall consume his branches, and devour them, because of their own counsels.*

That is a very striking expression, “Because of their own counsels.” It should be a solemn warning to us not to follow the devices of our own heart when we see the consequences of Israel’s walking after his own way.

Hosea 11:7. *And my people are bent to backsliding from me:*

They seemed as if they must do it, as if their hearts were set upon it; they were “bent” upon it. Oh, that our bent and bias were towards holiness, and not towards backsliding!

Hosea 11:7. *Though they called them to the most High, none at all would exalt him.*

See how Israel puts God away, and will not hear Jehovah’s voice. Now observe the change in the chapter, for God speaks of his faithfulness even to backsliding Israel. He does not give his people up, and he still yearns over them in tenderest pity and forbearance.

Hosea 11:8. *How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together.*

And this divine turning and repenting, remember, were toward a people who did not turn to the Lord. God turned towards a people that would not turn towards him, and his repentings were “kindled together” towards the nation that would not repent. Oh, the unspeakable, the unthinkable grace of God! He doeth for us “exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think.”

Hosea 11:9. *I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man;*

Our hope lies in the fact that God is God. Sometimes, that truth is a terror to men; they are distressed at the thought of the great and holy God,

yet in this truth is their only hope of salvation. The Lord says, “I will not return to destroy Ephraim, for I am God, and not man.”

Hosea 11:9. *The Holy One in the midst of thee: and I will not enter into the city.*

That is, the Lord says, “I will not come into it to see all its iniquities, lest in my wrath I smite and destroy it.” How tenderly doth God bear with wicked men! How great is his long-suffering! How graciously he seems to close his eyes, as if he would not see that which must bring upon us swift destruction if he looked upon it in his righteous anger!

Hosea 11:10. *They shall walk after the LORD:*

It is a great blessing when men begin to seek the Lord whom they formerly shunned. This proves that there has been wrought in them a complete change of heart.

Hosea 11:10. *He shall roar like a lion: when he shall roar, then the children shall tremble from the west.*

God’s terrible voice often makes men tremble, and that is one proof of the working of his grace in their hearts, for they tremble before him, and flee unto him.

Hosea 11:11-12. *They shall tremble as a bird out of Egypt, and as a dove out of the land of Assyria: and I will place them in their houses, saith the LORD. Ephraim compasseth me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit: but Judah yet ruleth with God, and is faithful with the saints.*

There are still some left to serve Jehovah; there is a remnant according to the election of grace even in the very worst of times. “Judah yet ruleth with God, and is faithful with the saints.” May we be found among the faithful few! Amen.

[HOSEA CONTENTS](#)

Hosea Chapter 12

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER 13

Verses 1-9

Hosea was full of complaints against the people of God; for, in his day, they had very sadly wandered from the Lord. They had even forgotten him. In Hosea's prophecy, we have the plaintive voice of a loving God chiding his backsliding children.

[Hosea 13:1](#). *When Ephraim spake trembling, he exalted himself in Israel; but when he offended in Baal, he died.*

A modest, humble, trembling heart is often by far the sounder heart, but when we begin to sin, and to sin boastfully, and to wrap ourselves about with the robe of self-complacency, then is death very near to us: "When Ephraim spake trembling, he exalted himself in Israel; but when he offended in Baal, he died."

[Hosea 13:2](#). *And now they sin more and more, and have made them molten images of their silver, and idols according to their own understanding, all of it the word of the craftsmen: they say of them, Let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves.*

When Jeroboam became king of the new kingdom of Israel, — in order to prevent his subjects from going to Jerusalem to worship God in Solomon's temple, — he started two shrines at Dan and Bethel, and there he set up what Holy Scripture calls in derision "calves." I suppose that his idea was to make images of a bull, the emblem of power, intending them to be the symbol of the Divine Being, and that the people intended still to worship God, but to worship him under the image of a bull. It is the same in Roman Catholicism to this day, — the worship of God, the worship of Christ, by means of crucifixes, and emblems and symbols of various kinds. But when men once begin that kind of idolatry, there is no knowing where they will stop; for the worship of God, through the medium of symbol, soon grows into the worship of other gods saints and saintesses, "blessed virgins" and I know not what besides, are pretty sure to be set up when once people begin to make use of outward and visible emblems of the Deity. So it was with these ancient Israelites. From worshipping the bull, which was meant to be a type of the omnipotent God, they went on to the worshipping of "molten images of their silver, and idols according to their own understanding." Brethren, let us take warning from these idolaters, and always keep to the simplicity of worship ordained by God in his Word. However comely and beautiful, or grand and imposing, and, consequently, fascinating, any form of idolatry may be to some minds, let us utterly

despise it if it is not according to the mind of God, and the teaching of his spirit, as revealed in his Word.

[Hosea 13:3](#). *Therefore they shall be as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that passeth away, as the chaff that is driven with the whirlwind out of the floor, and as the smoke out of the chimney.*

Those who will have gods of their own making shall have but a brief enjoyment of them. He who truly worships the everlasting God shall have an everlasting blessing; but he who worships gods that he has himself made, — mere objects of this mortal day, shall have but a short day of it. He shall be as the early dew, which glistens brightly, but is soon gone; or as the morning cloud, which is banished by the rising of the sun.

[Hosea 13:4-5](#). *Yet I am the LORD thy God from the land of Egypt, and thou shalt know no god but me: for there is no Saviour beside me. I did know thee in the wilderness, in the land of great drought.*

The Israelites drew near to God when they wanted bread and water in the wilderness. God says, “I did know thee in the wilderness, in the land of great drought;” and the Lord might say to his people nowadays, “I did know you when you were very sick, when you were very poor, when you were in great trouble. You sought me then; how is it that you are trying to do without me now?”

[Hosea 13:6-8](#). *According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten me. Therefore I will be unto them as a lion: as a leopard by the way will I observe them: I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, and will rend the caul of their heart, and there will I devour them like a lion: the wild beast shall tear them.*

When men forget God, they may expect that they will meet with some terrible judgments; and God’s own people especially will find this to be the case with them if they forget the Lord. Our God is a very jealous God; and when his children will set their hearts on other objects instead of upon himself, he will take care to embitter those objects of their affection to them. He will make their idols to be loathed by them. If God did not love us very much, he would think little of our faults, but just because he loves us so much, he cannot bear that any part of our heart’s affection should go away from himself. So, if he sees that we deal unfaithfully with him, he will make us realize that sin is an exceedingly evil and bitter thing. His anger

against us will be like that of a bear that is robbed of her whelps, or of a lion or leopard leaping upon his prey.

[Hosea 13:9](#). *Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help.*

“You have gone away from me, but I will bring you back again. You have destroyed yourself by your sin, but I will restore you to my favor by my grace. You may look within yourself for causes of repentance, but you must not look to yourself for the means of restoration; you must look to me, your Saviour and your God.” So this verse teaches us “O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help.”

Verses 1-14

[Hosea 13:1](#). *When Ephraim spake trembling, he exalted himself in Israel;*

When we are little in our own esteem, when we are full of fears concerning ourselves, when we dare not think of boasting, then it is that we grow:

“When Ephraim spake trembling, he exalted himself in Israel.”

[Hosea 13:1](#). *But when he offended in Baal, he died.*

It is when, like Ephraim, we turn aside to other gods, when our heart goes astray from the Lord, that there is death-death to our joys, death to our confidence, death to our usefulness. No one knows what destruction there is, even in the least sin, to the most joyful believer. It is like the hot breath of the Sirocco, which scorches up every green thing. If, before this terrible blast, everything is like Eden, behind it all is as a desert. Let us read the whole verse again that we may lay to heart the lesson it teaches us; “When Ephraim spake trembling, he exalted himself in Israel; but when he offended in Baal, he died.”

[Hosea 13:2](#). *And now they sin more and more,*

That is the usual way of sin; it is a growing evil; its course is downhill.

[Hosea 13:2](#). *And have made there molten images of their silver, and idols according to their own understanding, all of it the work of the craftsmen: they say of them, Let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves.*

Their idolatry was such that they were not satisfied with the bulls that were set on high as images, but they had little imitations of these, which they wore upon their persons, just as Romanists wear small crucifixes or crosses. These they carried about with them for their own private worship. Oh, what a tendency there is in sin to multiply itself. The idolaters were not satisfied with bowing the knee to false gods, but they said, “Let the men

that sacrifice kiss the calves.” Superstition goes from one evil to another, there is no end to it. You may begin with what you call moderate Ritualism, but where you will end I cannot tell. Some go beyond the superstitions of popery itself. The only safe way is to worship the Lord our God, and serve him alone, and purge out the idols from among us.

[Hosea 13:3](#). *Therefore they shall be as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that passeth away, as the chaff that is driven with the whirlwind out of the floor, and as the smoke out of the chimney.*

If they make idols their gods, they shall be like their idols. Idols are but for a day; what is there in them of endurance? What is there in them of power? “They that make them are like unto them, so is every one that trusteth in them.” If we trust in anything that we can see, if we trust in anything but God, then our hope shall be “as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that passeth away,” and we ourselves shall be like the chaff that is driven from the threshing-floor by a whirlwind, or like the smoke driven out of the chimney by the blast.

[Hosea 13:4](#). *Yet I am the LORD thy God from the land of Egypt, and thou shalt know no god but me: for there is no saviour beside me.*

Now here is the wickedness of idolatry, that we have so good a God, and yet must needs look after another. Here is the sin of trusting to an arm of flesh, that we have an almighty arm to lean upon, and instead of doing so we begin to look to a poor arm that has not strength enough to support itself, much less to support us. Are any of you children of God forgetting your God? Is your faith turning away from the great invisible, and the sure promises of his Word? Are you looking to the creature? Beware of it, I pray you; whenever you do that, you are making a rod for your own back.

If you forsake the Lord, to whom will you go?

[Hosea 13:5](#). *I did know thee in the wilderness, in the land of great drought.*

Look back upon days of your trouble, when God was very near to you; do you not remember when he was everything to you? When you were poor, when you were sick, when you were despised, God did know you then; yet now you sing,-

“What peaceful hours I once enjoyed,
How sweet their memory still!”

[Hosea 13:6](#). *According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten me.*

What a terrible verse this is! After they had been filled, they turned away from the God that filled them. When they were poor and despised, then he was all to them; but afterwards, when by his providence they grew rich and increased in goods, then they forgot their God. I have often seen it thus; it is a grievous evil under the sun. I have seen the man rejoicing in God, earnest and devout while he has been afflicted and poor. God has prospered him, and then he has turned his back upon sacred things, and made the world his joy. Is not this a horrible sin, a gross evil? I well remember one, who used to steal into this house on Thursday nights, glad to escape a while from the persecution in his own home. He had a hard time of it to be a Christian at all; but he came to be the possessor of his father's estates, and he has now no care for these things. He is a fashionable gentleman now, he who once was glad enough to mix with even the poorest of God's people, and to find comfort among them. It is a sad thing when it is so, and when the Lord has to say to any, "I did know thee in the wilderness, in the land of great drought. They were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten me."

[Hosea 13:7-8](#). *Therefore I will be unto them as a lion: as a leopard by the way will I observe them: I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, and will rend the caul of their heart, and there will I devour them like a lion: the wild beast shall tear them.*

For God is jealous, and most jealous of those whom he loves best. He cannot endure that we should treat him thus; he means to have our love by some means, and if he cannot have it by gentleness, he will have it by sterner methods. If the Lord has chosen you, he will sooner be to you as a leopard and a lion than he will suffer you to live without him. You must, you shall find your all in him.

[Hosea 13:9-10](#). *O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me thine help. I will be thy king:*

If thou hast shifted me from the throne, and set up a usurper, I will come and be thy King even now.

[Hosea 13:10](#). *Where is any other that may save thee in all thy cities?*

To whom else canst thou look? Where else canst thou find peace?

[Hosea 13:10](#). *And thy judges of whom thou saidst, Give me a king and princes?*

What is the good of them? Have they not all turned out to be a delusion?

[Hosea 13:11-12](#). *I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath. The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up; his sin is hid.*

How sadly true this is! Sin seems to be bound up in our very nature. It is hard to find it; it is hidden away; and when we discover some of it, and it is purged away, there is still more to be found. As hidden treasure may lie in a house for many a day, and not be seen, so are there stores of corruption that seem hidden away in our nature, and are not easily discovered. What a gracious God we have to deal with, or else he would have swept us away long ago!

[Hosea 13:13-14](#). *The sorrows of a travailing woman shall come upon him: he is an unwise son; for he should not stay long in the place of the breaking forth of children. I will ransom them from the power of the grave;*

Oh, what great promises we get driven, like piles, into the marshes of our sin, to make a foundation for God's grace! Here, when the Lord says that we have destroyed ourselves, and he notes all the blackness of our depravity, then he comes in with this gracious word, "I will ransom them from the power of the grave." You who believe in Jesus shall not die; nay, not even the deadly force of sin shall hold you in your grave. There is a resurrection for the dead. There is a spiritual resurrection for you, believers. When you mourn your death, and cry, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" the Lord will answer you, "I will ransom you from the power of the grave."

[Hosea 13:14](#). *I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.*

Lord, work this quickening in thy people tonight, and let us live in the fullness of thy divine love, and so anticipate the day when our bodies also shall be raised by thy glorious power!

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CHAPTER 14

Verses 1-9

[Hosea 14:1](#). *O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.*

When we fall by sin, we must regain our comfort by going back to the place where we lost it: “Return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.” Then, to help us return, God, through his servant, actually makes a prayer for us.

[Hosea 14:2](#). *Take with you words, and turn to the Lord:*

“What words am I to take?” asks the poor convinced sinner. “I cannot put words together.” Here are the words put into your mouth: —

[Hosea 14:2](#). *Say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips.*

Come with humble confession, come with sincere repentance, come with earnest supplication, come trusting to the grace of God, come bringing your heart with you, and rendering it to God as a living sacrifice.

[Hosea 14:3](#). *Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy.*

If you come to God to be saved, you must bring no other saviour with you. What an encouragement is given to us to come to God! He calls himself the Father of the fatherless. O thou, whose soul is orphaned, thou who art left disconsolate in a world of grief, come thou to him in whom the fatherless find mercy, for so shalt thou find mercy!

[Hosea 14:4-5](#). *I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him. I will be as the dew unto Israel:*

“Swiftly and mysteriously will I come and refresh him.”

[Hosea 14:5](#). *He shall grow as the lily,*

Quickly, beautifully, —

[Hosea 14:5](#). *And cast forth his roots as Lebanon.*

He shall be as permanent as he is fair, like a cedar as well as like a lily.

[Hosea 14:6](#). *His branches shall spread,*

The dew of the Lord imparts influence to men; it gives them, as it were branches, with which they cast a wide shadow.

[Hosea 14:6](#). *And his beauty shall be as the olive tree,*

The beauty of fruitfulness. God grant all of us this beauty!

[Hosea 14:6](#). *And his smell as Lebanon.*

Oh, to stand in holy repute among men, so that there is a fragrance going forth from us, like the sweet odours from the wild thyme and other products of Mount Lebanon!

[Hosea 14:7](#). *They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon.*

When God blesses men, he also blesses those round about them. Your children, your servants, your neighbours, shall all be the better if the grace of God comes to you. So may it be!

[Hosea 14:8-9](#). *Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols? I have heard him, and observed him: I am like a green fir tree. From me is thy fruit found. Who is wise? and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the LORD are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein.*

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 34; and Hosea 14.

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Amos

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CHAPTER 5

Verses 4-27

[Amos 5:4](#). *For thus saith the LORD unto the house of Israel, Seek ye me, and ye shall live:*

And that it just the message of God to professing Christians now: “Seek ye me.” Get away from your mere ceremonies, from trusting in your outward performances, and get to God himself. Get beyond your fellow-worshippers and your ministers, beyond your sanctuaries and your supposed holy places, and get in spirit and in truth to God himself: “Seek ye me, and ye shall live.”

[Amos 5:5](#). *But seek not Beth-el, nor enter into Gilgal and pass not to Beersheba; for Gilgal shall surely go into captivity, and Beth-el shall come to nought.*

These were the places where the calves and other idols were set up for the worship of God by means of visible symbols. That was the Romanism of that day. Pure spiritual worship was ordained by God, but that was not enough for the idolatrous Israelites. They must needs set up the image of an ox, the emblem of power, — not that they would worship the ox, they said, but that they might worship the God of power through that symbol. And that is the plea of Papists today: — “We do not worship that cross; we do not worship that image; but these things help us. They are emblems.” But

they are absolutely forbidden by God: “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them.” The first commandment forbids us to have any other God than Jehovah; the second forbids us to worship him through any emblem or symbol whatsoever.

[Amos 5:6-7](#). *Seek the LORD, and ye shall live; lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and devour it, and there be none to quench it in Beth-el. Ye who turn judgment to wormwood, and leave off righteousness in the earth,*

Here you have another great truth, — that, in order to seek God aright, we must turn away from sin. All the ritualism in the world will not save us, or be acceptable to God; there must be purity of life, and holiness of character; justice must be done between man and man, and we must seek to be right before the righteous and holy God.

[Amos 5:8](#). *Seek him that maketh the seven stars and Orion, —*

The Creator of the spring-bringing Pleiades, and of the winter-bringing Orion, —

[Amos 5:8-9](#). *And turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night: that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: The LORD is his name: that strengtheneth the spoiled against the strong, so that the spoiled shall come against the fortress.*

The God of the weak, the Defender of the oppressed. Ye that oppress the poor, and tread down the people, seek ye him, and wash your hands from the stains of your past injustice.

[Amos 5:10](#). *They hate him that rebuketh in the gate, and they abhor him that speaketh uprightly.*

There is still a generation that cannot bear to be told of its faults, and that shows its venom against everything that is right.

[Amos 5:11](#). *Forasmuch therefore as your treading is upon the poor, and ye take from him burdens of wheat: ye have built houses of hewn stone but ye shall not dwell in them; ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink wine of them.*

God has often shown how he can overthrow those who oppress the poor.

[Amos 5:12-17](#). *For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins: they afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the*

poor in the gate from their right. Therefore the prudent shall keep silence in that time; for it is an evil time. Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live: and so the LORD, the God of hosts, shall be with you, as ye have spoken. Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate: it may be that the LORD God of hosts will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph. Therefore the LORD, the God of hosts, the Lord saith thus, Wailing shall be in all streets, and they shall say in all the highways, Alas! alas! and they shall call the husbandman to mourning, and such as are skilful of lamentation to wailing. And in all vineyards shall be wailing: for I will pass through thee, saith the LORD.

National sins bring down national judgments; and when God grows angry against the people, he makes the places of their feasting, the vineyards where grow their choicest vines, to become the places of their sorrow, so that wailing and distress are heard on all sides. Oh, that nations knew the day of their visitation, and would do justly! Then would such judgments be averted.

[Amos 5:18](#). *Woe unto you that desire the day of the LORD! to what end is it for you? the day of the LORD is darkness, and not light.*

“The day of the Lord is darkness, and not light,” for such as you, impenitent, unjust, graceless sinners. “The day of the Lord” will not bring blessings to you; but it will be —

[Amos 5:19](#). *As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him.*

From bad to worse do they go who think to escape from present misery by plunging into the presence of God. The suicide is, of all fools, the greatest, for he goes before God with his own indictments, nay, with his own sentence in his hand. He needs no trial; he has condemned himself.

[Amos 5:20-22](#). *Shall not the day of the LORD be darkness, and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it? I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts.*

See how God speaks about public worship and formal sacrifices when the heart is not right with him. When the moral conduct of the offerer is wrong, the Lord will not accept his offering.

[Amos 5:23-24](#). *Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let judgment run down as waters, and*

righteousness as a mighty stream.

This is what God asks for, — righteousness, not sweet music. Have they not, at this very day, turned what were once houses of prayer into music-halls, set up their idols in our parish churches, and adorned their priests with every kind of Babylonian garment which they could find at Rome, the mystical Babylon? Are they not turning this nation back again to that accursed Popery, the yoke of which our fathers could not bear? Therefore, the Lord is wroth with this land; there are storm-clouds gathering over it, because it is not sufficiently stirred with indignation against those idolatrous men who are again seeking to come to the front among us.

[Amos 5:25](#). *Have ye offered unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel?*

“Did you worship me? Did you offer sacrifices to me?” “No,” said God, “ye did not.”

[Amos 5:26-27](#). *But ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves. Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith the LORD, whose name is The God of hosts.*

Oh, for pure worship! Oh, for pure living! Oh, for hearts that spiritually worship the Lord, for Jesus said, “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.” “But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?”

[AMOS CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 6

Verses 1-8

Amos was a herdsman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit. His words are rugged, but sometimes he rises to sublimity. His expressions are somewhat dark, and not readily to be understood; but when we learn the meaning of them, we perceive that they are full of deep, earnest, solemn warning and instruction.

[Amos 6:1](#). *Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria, which are named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel came!*

It was a time of great sin, and also of great judgment, yet there were some in Zion who were quite at ease under all that was happening. No sense of sin grieved them, no thought of coming judgment alarmed them. What did they care if the nation went to rack and ruin? What did it signify to them that God was angry with his people? They were atheists; or, at least, they acted as if they were. Whatever might happen, they would run the risk of it. “Woe,” says God, to all such people as these; and when the Lord says “Woe” to anyone, it is indeed woe, for he never speaks thus without cause.

[Amos 6:2](#). *Pass ye unto Calneh, and see; and from thence go ye to Hamath the great; then go down to Gath of the Philistines: be they better than these kingdoms? or their border greater than your border?*

The Lord points to other cities which had been destroyed, — to Calneh, and Hamath, and Gath, which he had smitten because of the sin of the people who had lived there; and he says, “Ye that dwell at Jerusalem, and ye that live at Samaria, do not imagine that ye will escape the consequences of your sin. I was able to reach the inhabitants of these proud cities, despite their strong fortifications and their powerful armies; and I can reach you also.” So, when we look back upon the judgments of God upon guilty men, we may conclude that no sinner has any right to think that he shall escape. The proudest and mightiest have been brought down by God and so will men, who dare to resist the Most High. Continue to be humble, even to the world’s end.

[Amos 6:3](#). *Ye that put far away the evil day, —*

Ye who say, “There is time enough yet. Let us see a little more of life; why need we be in a hurry to seek salvation?” “Ye that put far away the evil day,” —

[Amos 6:3](#). *And cause the seat of violence to come near;*

For, when men try to postpone thoughts about “the judgment” which is to follow “after death,” they are generally the more eager to indulge in sin. They say, “There is time enough yet,” because they want a longer period to get greater indulgence in sinful ways. The Lord says “Woe” to all such people as these.

[Amos 6:4](#). *That lie upon beds of ivory,*

They were men of wealth, who spent their money upon all manner of luxuries while the poor of the land were perishing through want.

[Amos 6:4](#). *And stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall;*

It was, as I have said, a time of danger, when war was at the gates; but the people were so careless that they lived as if peace were established for ever, and the enemy could never touch them. Their expenditure was at a high rate for self-indulgence, and for that only.

[Amos 6:5](#). *That chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instrument of music, like David;*

But not for the same purpose as David played and sang; his instruments of music were used for spiritual solace and the worship of God; but these people set their wits to work to find out how their music might inflame their lusts, and be a vehicle for the expression of their lascivious desires.

[Amos 6:6](#). *That drink wine in bowls,*

For seldom can a careless man crown the edifice of his sin without indulging in drunkenness; he must have the sensual delight that he finds in “the flowing bowl.”

[Amos 6:6](#). *And anoint themselves with the chief ointments: but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.*

It is not wrong for a person, to whom God has given much of the good things of this life, to enjoy them fitly and reasonably. The sin of these people consisted in the fact that, when others were afflicted, they took that opportunity to indulge themselves in all the delights of the flesh; and when God’s rod was being used for chastisement, they went on with their sinful mirth to show how little they cared about it. Probably I am addressing some who have, at this very moment, a sore sickness in the house; or it may be that a beloved wife is scarcely cold in her grave, or a dear child has only just sobbed itself into its death-sleep; yet the survivors are running after amusements, and pleasures, and follies, more wildly than ever, as if to hush the voice of conscience, and to forget the strokes of God’s rod. Oh, that this very solemn chapter might convey a warning message to them!

[Amos 6:7](#). *Therefore now shall they go captive with the first that go captive, and the banquet of them that stretched themselves shall be removed.*

Whenever God does come forth to execute judgment upon the ungodly, he will first pick out those who have defied him the most. Those who have the proudest spirit and the hardest heart shall be the first to feel the strokes of his rod.

[Amos 6:8](#). *The Lord GOD hath sworn by himself, saith the LORD the God of hosts, I abhor the excellency of Jacob, and hate his palaces:*

therefore will I deliver up the city with all that is therein.

The next chapter shows that, even when God was very angry with the wicked, there was still wonderful power in prayer.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Amos 6:1-8](#); [Amos 7:1-6](#).

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CHAPTER 7

Verses 1-6

[Amos 7:1-3](#). *Thus hath the Lord God showed unto me; and, behold, he formed grasshoppers in the beginning of the shooting up of the latter growth; and, lo, it was the latter growth after the king's mowings. And it came to pass, that when they had made an end of eating the grass of the land, then I said, O Lord God, forgive, I beseech thee: by whom shall Jacob arise? For he is small. The Lord repented for this: it shall not be, saith the LORD.*

In a vision, the prophet saw the locusts or grasshoppers come to devour all the green things of the land, — a very terrible visitation. If you have never seen it, you cannot realize how utterly bare everything is made after the visit of the locusts. The prophet put up a vehement and earnest prayer; he cried, “O Lord God, forgive” and, no sooner was the intercession offered than the Lord said, “It shall not be.” Thus the impending judgment was turned away.

[Amos 7:4-6](#). *Thus hath the Lord God showed unto me: and, behold, the Lord God called to contend by fire, and it devoured the great deep, and did eat up a part. Then said I, O Lord God, cease, I beseech thee: by whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small. The Lord repented for this: This also shall not be, saith the Lord God.*

This time, the prophet saw the fire devouring the land, — perhaps the fire of war, which casts its blazing brand upon peaceful dwellings. This fire, however, was something worse than that, for the very deep itself seemed to be licked up by tongues of flame; and the prophet, in hearty sympathy with the afflicted people, cried again as he had done before, and the answer came “This also shall not be, saith the Lord God.” This ought to encourage you who are the King’s remembrances to make use of the position in which his grace has placed you, and to cry earnestly to him to turn away his wrathful

hand, and have pity upon sinners. God grant that many of us may have such an intercessory spirit as that of Amos the herdsman-prophet!

This exposition consisted of readings from [Amos 6:1-8](#); [Amos 7:1-6](#).

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CHAPTER 1

Verses 1-17

[Jonah 1:1-3](#). *Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me. But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.*

Observe the misconduct of the prophet Jonah. He had a plain command from the Lord, and he knew it to be a command; but he felt that the commission given to him would not be pleasant and honouring to himself, and therefore he declined to comply with it. We see, from his action, how some, who really know God, may act as if they knew him not. Jonah knew that God was everywhere, yet he “rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.” What strange inconsistencies there often are even in good men! Here is one, who is favored with a divine commission, — one who knows God, and fears him; yet, for all that, he ventures on the fool’s errand of endeavoring to escape from the Omnipresent. He “went down to Joppa,” which was the port of his country, “and he found a ship going to Tarshish.” Learn from this that providence alone is not a sufficient guide for our actions. He may have said, “It was very singular that there was a ship there going to Tarshish, just when I reached the port. I gather from this that God was not so very disinclined for me to go to Tarshish.” Precepts, not providences, are to guide believers; and when Christian men quote a providence against a precept, — which is to set God against God, — they act most strangely. There are devil’s providences as well as divine providences, and there are tempting providences as well as assisting providences, so learn to judge between the one and the other.

[Jonah 1:4](#). *But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken.*

Learn, hence, that “Omnipotence has servants everywhere.” The Lord is never short of sheriff’s officers to arrest his fugitives, and on that occasion he “sent out a great wind into the sea.” “The wind bloweth where it listeth.” That is true, but it is also true that the wind bloweth where God listeth, and he knew how to send that great wind to the particular ship. No doubt many ships were on the Mediterranean at that time; but, possibly, unto none of them was the storm sent save unto the one which carried Jonah son of Amittai. We say, “Every bullet has its billet,” and this great wind was sent to pursue the fugitive prophet.

[Jonah 1:5](#). *Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, —*

If there is ever a special time for prayer, it is a time of need. Nature seems then to compel men to utter prayer of such a sort as it is, for it is but nature’s prayer at the best: “The mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god,” —

[Jonah 1:5](#). *And cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them.*

Life is precious, and a man will give up everything else in order to save it.

Satan spoke the truth when he said, “Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath, will he give for his life.” From the action of these mariners, we may learn that sometimes we may lighten our ship for the safety of our souls. When we have less to carry, probably we shall sail more safely. Losses and crosses may turn out to be our greatest gains. Let the ill-gotten ingots go to the bottom of the sea; and lo, the ship rights herself at once!

[Jonah 1:5](#). *But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep.*

The greatest sinner on that ship appeared to be the least concerned about the storm which had come because of him, he did not even seem to know that there was a storm, for he had “gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep.”

[Jonah 1:6](#). *So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not.*

It is hard when sinners have to rebuke saints, and when an uncircumcised Gentile can address a prophet of God in language like this.

[Jonah 1:7](#). *And they said every one to his fellow, Come and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah.*

We commend not the action of these men in casting lots, but we admire the providence by which the lot fell upon Jonah. Solomon says, “The lot is cast into the lap,” but he did not say that it was right that lots should be cast into the lap; and he very properly added, “but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.”

[Jonah 1:8](#). *Then they said unto him, Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil is upon us, What is thine occupation? and whence comest thou? what is thy country? and of what people art thou?*

I do not know whether these men had traded with those who then lived in these islands, but they had a very English custom of not judging a man before they had heard him speak. It would be well if we all practiced it more, — so that, before we condemn men, we were willing to hear their side of the question. Considering that there was such a storm raging, the

questions put to Jonah were remarkably calm. They were very comprehensive, and went to the very root of the matter.

[Jonah 1:9](#). *And he said unto them, I am an Hebrew:*

That let them know whence he came, and what his country was.

[Jonah 1:9](#). *And I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land.*

That, I suppose, must be regarded as his occupation; and what a blessed occupation it is, — to be occupied with the fear of the Lord! So, you see that, though Jonah was not properly following his occupation while he was on board that ship, yet he did not hesitate to avow, “I am a Hebrew; and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land.” The child of God, even when he gets where he ought not to be, if you test him and try him, will stand to his colors. He will confess that he is, after all, a servant of the living God.

[Jonah 1:10](#). *Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, Why hast thou done this?*

Jonah had to go through this catechism, question after question, and this was the hardest of them all: “Why hast thou done this?” Could you, dear friend, submit every action of your life to this test? “Why hast thou done this?” I am afraid that there are some actions, which we have performed, for which we could not give a reason, or the reasons for which we should not like to give to our fellow men, much less to our God.

[Jonah 1:10-11](#). *For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them. Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us?*

Here is another question; the catechism is not yet finished, and this is one of the most difficult of all.

[Jonah 1:11-12](#). *For the sea wrought, and was tempestuous. And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you:*

Notwithstanding all his faults, Jonah was an eminent type of Christ. We know that from our Lord’s own words, for he was as long in the belly of the whale as Christ was in the heart of the earth. Here he seems to be a type of our Saviour: “Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea: so shall the sea be calm unto you:”

[Jonah 1:12-13](#). *For I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you. Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring it to the land;*

They showed a deal of good feeling in all their treatment of Jonah. They could not bear to take away a fellow-creature's life, so they pulled and tugged in order to get the ship to land.

[Jonah 1:13](#). *But they could not: for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous against them.*

Their safety lay in the sacrifice, — not in the labour. They rowed hard to bring the ship to land, but their efforts were of no avail. If they would cast Jonah overboard, then they would be safe.

[Jonah 1:14-15](#). *Wherefore they cried unto the LORD, and said, We beseech thee, O LORD, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for thou, O LORD, hast done as it pleased thee. So they took up Jonah, —*

Put the emphasis on the first word, “So they took up Jonah”; that is, with great reluctance, with much pity and sorrow, not daring to do such a deed as that wantonly and with a light heart. When men do deeds like this, on a far greater scale, and go to war with a light heart, they will have a heavy heart before long. If ever you have to cast a brother out of the Church, — if ever you have to relinquish the friendship of any man, — do it as these men did with Jonah, patiently, and carefully. Investigate the matter, and do not act until you are driven to it after consulting the Lord.

[Jonah 1:15-16](#). *And cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging. Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the LORD, and made vows.*

Jonah had been the means of causing a greater change than he expected. His conduct and punishment had been a warning to those thoughtless sailors. They could not but believe in the God who had thus followed up his fugitive servant.

[Jonah 1:17](#). *Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah.*

He prepared a storm, he prepared a fish and we afterwards read that he prepared a gourd, and he prepared a worm. In the great things of life, and in the little things, God is ever present. The swimming of a great fish in the sea is, surely, not a thing that is subject to law. If ever there is free agency in this world, it must certainly be in the wanderings of such a huge creature that follows its own instincts, and ploughs its way through the great wastes of the wide and open sea. Yes, that is true; yet there is a divine predestination concerning all its movements. Over every motion of the fin

of every minnow predestination presides. There is no distinction of little or great in God's sight, he that wings an angel guides a sparrow. "The Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah."

[Jonah 1:17](#). *And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.*

So round about the truant prophet was the preventing grace of Jehovah.

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CHAPTER 2

Verses 1-10

Jonah 2:1. *Then Jonah prayed unto the LORD his God out of the fish's belly.*

What a strange place for prayer! Surely then is the only prayer that ever went up to God out of a fish's belly. Jonah found himself alive;-that was the surprising thing, that he was alive in the belly of a fish;-and because he was alive, he began to pray. It is such a wonder that some people here should continue to live that they ought to begin to pray. If you live with death so near, and in so great peril, and yet you do not pray, what is to become of you? This prayer of Jonah is very remarkable because it is not a prayer at all in the sense in which we usually apply the word to petition and supplication. If you read the prayer through, you will see that it is almost all thanksgiving; and the best prayer in all the world is a prayer that is full of thankfulness. We praise the Lord for what he has done for us, and thus we do, in effect, ask him to perfect the work which he has begun. He has delivered us, so we bless his holy name, and by implication we beseech him still to deliver us. Notice that it says here, "Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God." He was a runaway; he had tried to escape from the presence of God; yet the Lord was still his God. God will not lose any of his people, even if, like Jonah, they are in the belly of a fish, Jehovah is still their God: "Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish's belly," —

Jonah 2:2. *And said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD, and he heard me;-*

You see that this is not praying, it is telling the Lord what he had done for his disobedient servant. Jonah had prayed, and the Lord had heard him, yet he was still in the fish's belly. Unbelief would have said, "You have

lived so long; Jonah; but you cannot expect to live to get out of this dreary, damp, fetid prison.” Ah, but faith is out of prison even while she is in it. Faith begins to tell what God has done before the great work is actually accomplished; so Jonah said, “I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord, and he heard me;” —

Jonah 2:2. *Out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice.*

He was like a man in the unseen world among the dead. He felt that he was condemned and cast away; yet God had heard him, and now he sings about it in the belly of the fish. No other fish that ever lived had a live man inside him singing praises unto God.

Jonah 2:3. *For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas;*

The word Jonah used implies that God had violently cast him away into the deep. “Cast me not off,” prayed David, but here is a man who says that God did cast him out like a thing flung overboard into the vast deep: “Thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas;” —

Jonah 2:3. *And the floods compassed me about:*

“They rolled all over me, beneath me, above me, around me; ‘The floods compassed me about:’” —

Jonah 2:3. *All thy billows and thy waves passed over me.*

Jonah had evidently read his Bible; at least, he had read the 42nd Psalm, for he quotes it here. It is a blessed thing to have the Bible in your mind and heart so that, wherever you may be, you do not need to turn to the Book because you have the Book inside you. Here is a man inside a fish with a Book inside of him; and it was the Book inside of him that brought him out from the fish again.

Jonah 2:4. *Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple.*

What grand faith Job displayed when he said, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him;” and here is another splendid manifestation of faith, “I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple.’ If God does not look at me, I will still look towards the place where he dwells. As I am being flung away from him, I will give one more look towards his holy temple.”

Jonah 2:5. *The waters compassed me about, even to the soul:-*

They seemed to get right into his spirit; his heart became waterlogged: “The waters compassed me about, even to the soul:” —

Jonah 2:5. *The depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head.*

Like his winding-sheet,-as if the cerements of the grave were wrapped about his mouth, and ears, and eyes, and he was consigned to a living tomb. This narrative is a graphic description of the natural motion of the great fish which had swallowed Jonah. When the fish found this strange being inside him, the first thing that he did was to plunge as deep as ever he could into the waters. You will see that Jonah did go down very deep indeed. The next thing was for the fish to make for the weeds; as certain creatures eat weeds to cure them when they feel very ill, this fish went of to the weedy places to see if he could get a cure for this new complaint of a man inside him.

Jonah 2:6. *I went down to the bottoms of the mountains;-*

To the very roots and foundations of the mountains, where the big jagged rocks made huge buttresses for the hills above: “I went down to the bottom of the mountains;” —

Jonah 2:6. *The earth with her bars was about me for ever:*

Down went the fish, as deep as he could go: and, of course, down went Jonah too, and he might well imagine that he was in a vast prison from which there was no way of escape,

Jonah 2:6. *Yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O LORD my God.*

And, dear friend, God can bring you up, however low you may have gone. Though, in your own feelings, you feel as if you had gone so low that you could not go any lower, God can, in answer to prayer, bring you up again. O despairing one, take heart, and be comforted by this story of Jonah! God is dealing with you as he was with him. There may be a great fish, but there is a great God as well. There may be a deep seas, but there is an almighty God to bring you up out of it.

Jonah 2:7. *When my soul fainted within me I remembered the LORD:*

It is a blessed memory that serves us faithfully in a fainting fit. Mostly, when the heart faints, the memory fails; but Jonah remembered the Lord when his soul fainted within him.

Jonah 2:7. *And my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple.*

Think of Jonah’s prayer going right within the veil, and reaching the ear and heart of God in his holy temple. He said that he was cast out of God’s sight, yet his prayer went into God’s temple. Oh, the prevalence of a bold believing prayer! “My prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple.”

Jonah 2:8. *They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy.*

If you trust anywhere but in God, you will run away from your own mercy. God is the only really merciful One who can always help you; but if you trust in your own righteousness, if you trust in priest craft, if you trust in any superstition, you are observing lying vanities, and forsaking your own mercy. God is the source of your mercy; do not run away from him to anyone or anything else.

Jonah 2:9. *But I will sacrifice unto thee-*

I long to do so. I cannot do it just now, but I would if I could; and I will do it when thou shalt grant me deliverance from my present peril.”

Jonah 2:9. *With the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD.*

That is one of the grandest utterances that any man ever made: “SALVATION!” Write it in capital letters. It is a very emphatic word in the Hebrew, and I might read it, “Mighty salvation is of Jehovah.” This is real, old-fashioned Calvinistic doctrine spoken centuries before John Calvin was born. The whale could not endure it, and he turned Jonah out directly he said, “Salvation is of the Lord.” The world does not like that doctrine, and there are many professing Christians who do not like it. They say, “Salvation is of man’s free will; salvation is of the works of the law; salvation is of rites and ceremonies;” and so on. But we say, with Jonah, “Salvation is of the Lord.” He works it from beginning to end, and therefore he must have all the praise for it for ever and ever.

Jonah 2:10. *And the LORD spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.*

God has only to speak, and even sea-monsters obey him. I know not how he spoke to the fish; I do not know how to talk to a fish, but God does; and as the Lord could speak to that fish, he can speak to any sinner here. However far you may have gone from all that is good, he who spoke to that great fish, and made it disgorge the prophet Jonah, can speak to you, and then you will give up your sins as the whale gave up Jonah. God grant that it may be so this very hour! That is the prayer of an ancient mariner, may it be ours, as far as it is suited to our circumstances, and may we be brought by God’s grace to cry, with Jonah, “Salvation is of the Lord”!

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CHAPTER 3

Verses 1-10

[Jonah 3:1-2](#). *And the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee.*

There is no preaching like that which Gods bids us. The preaching that comes out of our own heads will never go into other men's hearts. If we will keep to the preaching that the Lord bids us, we shall not fail in our ministry.

[Jonah 3:3](#). *So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days' journey.*

For those times, Nineveh was "an exceeding great city," but it is far exceeded in size by this modern Nineveh of London.

[Jonah 3:4](#). *And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.*

His message was short and sharp, there was not a word of mercy in it. There was nothing to distract the attention of the hearers from the one point and the one subject; and there is a great deal in that. We may sometimes say too much in a single sermon, and give our hearers a field of wheat instead of a loaf of bread. But Jonah said what he was bidden to say, no more and no less: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown."

[Jonah 3:5-9](#). *So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything: let them not feed, nor drink water: but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?*

Note that the only message they had heard was a prophecy of impending judgment. God had sent his servant to warn them of the coming destruction; and, since he had warned them that he meant to destroy them, they could

infer that he might possibly intend pity towards them should they repent, but there was as yet no verbal declaration of mercy or hope. these people went to God with nothing better to sustain them than this, “Who can tell?” How much more guilty than these Ninevites are they who refuse to humble themselves before God, even when they have distinct injunctions from God, and explicit promises that whosoever shall confess and forsake his sins shall find mercy! these men of Nineveh will rise up in judgment against the men of London, and the men of this generation, and condemn them, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now men do not repent even at the testimony of Jesus Christ the Son of God. To despise the prophet Jonah, would have involved these people in certain destruction; of how much sorer punishment shall they be thought worthy who despise the Christ of God, and do despite unto the Spirit of grace.

[Jonah 3:10](#). *And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not.*

There is no change in God, absolutely considered, but there is often an apparent change, that which he threatens, while men remain in sin, is not executed upon them when they repent and turn to him. He is always the same God. from the beginning, he has been “the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.” If he did not pardon sin, when men turn from it with sincere repentance, he would have changed his method of dealing with the penitent; but when he does forgive, it is according to his way from the beginning, for he has ever been a tender, and compassionate, and gracious God.

This exposition consisted of readings from Jonah 3; [Jonah 4:1-2](#); and Romans 5.

[JONAH CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 4

Verse 1-2

[Jonah 4:1](#). *But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry.*

A nice prophet this! Jonah was a man of a somewhat ugly disposition, yet I think he has been misunderstood. He was the true child of Elijah, the

prophet of fire. Elijah was a rough, stern servant of the Lord, who felt that the indignities which had been done to Jehovah deserved instant and terrible punishment; and he seemed almost to wish to see that punishment inflicted, as he accused the people unto God, saying, “the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.” He was bravely stern for God, and Jonah was cast in a similar mold. He seemed to feel, “I have been sent of God to tell these people that they will be destroyed for their sin. Now, if they are not destroyed, it will be thought that I have not preached the truth, and, what is far more serious, it will be thought that God does not keep his word.” His whole thought was taken up with the honour of God, and his own honour as involved in that of the Lord. There are many people, nowadays, who seem to think everything of man, and very little of God; and, consequently, they fall into grievous errors. Jonah, on the contrary, thought everything of God, and very little of men. He fell into an error by so doing, and there was a want of balance of judgment, yet is Jonah’s error so very seldom committed that I am half inclined to admire it in contrast with the error on the other side. He felt that it would be better for Nineveh to be destroyed than for God’s truthfulness to be jeopardized even for a single moment. God would not have us push even concern for his honour too far; but we are such poor creatures that, very often, when we are within an inch of the right course, we fall into a snare of the enemy. It was so with Jonah, when he was exceedingly displeased and very angry at what God had done in sparing the repentant people of Nineveh.

[Jonah 4:2](#). *And he prayed unto the LORD, and said, I pray thee, O LORD, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish : for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil.*

This was as much as if he had said to the Lord, “I went and did thy bidding, and told the Ninevites that they would be destroyed; but I knew in my heart that, if they repented, thou wouldst not carry out thy threat, and now thou art too gracious, too kind, to these wicked people.” It is a strange thing, is it not, that Jonah was angry because his message was blessed to his hearers? As a good commentator says, “When Christ sees of the travail of his soul, he is satisfied; but when Jonah saw of the travail of his soul, he was dissatisfied.” There are some men who leave off preaching because

they do not succeed; but here was one who was ready to give up because he did succeed. It is strange that such a good man as Jonah was should fall into such a foolish state of mind; but God still has a great many unwise children. You can find one if you look in the right place; I mean, in a looking-glass. We are all foolish at times; and it should be remembered that, although Jonah was foolish, and wrong in certain respects, there is this redeeming trait in his character, — we might never have known the story of his folly if he had not written it himself. It shows what a true-hearted man the prophet was, that he just unveiled his real character in this Book. Biographies of men are seldom truthful, because the writers cannot read the hearts of those whom they describe; and if they could read them, they would not like to print what they would see there. But here is a man, inspired of God to write his own biography, and he tells us of this sad piece of folly, and does not attempt in the least degree to mitigate the evil of it. Now turn to a very different portion of Scripture, Romans 5

This exposition consisted of readings from Jonah 3; [Jonah 4:1-2](#); and Romans 5.

Verses 1-11

You know all about Jonah's refusal to go upon the Lord's errand, and how he was held to it, and carried to his work in a great fish as he would not go by himself. Somehow or other, God will make his servants do his will; and the more speedily they do it, the better it is for them. You know also how the Ninevites repented at the preaching of Jonah, and how the Lord had mercy upon them.

[Jonah 4:1-3](#). *But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry. And he prayed unto the Lord, and said, I pray thee, O LORD, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil. Therefore now, O Lord, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live.*

“For, if I live, the Ninevites will say, ‘This man scared us needlessly. He is a prophet of evil, and he is a liar, too, for our great city is not destroyed. He frightened us into a kind of repentance for which there was no necessity, for his God does not carry out his threatenings,’” and so forth. And poor Jonah could not face such talk as that. But, brother, if you preach God's Word as he gives it to you, you have nothing to do with the consequences

that come of it. God will justify his own truth; and even if it should seem that the worst rather than the best consequences ensue, it is for you still to go on in the name of him who sent you. Whenever you and I begin to try to manage God's kingdom for him, we find the divine scepter too heavy for our little hands to hold; our case would be like that of Phaeton trying to drive the horses in the chariot of the sun. We cannot hold the reins of the universe. And poor Jonah, wanting to manage everything for God, makes a dreadful mess of it, and in his anger makes a very foolish request: "O Lord, take, I beseech thee, my life from me."

[Jonah 4:4](#). *Then said the LORD, Doest thou well to be angry?*

How kind of God to speak thus gently to his rebellious servant. Are any of you given to anger? Might not the Lord say to you, "Doest thou well to be angry, so soon, — so often, — so long, — about such little things?"

[Jonah 4:5](#). *So Jonah went out of the city, —*

When, no doubt, everybody would have been willing to entertain him, for all, even to the king, must have felt a deep respect for the messenger who had brought them to their knees before the Lord: "Jonah went out of the city," —

[Jonah 4:5](#). *And sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city.*

To see those forty days out; half hoping, perhaps, that there would come an earthquake, to shake the city down; and then, under his little booth of boughs, he would not be hurt by the falling edifices. In as sulky and surly a spirit as he could be, he put himself to great inconveniences. The damp of the night fell on him, and the heat of the sun would soon wither up the branches. If, dear friends, like Jonah, you want to complain, you will soon have something to complain of. People who are resolved to fret, generally make for themselves causes for fretfulness.

[Jonah 4:6](#). *And the LORD God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd.*

Those who are angry with God show the littleness of their minds. "Little things please little minds;" so a gourd made Jonah glad.

[Jonah 4:7-8](#). *But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered. And it came to pass, when the*

sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, —

Jonah was soon up, and soon down. Yesterday, he “was exceeding glad of the gourd;” today, he is fainting because of the heat of the sun. If we allow our mercies to become too sweet to us, they will soon become, by their withdrawal, too bitter for us. When we feel too much affection for the creature, we shall soon find a great deal of affliction from the creature. “The sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die,” —

[Jonah 4:8-9](#). *And said, It is better for me to die than to live. And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death.*

He had gotten into such a bad spirit that he could even brave it out with his God. Oh, that we might be preserved from such an evil temper! It is well for us that, “Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.” When a child is in a fever, and says a great many naughty things, his father puts it down to the sickness rather than to the child. So it was with God’s poor fainting servant Jonah.

[Jonah 4:10-11](#). *Then said the LORD, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night: and should not I spare Nineveh, —*

“Nineveh, for which I have laboured; Nineveh, which I made to grow; Nineveh, which has been many years in the building; Nineveh, which contains multitudes of immortal souls which will not perish in a night: ‘Should not I spare Nineveh,’” —

[Jonah 4:11](#). *That great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; —*

This is always supposed to mean infants, and I judge that the supposition is a correct one. So Nineveh had a population of over one hundred and twenty thousand who were under two years old, so it must have been an immense city. Who can tell the blessing that even infants bring to us? It may be that God spares London for the sake of the children in it. What a deal the Lord Jesus Christ made of children! He suffered the little children to come unto him, and forbade them not. Does God care for children? Ay, that he does; and so should his servants! They are the better part of the human race; there is more in them that is admirable than there is in us who are grown up. They are, in many respects, a blessing to the city,

as these six-score thousand little ones were to Nineveh. But how singularly does God add —

[Jonah 4:11](#). *And also much cattle?*

Does God care for cattle? He does; and how that fact should teach his servants to be kind to all brute creatures! There is some truth in those lines of Coleridge, —

“He prayeth best, who loveth best All things, both great and small,”

for everything that lives should be the object of our care for the sake of him who gave them life; and if he has given us to have dominion over all sheep and oxen, and the birds of the air, and so forth, let not our dominion be that of a tyrant, but that of a kind and gentle prince who seeks the good of that which is under his power. Here ends the story of Jonah which he tells himself; and he did not add anything to it because nothing needs to be added. The Lord’s question to him was altogether unanswerable, and Jonah felt it to be so. Let us hope that, during the rest of his life, he so lived as to rejoice in the sparing mercy of God. He had stood outside the door, like the elder brother who was angry, and would not go in, and who said to his father,” Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: but as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.” But after his father had said to him, “Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine,” I hope that he went in, and I trust that Jonah also went in and lived with the penitent Ninevites, and that all were happy together in the love of the God who had been so gracious to them.

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CHAPTER 4

Verses 1-13

[Micah 4:1](#). *But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it.*

God's cause and kingdom shall not be hidden away in a corner: "the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains," an Alp upon other Alps, higher than all the other hills. The day is coming when the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ shall be the most conspicuous thing in the whole world, "and people shall flow unto it." The heathen, the people who knew nothing about it, shall flow to it like a great river.

[Micah 4:2](#). *And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths:*

That is the way the grace of God works in us; he teaches, and then we not only learn, but we obey.

[Micah 4:2-3](#). *For the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off;*

The kingdom of Christ, the Son of David, shall attract people and nations that were far off from the holy city where he lived and died.

[Micah 4:3](#). *And they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.*

They shall give up the study of the art of war. Their spirit shall be softened, in many cases renewed by grace and then they shall take to the useful arts; they shall not throw away their swords, but shall beat them into

ploughshares, they shall not hurl their spears into the earth, but shall bend them into scythes or pruning-hooks. Oh, that the day were come when the wealth and ingenuity and power of nations were used in the pursuits of peace instead of in the arts of war! This is the tendency of the kingdom of Christ, for wherever he comes, he makes peace. Nothing is more opposed to the spirit of Christianity than war; and when men are Christians, not in name only, but in deed and in truth, wars must cease.

[Micah 4:4](#). *But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree: and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken it.*

The best evidence that this will be the case is that the Lord of hosts, who has all power at his disposal, has said that it shall be so.

[Micah 4:5](#). *For all people will walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the LORD our God for ever and ever.*

When we learn to know God in truth, we do not give him up, but we walk in his name for ever and ever. God's covenant with us is an everlasting covenant, reaching beyond time, and enduring throughout eternity. Some nations have discarded their idol gods; but those who really know and love the Lord will walk in his name for ever and ever.

[Micah 4:6](#). *In that day, saith the LORD will I assemble her that halteth,*

—
God will bring to himself you that limp, that hesitate, that tremble, that fear: "I will assemble her that halteth," —

[Micah 4:6](#). *And I will gather her that is driven out —*

Hunted by Satan, and harassed by care, frightened by depression of spirit, "I will gather her that is driven out," —

[Micah 4:6](#). *And her that I have afflicted;*

If God has laid his hand upon one of you so that you have a special affliction from himself, you have this gracious promise that he will gather you to himself.

[Micah 4:7](#). *And I will make her that halted a remnant, and her that was cast far off a strong nation: and the LORD shall reign over them in mount Zion from henceforth, even for ever.*

Little scattered communities, churches which have been weak and feeble shall have the strengthening of God, and they shall be, through his sovereign grace, a remnant saved by grace to his praise and glory. Note how everything here is done by God; you keep on reading, "I will," "I will," "I

will.” Oh, those blessed “I wills” of God! Our wills are often defeated and disappointed, but God’s “I wills” stand fast for ever.

[Micah 4:8](#). *And thou, O tower of the flock, the stronghold of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion; the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem.*

So it did. “Beginning at Jerusalem,” was Christ’s order concerning the preaching of the gospel after his resurrection. The first servants of Christ were of that ancient people who might be called the “tower of the flock, the strong hold of the daughter of Zion.” Oh, that Christ would soon return in mercy to the —

“Chosen seed of Israel’s race,
A remnant weak and small,” —

and gather them to himself, for that would be the fullness of the Gentiles also!

[Micah 4:9](#). *Now why dost thou cry out aloud? is there no king in thee? is thy Counselor perished?*

Sometimes, our prayers may be the utterance of our fears rather than of our faith, and then the question comes, “Is there no king in thee? Is thy Counselor perished?” Can we not trust to him whose name is “Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace”?

[Micah 4:10](#). *For pangs have taken thee as a woman in travail.*

They are sharp pangs, but they lead to life, and therefore they are blessed pangs after all.

[Micah 4:10](#). *Be in pain, and labour to bring forth, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in travail: for now shalt thou go forth out of the city, and thou shalt dwell in the field, and thou shalt go even to Babylon: there shalt thou be delivered; there the LORD shall redeem thee from the hand of thine enemies.*

It looks more like a threat than a promise that God would send his people to Babylon, but there they were to be delivered; and it oftentimes happens with us that we must be brought into captivity before we are set free, we must feel the weight of the iron bondage of sin and Satan before we are brought out into the glorious liberty wherewith Christ makes his people free.

[Micah 4:11](#). *Now also many nations are gathered against thee, that say, Let her be defiled, and let our eye look upon Zion.*

All the enemies of Israel came together, hoping to destroy her, they saw that God had left her for a while in their hands, so they maliciously sought her destruction.

[Micah 4:12](#). *But they know not the thoughts of the LORD, —*

They had their own thoughts, and they thought that the Lord meant what they meant, — the entire destruction of the chosen race. So the prophet says, “But they know not the thoughts of the Lord,” —

[Micah 4:12](#). *Neither understand they his counsel: for he shall gather them as the sheaves into the floor.*

God let them come together, great hosts of them, like the sheaves of wheat upon the threshing-floor. Then see what the Lord says: —

[Micah 4:13](#). *Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion: for I will make thine horn iron, and I will make thy hoofs brass; and thou shalt beat in pieces many people:*

She was to be like the ox that treadeth out the corn, and she was to have horns of iron and hoofs of brass with which to break in pieces those that had oppressed her.

[Micah 4:13](#). *And I will consecrate their gain unto the LORD, and their substance unto the Lord of the whole earth.*

So that, when they expected to destroy her, she destroyed them, and there may come a day when all the great men and the wise men and the proud men of the world will come together to destroy the Church of Christ, but, oh, how mistaken they will be! For when their pride is at its height, then will the poor weak Church of Christ be suddenly strengthened by the Most High, and she shall tread them under her foot, and they shall be utterly defeated, to the praise of the glory of the God of Zion who liveth for ever and ever.

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Micah Chapter 5

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER 6

Verses 1-16

[Micah 6:1](#). *Hear ye now what the LORD saith;*

And yet some doubt the infallible inspiration of Scripture. I would commence every reading of the Scripture with such a word of admonition as this: "Hear ye now what the Lord saith." That is what the prophet said; but God spake by the prophet: "Hear ye now what the Lord saith."

[Micah 6:1](#). *Arise, contend thou before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice.*

As men were hardened, and turned away their ears, the prophet was bidden to speak to the mountains, those mountains which had been disfigured with the shrines of idols, with altars on every high hill, or, perhaps, those higher hills that were never cultivated, and that remained untouched by the defiling hand of men. God makes an appeal to these ancient things.

[Micah 6:2](#). *Hear ye, O mountains, the LORD'S controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth: for the LORD hath, a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel.*

It was wonderful condescension on God's part that he should deign to come as a defendant before the august court of the mountains, and in the presence of the deep foundations of the earth. It is a noble conception, in poetry most excellent; in grandeur, worthy of God. He made his appeal to the ancient hills to hear his pleading while he condescended to argue and ask his people why they had rejected their God, and turned aside to idols. Then he pleaded with Israel.

[Micah 6:3](#). *O my people, what have I done unto thee?*

"What but good, what but mercy, have I done unto thee?"

[Micah 6:3](#). *And wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me.*

He asks them to give any reason whatever why they had turned away from him. Beloved friends, have any of you, who are the people of God, grown cold in your love to him? Are you neglecting the service of the Most High? Are you beginning to trust in an arm of flesh? Are you seeking your pleasures in the world? Have you lost the love of your espousal, your first love to your blessed Lord? Then hear him plead with you. Be not as Israel was, but let the Lord speak to you rather than to the hills: "What have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me." O Lord, we have nothing to testify against thee! We have very much to testify for thee; and we blush to think that we have not done so oftener. Oh, that

we had felt more love to thee, and had borne a bolder and more consistent testimony to thy love, thy grace, thy faithfulness!

[Micah 6:4](#). *For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants; and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.*

God constantly refers to Israel's coming out of Egypt; on every great occasion he begins, "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." And to his people the Lord still says, "I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of slavery." Is it not so? Do we not still delight in his redeeming work, in the sprinkling of the blood of the Paschal Lamb, and in the high hand and outstretched arm with which the Lord delivered us from the bondage of our sin? Remember that thou also wast a bondman; forget not who bought thee, and with what price; remember who delivered thee, and led thee out, and with what mighty power. Remember this, and let thy cold love burn up again, and let thine indifference turn to enthusiasm. O Lord, revive thy people! The Lord further says to his people, "I sent before thee Moses (the lawgiver), Aaron (the priest), and Miriam (the prophetess);" one to teach thee, another to plead for thee, and to sacrifice for thee, and the third to sing for thee, to sing thy song of gladness at the Red Sea. God has given to his people many ministries in divers forms; and they are all concentrated in his Son, who is everything to us. Oh, by the greatness of his gifts to us, let us come back to our former love to him, and to something more than that!

[Micah 6:5](#). *O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal; that ye may know the righteousness of the LORD.*

Balak endeavored to get Balaam to curse the people of God; but they could not be overcome by human power. He sought to destroy them by superhuman agency; but Balaam's curses turned to blessings. God would not permit the false prophet to curse Israel; and he has in our case turned the curse of the great adversary into a blessing. He has delivered us, and our trials have strengthened us, and taught us more of God. Will we not remember this? Shittim was the last encampment on the further side of Jordan, Gilgal the first in the promised land; therefore they are united here with God's righteousnesses to his people, for the word is in the plural. It is a remarkable idiom: "That ye may know the righteousnesses of the Lord." He

is righteous always, in every way, towards everything, and under every aspect. I wish we knew this, for sometimes we begin to think that he deals harshly with us. When we are severely tried, we begin to doubt the righteousness of the Lord. Remember all that he has done to you from the first day to the last, “that ye may know the righteousness of the Lord.” Now the plaintiff takes up the case, but he, too, turns defendant, and asks what he can do to bring about a reconciliation.

[Micah 6:6-7](#). *Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?*

The people will give God everything but what he wants. They begin, you see, by saying that they will bring burnt offerings; they are ready to do that. The axe shall fall upon the head of numberless young bullocks, such as God demanded under the law. The people are ready enough for that sacrifice; and as for rams, they will shed their blood by thousands. If oil is wanted for the meat offering, rivers of it shall flow. When they have offered what God would have, they offer what he would not have, what God abhorred and loathed, for they offered to give their firstborn for their transgressions. They insulted Jehovah with the sacrifices of Moloch, with human slaughter, offering their children to obtain atonement for their sins. They were willing to go even that length, and to do anything but what God wants; and men will still give to God anything but what he asks for; majestic edifices, gorgeous services, ecstatic music, gold and silver; anything but what the Lord demands. Here is God’s answer:

[Micah 6:8](#). *He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?*

It was a spiritual worship that the Lord required; not externals, not outward gifts, but the heart. If thou wilt bring an offering, bring thyself; there is no other gift that the Lord so much desires. The prophet mentions three things that the Lord required of his people: “To do justly:” here are the equities of life. “To love mercy here are the kindnesses of life, which are to be rendered cheerfully. The prophet does not say, “to do mercy,” but to “love” it, to take a delight in it, to find great pleasure in the forgiveness of injuries, in the helping of the poor, in the cheering of the sick, in the

teaching of the ignorant, in the winning back of sinners to the ways of God. "And to walk humbly with thy God." These are the things which please him; and when we are in Christ, and he becomes our righteousness, these are the sacrifices with which God is well pleased; they make an offering of a sweet smell, a holy incense which we may present before him. Talk no more of your outward ordinances, your will-worship, with abundance of music, or human eloquence and learning, and what not. These things delight not the Lord; no offering is acceptable unless the outward conduct shows that the heart is right with him.

[Micah 6:9](#). *The LORD'S voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name: hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it.*

God's voice to his people is often uttered by means of their affliction. "Hear ye the rod." He wishes us to understand that judgments and calamities are his voice crying to the city. Oh, that we were men of wisdom, that we would hear what God has to say! Alas! Israel did not hear, and Judah would not listen, even to God's own voice!

[Micah 6:10](#). *Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and the scant measure that is abominable?*

Here he comes to practical details. In Micah's day, men had grown rich by oppression, by a want of justice; they had wronged their fellow men, and God asked them whether they expected to be pleasing to him when their houses were full of treasure which they had virtually stolen by giving scant measure and short weight. God condescends even to point out these minute particulars of moral conduct, and so should his servants do. It is not for us, his ministers, to be soaring into the clouds, to astonish you with the grandeur of our thoughts and words; but to come to your shops, to look at your bushel-measures and your pecks, your yard-sticks and your weights.

[Micah 6:11-12](#). *Shall I count them pure with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights? For the rich men thereof are full of violence, and the inhabitants thereof have spoken lies, and their tongue is deceitful in their mouth.*

They were, I suppose, very much what Orientals are still; you cannot trade with them without having need of more than two eyes. Their price has to be beaten down; their quantities must be counted. God would not have his people like this. He says nothing about the Moabites or the Babylonians doing this, but for his people to do it was very grievous to him.

[Micah 6:13](#). *Therefore also will I make thee sick in smiting thee, in making thee desolate because of thy sins.*

They lied, and they cheated; so God would give them a sorry tongue, betokening their ill-health. He would make their present distress to get worse and worse, till they should be sick through their wounds.

[Micah 6:14](#). *Thou shalt eat, but not be satisfied;*

The satisfaction that comes to us through eating is of his mercy, and when he wills, he can say, "Thou shalt eat, but not be satisfied."

[Micah 6:14](#). *And thy casting down shall he in the midst of thee;*

"Thou shalt feel an inward sinking; even when thou hast eaten, thou shalt be faint, as a man who has eaten nothing."

[Micah 6:14](#). *And thou shalt take hold, but shalt not deliver; and that which thou deliverest will I give up to the sword.*

So that in every project they would be disappointed; in every design they would be frustrated, because God would be against them.

[Micah 6:15](#). *Thou shalt sow, but thou shalt not reap; thou shalt tread the olives, but thou shalt not anoint thee with oil; and sweet wine, but shalt not drink wine.*

God can let men have every form of outward prosperity, and yet make nothing of it. I fear that some, perhaps some present, have every outward religious blessing; yet nothing comes of it. You hear sermons, you come to meetings, you tread the olives, but you are not anointed with the oil. The grapes are in the wine-vat; but you drink not the wine. God save us from that sad condition!

[Micah 6:16](#). *For the statutes of Omri are kept,*

They would not keep the statutes of God; but they could keep the foul statutes of Omri, which appear to have been specially objectionable to God.

[Micah 6:16](#). *And all the works of the house of Ahab, and ye walk in their counsels;*

He was an arch rebel against God. Remember his murder of Naboth to get his vineyard; and these people followed his evil example.

[Micah 6:16](#). *That I should make thee a desolation, and the inhabitants thereof an hissing: therefore ye shall bear the reproach of my people.*

Very hard was it to bear that reproach, when there would be none of the comforts of the Spirit to go with it. There are some professors who bear the reproach of Christ, but will never share his crown; that is a fearful state of things. Gladly enough would we take up that reproach that we may be truly

his; but if we profess to be God's people, and act inconsistently, we shall bear all the reproach, but have nothing to sustain us under it. O Lord, of thy mercy, save us from this!

MICAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 7

Verses 1-20

The prophet begins in a sorrowful strain, and there is much that is said in the chapter, yet there is also much of holy confidence in God.

Micah 7:1. *Woe is me! for I am as when they have gathered the summer fruits, as the grape gleanings of the vintage: there is no cluster to eat: my soul desired the first ripe fruit.*

It is a terrible thing for a good man to find good men growing very scarce, and to see wicked men becoming more wicked than ever. It makes him feel his loneliness very keenly, and joy seems to be banished from his heart.

Micah 7:2. *The good man is perished out of the earth: and there is none upright among men: they all lie in wait for blood; they hunt every man his brother with a net.*

Those were sad times in which Micah lived; and yet, under some aspects, one might be willing and even glad to live in such times, for, if ever one could be useful to one's fellows, surely it would be then. God had need of a voice like that of the prophet Micah in the days when his worship was forsaken, and the true faith had almost died out among men. Unless God had left a Micah here and there, the land would have been as Sodom, and have been made like unto Gomorrah. So the more unpleasant the age was to the good man, the more necessary and profitable was he to that age.

Micah 7:3. *That they may do evil with both hands earnestly,*

I wish the professed followers of Christ did good with both hands, that is, with every faculty, with every capacity, in every way, and at every opportunity, just as wicked men "do evil with both hands earnestly."

Micah 7:3. *The prince asketh, and the judge asketh for a reward; and the great man, he uttereth his mischievous desire: so they wrap it up.*

Honesty seemed to have died out of the nation; the highest people in the land, who ought to have been beyond the power of bribery, sold the

administration of justice to the highest bidder. Ah, those were ill times indeed.

[Micah 7:4](#). *The best of them is as a brier: the most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge: the day of thy watchmen and thy visitation cometh; now shall be their perplexity.*

Sin brings sorrow in its train; and, as nations will have no future as nations, God deals with national sin here upon earth, and visits it with national punishments. Now that sin had become so rampant in Israel, it would be the time of their perplexity, and when sins, like chickens, come home to roost, then will be the time of the sinner's perplexity. He lets his sins fly abroad, and thinks that, like the wandering birds of the air, they will soon be gone, and he shall never see them again, but they will all come home to him, and he shall be made bitterly to rue the day in which he thought that he could make a profit by transgressing the righteous law of the Lord.

[Micah 7:5](#). *Trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide: keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom.*

So saturated with dishonesty had the nation become that the evil had penetrated even into domestic life, so that, where all should have been in a state of mutual happy confidence, the prophet felt bound to tell them that each confidence could not exist between those who appeared to be friends, or even between husbands and wives.

[Micah 7:6](#). *For the son dishonoureth the father, the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter in law against her mother in law; a man's enemies are the men of his own house.*

And this is true in a measure still, for, without the fear of God, you will find that even the nearest and dearest relationships will not keep the unconverted from being the enemies of the godly. In that respect, a gracious man cannot trust her that lieth in his bosom, if she be not a true child of God.

Now mark the grandeur of faith. Set this white spot right in the middle of the black darkness of which we have been reading:-

[Micah 7:7](#). *Therefore I will look unto the LORD-*

There was nowhere else for the prophet to look. According to what he tells us, all men had become false; "therefore," says he, "I will look unto Jehovah;"-

[Micah 7:7-8](#). *I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me. Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be a light unto me.*

And this is all the light that God's people need. Even if it be the darkness of a black Egyptian night into which our spirit has fallen, yet, if God shall but appear to us, there shall soon be light for us. Dr. Watts truly sang,-

“In darkest shades, if he appear,
My dawning is begun;
He is my soul's sweet morning star,
And he my rising sun.”

[Micah 7:9](#). *I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness.*

Listen to this testimony of the prophet, tried child of God; even when in your own household you find enemies, put your trust in God, for he will yet appear to deliver you. Let this be your joy. Sit still in humble patience, and “bear the indignation of the Lord,” for, even though trouble is laid upon you, it is not so heavy as it might have been, and it is not so severe as it would have been if the Lord had dealt with you in strict justice. Therefore in patience possess your soul, and wait quietly before your God. Be not without hope, expect that he will plead your cause and that he will execute judgment for you; watch for his light, which will most surely come, and in which you shall behold, not your own righteousness, but his.

[Micah 7:10](#). *Then she that is mine enemy shall see it, and shame shall cover her which said unto me, Where is the LORD thy God? mine eyes shall behold her: now shall she be trodden down as the mire of the streets.*

This verse relates to the nation which, at that time, was oppressing Israel. She should have her turn of suffering for she should be crushed beneath Jehovah's foot as the mire is trodden in the streets.

[Micah 7:11-12](#). *In the day that thy walls are to be built, in that day shall the decree be far removed. In that day also he shall come even to thee from Assyria, and from the fortified cities, and from the fortress even to the river, and from sea to sea, and from mountain to mountain.*

This is what was to befall those who had sinned against God, and oppressed his people; he would let loose the oppressors upon them, and they should find foes in every quarter.

[Micah 7:13](#). *Notwithstanding the land shall be desolate because of them that dwell therein, for the fruit of their doings.*

That is a wonderful expression, “the fruit of their doings.” All doings bear fruit of one kind or another, and sinful doings bear bitter and deadly fruit. Woe to the man who is made to eat the fruit of his own doings! That which men eat on earth they may have to digest in hell, and there shall they lie for ever digesting the terrible morsels which they ate with so much gusto here below.

[Micah 7:14](#). *Feed thy people with thy rod, the flock of thine heritage, which dwell solitarily in the wood, in the midst of Carmel: let them feed in Bashan and Gilead, as in the days of old.*

Sometimes, there are pastures in the very center of woods, and God’s people in Micah’s day were like a little flock of sheep hidden away from their enemies in the midst of a wood, but God will bring them out by-and-by to far larger liberty. They shall yet have Bashan and Gilead to be their pasture, “ as in the days of old; “ and so the little one shall become a thousand, and the small one a great nation, and they that were hidden away because of their many enemies shall have such liberty that everywhere they shall worship and praise the Lord their God.

[Micah 7:15-17](#). *According to the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt will I show unto him marvelous things. The nations shall see and be confounded at all their might: they shall lay their hand upon their mouth, their ears shall be deaf: They shall lick the dust like a serpent, they shall move out of their holes like worms of the earth: they shall be afraid of the LORD our God, and shall fear because of thee.*

The day will come when there shall be such a fear of the people of God upon those who formerly persecuted them that they shall tremble before the Lord, and be afraid of the very people whom once they derided and oppressed.

[Micah 7:18](#). *Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy.*

He never delights in anger, especially in anger against his own people. That is but temporary anger, and is, after all, only another form of love, for the parental anger which hates sin in a dear child is but love on fire. May God never permit us to sin without being thus angry with us! We might almost beseech him never to tolerate sin in us, but to smite us with the rod

rather than suffer us to be happy in the midst of evil. Perhaps the worst of horrors is peace in the midst of iniquity, happiness while yet sin is all round about us.

[Micah 7:19](#). *He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us, he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.*

We read about their sins in the earlier part of the chapter; and what a horrible catalogue of evils it was, yet here we read, “ Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth inquiry?” Even those mountainous sins of which the prophet writes, the Lord will tear up by their roots, and cast them into the depths of the sea.

[Micah 7:20](#). *Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old.*

There is our comfort, our God is the covenant-keeping God who will perform every promise that he has made. Even “if we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.” Blessed be his holy name.

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CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

Nahum

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SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER 2

Verses 11-13

This is a prophecy of the destruction of Nineveh. Remember that Assyria had been one of the great powers that swayed the world, a cruel,

tyrannical empire; and God at last determined to destroy Nineveh, which was its seat of government. In a high poetical strain, the prophet cries out,

[Nahum 2:11](#). *Where is the dwelling of the lions, and the feedingplace of the young lions, where the lion, even the old lion, walked, and the lion's whelp, and none made them afraid?*

You will remember how Mr. Layard took out of the ruins at Nineveh those immense lions that now stand in the British Museum. They were the very type of this great empire, that boasted itself in its lion-like strength and ferocity. So the prophet cries, "Where is the lair of the lion?"

[Nahum 2:12](#). *The lion did tear in pieces enough for his whelps, and strangled for his lionesses, and filled his holes with prey, and his dens with ravin.*

They were always destroying, and plundering, and carrying home the spoil, so that everybody was fattened with the rapine of the nations.

[Nahum 2:13](#). *Behold, I am against thee, saith the LORD of hosts,*

And whenever that is the case, a man does not need any other adversary. If God be against you, O my dear hearer, what will become of you? Though you should have all the power of the world, and possess robust health, abundant riches, and keen wit, what can you do against God? "I am against thee, saith Jehovah of hosts." He throws down the gauntlet to Nineveh.

[Nahum 2:13](#). *And I will burn her chariots in the smoke, and the sword shall devour thy young lions: and I will cut off thy prey from the earth, and the voice of thy messengers shall no more be heard.*

It is time that they were stopped. You remember in what foul-mouthed language Rabshakeh addressed king Hezekiah; and God now declares that there shall be no more such letters as his. God may allow evil to lord it over his people for a while; but he puts a hook in the mouth of the leviathan by-and-by. He that restraineth the sea and the waves thereof, Jehovah is his name, and he restraineth the wickedness of men.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Nahum 2:11-13](#); [Nahum 2:3](#).

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CHAPTER 3

Verses 1-19

[Nahum 3:1](#). *Woe to the bloody city! it is all full of lies and robbery; the prey departeth not;*

Assyria became a great empire through violence, falsehood, and robbery. The soldiery had no respect for justice; they trod out the last spark of liberty, and crushed all nations under their feet.

[Nahum 3:2-3](#). *The noise of a whip, and the noise of the rattling of the wheels, and of the prancing horses, and of the jumping chariots. The horseman lifteth up both the bright sword and the glittering spear: and there is a multitude of slain, and a great number of carcasses; and there is none end of their corpses; they stumble upon their corpses:*

When the Medo-Babylonian army came against the great city, it inflicted a terrible slaughter, killing the inhabitants without mercy, making a very holocaust of human bodies; but, inasmuch as it was a den of criminals, this horrible execution was well deserved. Yet is the story dreadful.

[Nahum 3:4-5](#). *Because of the multitude of the whoredoms of the well favoured harlot, the mistress of witchcrafts, that selleth nations through her whoredoms, and families through her witchcrafts. Behold, I am against thee, saith the LORD of hosts;*

These people had been steeped in sin of the worst kind, they had led other nations into it; and had practiced the witchcrafts which God abhors. Therefore again Jehovah says, "I am against thee." When God is in arms against a triumphant nation, he soon makes an end of it.

[Nahum 3:5-6](#). *And I will discover thy skirts upon thy face, and I will shew the nations thy nakedness, and the kingdoms thy shame. And I will cast abominable filth upon thee, and make thee vile, and will set thee as a gazingstock.*

See what God can do. They were the proudest of the proud, and now he makes them the scorn of the scorner, and sets them as a gazingstock. May God never deal in that way with any proud man here! He can easily do it; when we set ourselves up to be little gods, he can soon make us utterly mean and contemptible, and bring us down to nothing at all. It is his way to deal thus with the proud.

[Nahum 3:7](#). *And it shall come to pass, that all they that look upon thee shall flee from thee, and say, Nineveh is laid waste: who will bemoan her? whence shall I seek: comforters for thee?*

If you could go today, and see the vast heaps of Kouyunjik, and of the great monuments of that mighty city all destroyed and crumbling into

powder, you would know something of what God can do. It does not look likely to you that London can ever become a heap of ruins; and yet it may be, for its sins reek up to heaven as the sins of Nineveh did. The Lord can smite this city as he smote that.

[Nahum 3:8](#). *Art thou better than populous No, that was situate among the rivers, that had the waters round about it, whose rampart was the sea, and her wall was from the sea?*

The prophet quotes the destruction of the city called No-Amon, probably Thebes, as an instance of what God can do.

[Nahum 3:9](#). *Ethiopia and Egypt were her strength, and it was infinite;*

There seemed to be no measure to her strength. If she wanted assistance from other nations, she had only to call them in, and the mercenary tribes were ready to defend her.

[Nahum 3:9-10](#). *Put and Lubim were thy helpers. Yet was she carried away, she went into captivity: her young children also were dashed in pieces at the top of all the streets: and they cast lots for her honourable men, and all her great men were bound in chains.*

So one city is a warning to another. No in Egypt is a warning to Nineveh in Assyria, and both of these a warning to our city, and a warning to every man who is proud, and haughty, and domineering, and oppressive to the poor, great in his own wisdom, and careless for the comfort of others.

[Nahum 3:11](#). *Thou also shalt be drunken: thou shalt be hid, thou also shalt seek strength because of the enemy.*

Nineveh never dreamed of doing that; she said, "I am a queen, I shall see no sorrow; I am the greatest of all cities."

[Nahum 3:12](#). *All thy strongholds shall be like fig trees with the first ripe figs: if they be shaken, they shall even fall into the mouth of the eater.*

As figs do when they are ripe. These castles, towers, fortresses, built to stand the siege, would be no sooner attacked than they would fall into the hand of the enemy.

[Nahum 3:13](#). *Behold, thy people in the midst of thee are women:*

You see, on those great Assyrian stones, the strong men that are sculptured there, with their enormous muscles, telling of gigantic force. When God came to deal with them, they became weak and cowardly.

[Nahum 3:13-14](#). *The gates of thy land shall be set wide open unto thine enemies: the fire shall devour thy bars. Draw thee waters for the siege,*

The prophet challenges them to defend themselves.

[Nahum 3:14](#). *Fortify thy strong holds: go into clay, and tread the mortar, make strong the brickkiln.*

That was, to mend the walls whenever they were broken. They did this with great industry. “Do it,” says God, “yet you shall not be able to stand.”

[Nahum 3:15-17](#). *There shall the fire devour thee; the sword shall cut thee off, it shall eat thee up like the cankerworm: make thyself many as the cankerworm, make thyself many as the locusts. Thou hast multiplied thy merchants above the stars of heaven: the cankerworm spoileth, and fleeth away. Thy crowned are as the locusts, and thy captains as the great grasshoppers, which camp in the hedges in the cold day, but when the sun ariseth they flee away, and their place is not known where they are.*

What marvellous poetry is this! How terrible! Their soldiers, their rulers, their captains, were as many as the locusts and the grasshoppers; but when they were wanted, all these hosts would flee, away. What cannot God do when he comes out to fight with men? “The Lord is a man of war; the Lord is his name.” He brings confusion to his enemies. Oh, fight not against him! Beloved, let us be at peace with him, the strong and mighty God. Let us confess our faults to him, acquaint ourselves with him, and be at peace.

[Nahum 3:18](#). *Thy shepherds slumber, O king of Assyria*

They who should have taken care of the people, the chief governors, neglected them; they who should have defended the people were out of the way when they were wanted: “Thy shepherds slumber, O king of Assyria.”

[Nahum 3:18](#). *Thy nobles shall dwell in the dust: thy people is scattered upon the mountains, and no man gathereth them.*

Let not the same be said of London. Are there any who can say, “No man careth for my soul”? Let them not be without a helper.

“Oh, come, let us go and find them!

In the paths of death they roam;

At the close of the day ‘twill be sweet to say, ‘I have brought some lost one home.’”

Brothers and sisters, rouse yourselves; be shepherds to the people of this modern Nineveh, and seek to gather the scattered flock of Christ.

[Nahum 3:19](#). *There is no healing of thy bruise; thy wound is grievous:*

Thank God, we have not come to that point yet, there is healing for the bruised sinner! Though the wounds of our people are grievous, there is a balm for them; we know where it is, and what it is; let us not be slow to tell them about it.

[Nahum 3:19](#). *All that hear the bruit of thee shall clap the hands over thee:*

I think that is the old Norman-French word, “bruit,” signifying noise or tumult, that has been left in our Bible.

[Nahum 3:19](#). *For upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually?*

Nineveh had been so wicked, and had done so much evil, that when men heard that it was destroyed, they would even clap their hands for very joy that such an evil-doer was out of the way.

I know not to what purpose I was moved to read this passage; but it is specially meant for some one, to whom may God apply it by his Spirit!

This exposition consisted of readings from [Nahum 2:11-13](#); [Nahum 2:3](#).

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CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

Habakkuk

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CHAPTER 2

Verses 1-11

[Habakkuk 2:1](#). *I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved.*

“I shall look to God, and I shall also look to myself. There shall be an expectation as I gaze upward to my Lord, and there shall also be an examination as I look within at my empty, guilty, good-for-nothing self.”

[Habakkuk 2:2](#). *And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it.*

The prophets were accustomed to write their messages upon wax tablets, and the Lord bade Habakkuk thus write what he had seen. God would have both his law and his gospel plainly revealed to men, so that they might know and understand his will. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “We use great plainness of speech;” and the Lord would have all his servants do likewise. It is not for us to bury the gospel under a mass of fine words, but to set it forth in the simplest and clearest possible language; for it is not the power of human words that God blesses, but the truth itself as it is applied to the heart by his Spirit.

[Habakkuk 2:3](#). *For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.*

Is that a contradiction,—“Though it tarry,.... it will not tarry” ? No; to us, it appears to tarry; but, in God’s way of reckoning, it does not really tarry. To our impatient spirits, it seems long in coming; but God knows that it will not be a moment beyond the appointed time.

[Habakkuk 2:4](#). *Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.*

This grand text was quoted by Paul when he wrote his Epistles to the Romans, the Galatians, and the Hebrews. It proves that Old Testament saints understood New Testament life. David and Abraham lived by faith, even as Paul and Peter and the other apostles did.

[Habakkuk 2:5](#). *Yea also, because he transgresseth by wine, he is a proud man, neither keepeth at home, who enlargeth his desire as hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all people:*

This was spoken of the Chaldeans, an ambitious nation so exceedingly greedy that it seemed as if the whole world would not be large enough to satisfy their voracious appetite. Their great kings enlarged their mouths like Gehenna, and they seemed as insatiable as the very maw of death itself.

They heaped up nation upon nation to make a huge empire for themselves.

[Habakkuk 2:6](#). *Shall not all these take up a parable against him, and a taunting proverb against him, and say, Woe to him that increaseth that which is not his! how long? and to him that ladeth himself with thick clay!*

That which is said of ambition may also be said of covetousness. What an idle task it is for a man to go on perpetually hoarding,— heaping together more than he can possibly enjoy himself, as if it were made for nobody but for one man, and he must needs grasp all the wealth of the world. There is scope enough for the loftiest ambition when you seek the nobler joys of grace; there is room for a sacred covetousness when you “covet earnestly the best gifts;” but, in every other respect, may these two things — ambition and covetousness — be ever thrust far from us!

[Habakkuk 2:7](#). *Shall they not rise up suddenly that shall bite thee, and awake that shall vex thee, and thou shalt be for booties unto them?*

So it happened to Chaldea that the nations, which they had spoiled, by- and-

by grew strong enough to take vengeance upon them, and to spoil them in their turn. Usually, when men do wrong, it comes home to them sooner or later. The chickens they hatch come home to roost; at night, at any rate, if not before. Towards the end of life, a man begins to gather the fruit of his doings; or if he does not reap it in this world, certainly he will in the world to come.

[Habakkuk 2:8-9](#). *Because thou hast spoiled many nations, all the remnant of the people shall spoil thee; because of men's blood, and for the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein. Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power of evil!*

He fancies, when he gets rich by oppressing others, that he will himself rise out of harm's way. He says that he will make the main chance sure, He who has plenty of gold fancies that he will be able to preserve himself from sorrow; but this is what God has to say about that matter:

[Habakkuk 2:10-11](#). *Thou hast consulted shame to thy house by cutting off many people and hast sinned against thy soul. For the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it.*

These Chaldeans were great builders, as we know by the vast ruins that still remain; and most of their buildings were erected by labour exacted from the people whom they oppressed. They received no wages for their work; so even today, from the ruins, the stone cries out of the wall, and the

beam out of the timber answers it. Let all men know that, sooner or later, God will execute justice even upon the greatest nations. If they will be destroyers, they shall be destroyed. Their evil policy shall, by-and-by, sweep them away. "There is a something in the world," says one, "that makes for righteousness." Indeed there is, only it is more than a something; it is God himself who is ever working in all things towards the vindication of his own righteous and holy law.

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CHAPTER 1

Verses 1-15

[Haggai 1:1-2](#). *In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, in the first day of the month, came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet unto Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying. This people say, The time is not come, the time that the LORD'S house should be built.*

God keeps an almanac, and the date on which he speaks is always important. There is a set time for each of his messages to come to men, and God would have them give heed to every message as soon as it is delivered

to them. If they do not, he keeps count of the days of their delay; and therefore he is particular in causing his servants to record the exact date when his message was delivered: "In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, in the first day of the month, came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet unto Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest." Oh that God would make this very day notable in our history by speaking to the hearts of many here! Notice, too, that God also takes care to direct his messages to those for whom they are intended. The word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet unto Zerubbabel and to Joshua. God knows to whom his message is specially addressed today, and he will not let it miss its mark. Oh, that someone here would cry unto him, and say, "Lord, speak to me, as thou didst to Zerubbabel; and not to me only, but to such-and-such another, as thou didst to Joshua." "Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, This people say." So that the Lord notes what people say, and in due time he reminds them of what they have said. Sometimes, he makes men eat their own words; but, if not, he at least recalls them to their remembrance: "This people say, The time is not come, the time that Jehovah's house should be built." Delay has always been one of the strongest of Satan's temptations even with God's own people, who far too often say, even concerning his work which they know ought to be done, "The time is not come." How much more would be done for God if we would all do at once what ought to be done! We could then go on to something else, and make our lives still more useful and fruitful. But we delay so long the carrying out of one good purpose that there remains no opportunity for another. If any of you Christian people are tempted to put off some service for God which lies upon your heart, I pray you to remember your Lord's words, and to imitate his prompt action, "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work."

[Haggai 1:3-4](#). *Then came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying, Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste?*

"There seems to be time enough for you to enjoy the luxuries of life, but not time for you to rebuild the temple of the Lord; time enough for you to get rich, but not time for you to serve God; time enough for you to spend your labour upon anything for yourself, but not upon the house of your

God!” What a rebuke was this to those who professed to be the Lord’s people!

[Haggai 1:5](#). *Now therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; consider your ways.*

“Just look back a little, and see what have already been the consequences of looking to yourselves, and not to your God; have you gained anything by so acting?”

[Haggai 1:6](#). *Ye have sown much, and bring in little;*

“You have sown much to yourselves, but little to God; what has your sowing brought in to you?”

[Haggai 1:6](#). *Ye eat, but ye have not enough;*

“Those of you who do seem to prosper are not content with what you have. Peace of mind does not come with it; you are not happy.”

[Haggai 1:6](#). *Ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink;*

“You are as thirsty as ever after all your drinking from the earthly cistern, yet you still crave for more of that drink which can never quench your soul’s thirst.”

[Haggai 1:6](#). *Ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put into a bag with holes.*

How often does this happen! Yet what folly it is for a man to work hard, and earn wages, and then put the money into a bag with holes, and so lose it all!

[Haggai 1:7-9](#). *Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways. Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the LORD. Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the LORD of hosts. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house.*

Again I beg you to note what a stern rebuke this was, yet how richly was it deserved! God had done great things for his people; he had brought them back from Babylon to Jerusalem, and their first concern should have been to rebuild the temple which had been destroyed. But every man was more concerned for his own house than for the house of the Lord, and, therefore, no good could come of whatever they did, or whatever they had. “I did blow upon it,” said the Lord; and when God blows upon whatever a man has, or upon whatever a man does, he soon blows it away, as the marginal reading says.

[Haggai 1:10-11](#). *Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit. And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon that which the ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labour of the hands.*

We are dependent upon God for everything, and sometimes he makes use of the ordinary laws of nature to be a chastisement to those who forget him. If we will not be reminded of him by his mercies, we shall be reminded by his judgments; and if, as stewards, we do not make a proper use of that which he entrusts to us, he can easily take it all away.

[Haggai 1:12](#). *Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the LORD their God had sent him, and the people did fear before the LORD.*

What a blessing it is when faithful testimony is thus received! Sometimes it happens that people get angry, and hate the preacher who too plainly rebukes them for their sins; but when the Spirit of God works within them, they take heed to what is said, and receive the preacher's message as from God himself.

[Haggai 1:13](#). *Then spake Haggai the LORD'S messenger in the LORD'S message unto the people, saying, I am with you, saith the LORD.*

Haggai was the Lord's messenger, so he did not utter his own words; but he "spake in the Lord's message unto the people, saying, I am with you, saith Jehovah." He was with them, so they were with him; and it is the same with us if we are true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, for he says to us, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world;" and if we have the presence of God, we have all that we need.

[Haggai 1:14-15](#). *And the LORD stirred up the Spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and did work in the house of the LORD of hosts, their God, in the four and twentieth day of the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king.*

God takes note of the time when his people work for him; he records, in his almanac, the day, the month, the year, for he loves to see his people actively engaged in his service.

This exposition consisted of readings from Haggai 1, 2

HAGGAI CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2

Verses 1-9

[Haggai 2:1](#). *In the seventh month, in the one and twentieth day of the month.*

Not very long after.

[Haggai 2:2-3](#). *Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest and to the residue of the people, saying, Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?*

It appears that the spirit of idleness had broken out again. As the walls began to rise the older men wept at the recollection of what an inferior structure it would be, compared with the former building of Solomon, and the idolaters, ready enough to get an excuse, are ready enough to cease work. Therefore, God's prophet is at it again. If the fire begins to die out, the bellows must be used again. The zeal of the Christian is very like the zeal of these men of Jerusalem — very apt to flag; and the zeal of God's messenger must come to stir them up again.

[Haggai 2:5-6](#). *According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not. For thus saith the LORD of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while,*

Though as some read it, it is "but a little structure," but our reading is, perhaps, better — it is but a little while.

[Haggai 2:6-9](#). *And I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the LORD of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the LORD of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the LORD of hosts.*

Clearly encouraging them to proceed with their work.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Haggai 1:1](#) to [Haggai 2:9](#); [Hebrews 7:15-28](#).

Verses 1-23

[Haggai 2:1](#). *In the seventh month, in the one and twentieth day of the month, came the word of the LORD by the prophet Haggai, saying,*

God's people need to be spoken to very often; and every time God speaks to them, he takes account of it. Let us do the same: let us not think it is such an unimportant matter for us to hear a gospel sermon that we need not take note when we hear it. Oh, that the Word of the Lord were more precious to us in these days! Let us praise God for it, and not reckon it to be so common a thing that we take no more notice of it than we do of eating our breakfast or sitting down to our supper.

[Haggai 2:2-3](#). *Speak now to Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and to the residue of the people, saying Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?*

There could not have been many persons left who had seen Solomon's temple. If any such were still living at that time, they must have been extremely aged persons; yet there were many there whose fathers had seen it, and who had heard from their fathers, when they sat upon their knees as children, what a glorious place the house of God had been in Solomon's day.

[Haggai 2:4](#). *Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the LORD and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the LORD, and work: for I am with you, saith the LORD of hosts:*

This is the second time that Haggai was sent with this message. It was so rich, so full, so divinely encouraging, that the Lord might well repeat it: "I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts."

[Haggai 2:5-7](#). *According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not. For thus saith the LORD of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts.*

So it happened that, to the second temple, the Babe of Bethlehem was brought, that glorious "Desire of all nations" whom we worship; and thus it came to pass that the glory of the second house was, after all, far greater than the glory of the first.

[Haggai 2:8](#). *The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the LORD of hosts.*

The released captives had not much of it with which to build the second temple, but God had all that was needed, and he was willing to supply them with enough for all the needs of the great work which they had undertaken in his name.

[Haggai 2:9](#). *The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the LORD of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the LORD of hosts.*

The Prince of peace gave peace to many in that second temple.

[Haggai 2:10](#). *In the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying,*

Here is another message from the Lord, and the date of its delivery is as carefully noted as the dates of those that had preceded it.

[Haggai 2:11-14](#). *Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Ask now the priests concerning the law, saying, If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any meat, shall it be holy? And the priests answered and said, No. Then said Haggai, If one that is unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean. Then answered Haggai, and said, So is this people, and so is this nation before me, saith the LORD, and so is every work of their hands; and that which they offer there is unclean.*

That which is ceremonially holy cannot communicate its holiness to that which is unclean; but that which is unclean, in the eyes of the law, can communicate its uncleanness to anything that touches it. These people, being themselves defiled with sin, could not bring to God either acceptable service or acceptable offerings.

[Haggai 2:15-17](#). *And now, I pray you, consider from this day and upward, from before a stone was laid upon a stone in the temple of the LORD: since those days were, when one came to an heap of twenty measures, there were but ten: when one came to the press vat for to draw out fifty vessels out of the press, there were but twenty. I smote you with blasting and with mildew and with hail in all the labours of your hands; yet ye turned not to me, saith the LORD.*

How often, in these two chapters, the word “Consider” occurs! And this subject of the Lord’s chastisement was well worthy of his people’s earnest and solemn consideration, yet they were not brought to repentance by all that they suffered.

[Haggai 2:18-19](#). *Consider now from this day and upward, from the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, even from the day that the foundation of the LORD’s temple was laid, consider it. Is the seed yet in the barn? yea, as yet the vine, and the fig tree, and the pomegranate, and the olive tree, hath not brought forth: from this day will I bless you.*

That was indeed a memorable day in their history; I trust that many of us can also remember such a notable day in our life, when the Lord said to us, “From this day will I bless you.”

[Haggai 2:20-23](#). *And again the word of the LORD came unto Haggai in the four and twentieth day of the month, saying, Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I will shake the heavens and the earth; and I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen; and I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them, and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother.*

In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith the LORD, and I will make thee as a signet: for I have chosen thee, saith the LORD of hosts.

This exposition consisted of readings from Haggai 1, 2

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CHAPTER 7

Verses 1-14

[Zechariah 7:1](#). *And it came to pass in the fourth year of king Darius, that the word of the LORD came unto Zechariah in the fourth day of the ninth month, even in Chisleu;*

God's prophets were not always in the spirit, and when the Word of God came to them, it was a notable day, and they marked it in their diary. I think that we, too, who are not prophets can remember some special time when God's Word was peculiarly precious to us. We can put down "the fourth day of the ninth month."

[Zechariah 7:2-3](#). *When they had sent unto the house of God Sherezer and Regemmelech, and their men, to pray before the LORD, And to speak unto the priests which were in the house of the LORD of hosts, and to the prophets, saying, Should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself, as I have done these so many years?*

On that day the Jews had kept a fast to commemorate the terrible calamity which happened to the temple in the time of Nebuchadnezzar. Now these people were living away in Babylon, and it occurred to them that, as the temple was now building and Jerusalem was restored, it was a question whether they ought to keep that fast any longer, it was not kept by divine command. It was a fast of their own inventing, and the question was whether they ought not to abandon it when things had so changed; so they sent messengers to the temple to inquire of the priests and of the prophets, and to pray to God himself. When we have a difficult question lying on the conscience, it is well to settle it, and not allow it to rest on the heart unsatisfied.

[Zechariah 7:4-5](#). *Then came the word of the LORD of hosts unto me, saying, Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even to me?*

There is the point. You can fast to self. You can fast to your own pride. If we have no thought of honouring God in our fasting, there is nothing in it. The question is, "Did ye at all fast unto me, even to me?"

[Zechariah 7:6](#). *And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did not ye eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves?*

If a holy feast is not kept with a view to God, it is not kept at all. It is a feast to yourselves. You have missed the mark altogether.

[Zechariah 7:7](#). *Should ye not hear the words which the LORD hath cried by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and in prosperity, and the cities thereof round about her, when men inhabited the south and the plain?*

Well, what was that word? Zechariah has it fresh from God, and he states it.

[Zechariah 7:8-10](#). *And the word of the LORD came unto Zechariah, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother: And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart.*

This is what God said — most just, most fit for God to require of his people.

[Zechariah 7:11-12](#). *But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, they should not hear. Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone lest they should hear the law, and the words which the LORD of hosts hath sent in his spirit by the former prophets: therefore came a great wrath from the LORD of hosts.*

And well there might. When God requires what is so just and so commendable, and men will not yield to it, and will not even hear about it, they deserve that God should grow wrathful with them.

[Zechariah 7:13](#). *Therefore it is come to pass, that as he cried, and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear saith the LORD of hosts:*

The punishment of sin seems to be according to the sin itself. If men will not hear God, neither will God hear them.

[Zechariah 7:14](#). *But I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations whom they knew not. Thus the land was desolate after them, that no man passed through nor returned: for they laid the pleasant land desolate.*

Now, in the next chapter, the prophet goes on to speak not so much of the people's sin as of God's resolve to have mercy upon them. He speaks with gentle warnings, and with loving promises.

This exposition consisted of readings from Zechariah 7; [Zechariah 8:9-22](#).

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CHAPTER 8

Verses 1-23

[Zechariah 8:1-2](#). *Again the word of the LORD of hosts came to me, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; I was jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I was jealous for her with great fury.*

Because they worshipped idols instead of the living God, Jehovah of hosts, who is a jealous God, was very angry with his ancient people, and allowed them to be carried away into captivity; and it is well for us, in these days, to recollect that we serve a jealous God, and that, if our hearts are not true to him, he will soon send us sharp afflictions, and make us feel the weight of his rod. It was Paul's anxious desire that he might be able to present the church at Corinth "as a chaste virgin to Christ;" and, certainly, our Lord Jesus Christ will not accept the professing church of these days on any other terms. Let thy heart be loyal and true to him, or else thou wilt stir up the holy jealousy of thy God. Yet the same jealousy which makes God punish his people for their unfaithfulness, prompts him to return to them in love so soon as he sees that he can justly do so. When their enemies have sorely vexed and oppressed them, then is the Lord jealous, not against them, but against their enemies, and he swiftly returneth to his own people in love.

[Zechariah 8:3](#). *Thus saith the LORD I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth; and the mountain of the LORD of hosts the holy mountain.*

The first coming or the return of God to a church, or to an individual heart, always promotes holiness; so, unless thy piety is daily growing, do not imagine that God is in the midst of thee; for, wherever the Lord comes, he comes "as a refiner and purifier." You will never find Jesus come except as John the Baptist pictured him to the Pharisees and Sadducees of his day: "whose fan is in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor." The coming of Christ into any soul, or into any church, is the death of sin and the birth of holiness.

[Zechariah 8:4-5](#). *Thus saith the LORD of hosts; There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof.*

It is an indication that there is peace in the city when the children can play in the streets without fear. We may apply these verses spiritually thus, — when God greatly blesses a Christian church, there are sure to be many aged persons in it, those who, by their long experience and their matured

wisdom, are able to teach others the lessons which they have themselves learned at the feet of Jesus. Happy is the church that hath in it many fathers and mothers in Israel. At the same time, a church that is largely blessed by God will also have in it many young converts, who will be as full of life and joy as children playing in the streets of a city in time of peace. There is a text which is true both in its literal and its spiritual sense: “Lo, children are a heritage of the Lord . . . Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them.” There is no glory so great to a Christian minister, and a Christian church, as that of having an abundance of spiritual children, and multitudes of converts brought to Christ. So shall it be with any church when God is in the midst of her.

[Zechariah 8:6](#). *Thus saith the LORD of hosts; If it be marvelous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, should it also be marvelous in mine eyes? saith the LORD of hosts.*

This is a very remarkable passage, warning us not to judge of God by ourselves. Though a thing may be difficult to us, there are no difficulties with God. Nay, even if we imagine anything to be impossible to man, the word impossibility has no relation to the Deity, for “with God all things are possible.” Are you in trouble today? Do you say that it is impossible for you to be delivered? It is an easy thing for God to deliver you, though the task seems so hard to you. Do you feel the weight of your sin, and do you imagine that it is impossible for your sin to be pardoned? Would you look upon it as a miracle; and because it seems so marvelous to you, do you think it is marvelous in God’s eyes? Remember what he said by the mouth of Isaiah, “My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.” Consider the infinite difference between God and man, and look no longer at God through the misleading glasses of your own feebleness.

[Zechariah 8:7-8](#). *Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Behold, I will save my people from the east country, and from the west country; and I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness.*

Mark God’s emphatic language, how full it is of “shalls” and “wills.” “I will,” and “they shall,” saith he, again and again; and if God saith, “I will,” who shall dare to say that it shall not be? What God declareth shall certainly come to pass. Surely this is golden language of comfort to those who are bowed down; then, how great must be the sinfulness of that unbelief which

dares to despair when God says “shall” and “will”! That one sentence in the eighth verse contains the whole gospel in two short sentences: “They shall be my people, and I will be their God.” This is the tenor of the covenant of grace. There is no “if,” nor “but,” nor “peradventure” in it, God does not say, “I will be their God if they will be my people;” nor, “I will love them if they will keep my laws.” That is the old covenant of works, which has been broken for ever; but the covenant of grace runs thus, “They shall be my people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness.”

[Zechariah 8:9-11](#). *Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Let your hands be strong, ye that hear in these days these words by the mouth of the prophets, which were in the day that the foundation of the house of the LORD of hosts was laid, that the temple might be built. For before these days there was no hire for man, nor any hire for beast; neither was there any peace to him that went out or came in because of the affliction: for I set all men everyone against his neighbour. But now I will not be unto the residue of this people as in the former days, saith the LORD of hosts.*

The Jewish people had been brought into abject poverty; they were all so poor that there was not one who could hire his fellow-man or even pay for the hire of a beast of burden. This was before the foundation of Solomon’s temple was laid; but, as that wondrous structure grew, the State also grew; and, often, the prosperity of a church brings prosperity to the people around it, and to the residue of God’s people there comes a blessing, and not a curse.

[Zechariah 8:12](#). *For the seed shall be prosperous;*

It is a happy omen for a church when the Word preached is with power.

[Zechariah 8:12](#). *The vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase,*

Happy are the hearts that are like fruitful vines, and good and fertile ground yielding thirty, sixty, or a hundredfold increase.

[Zechariah 8:12](#). *And the heavens shall give their dew;*

We cannot bring forth fruit unto God without the bedewing influences of the Holy Spirit. This is that “womb of the morning” of which David speaks in [Psalms 110:3](#), and out of which the precious fruit of the Spirit must come.

[Zechariah 8:12-15](#). *And I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things. And it shall come to pass, that as ye were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save*

you, and ye shall be a blessing: fear not, but let your hands be strong. For thus saith the LORD of hosts; As I thought to punish you, when your fathers provoked me to wrath, saith the LORD of hosts, and I repented not: so again have I thought in these days to do well unto Jerusalem and to the house of Judah: fear ye not.

Did you notice the repetition of the exhortation, “Fear not,” and then again, “Fear ye not”? The Lord knows how much mischief doubts and fears do to his people, and therefore many a time, in Scripture, he aims a blow at them. “Fear nots” abound in Scripture; it would be well if you made every one of them into a gallows-tree upon which to hang your unbelief until it died. What is your fear at this moment? What is the cause of your trembling? “Fear ye not,” saith God to you; will you dare to fear after this?

[Zechariah 8:16-17](#). *These are the things that ye shall do; Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates: and let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour;*

Some have wickedly said that “thought is free, and can’t be condemned;” but here we see that, if it goeth after evil, it is a wicked thing which God abhors.

[Zechariah 8:17-19](#). *And love no false oath: for all these are things that I hate, saith the LORD. And the word of the LORD of hosts came unto me, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; The fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts; therefore love the truth and peace.*

God turns sad fasts to glad feasts when he visits his people in love. Is there one here who has been having a long fast? Has your soul been sorely afflicted? Have you been desponding and trembling, so that you have had no joy and gladness? Ah, when the Lord Jesus Christ reveals himself to you, he will soon change your sad state into something brighter and better. He will give you “beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.” Look up, poor trembling soul, to yonder hill of Calvary where Jesus bled and died for you, and there let your joys begin, and never, never end.

[Zechariah 8:20-21](#). *Thus saith the LORD of hosts; It shall yet come to pass, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities: and*

the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the LORD, and to seek the LORD of hosts: I will go also.

You see that, in the latter days, there is to be a great spirit of prayer and of seeking the Lord. This will include the hearing of the Word, and the love of the truth; and one good sign is that the people will say, "Let us go speedily." They will not come in late, as so many do nowadays, just getting into their seats when the Scripture is being read, instead of being present at the opening prayer. I am sorry to say that some of you are getting later and later; and some morning, I shall most certainly carry out my threat, and preach the sermon first, unless you are more punctual. A little more thought, and a little sooner start, and you might all be at God's house in time. David longed to be a doorkeeper in the Lord's house, and you know that the doorkeeper is always the first in and the last out. May you all have more of David's spirit, though you cannot all be doorkeepers! These people are to say, "Let us go speedily (the marginal reading is 'continually') to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts: I will go also." That is the best way of bringing others to God's house, — to say, "I will go also." I have read that Julius Caesar never said to his soldiers, "Go," but "Let us go." So should we seek to get others to God's house by saying to them, "Let us go; . . . I will go also."

[Zechariah 8:22-23](#). *Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you.*

In the latter days, the Jews, who are still despised, and oppressed, and persecuted in many countries, shall be so highly honoured by God that men of other nationalities will want to be in their company. But, no doubt, there is here a special reference to Jesus, the Jew, the Son of God who became the Son of Mary too. Oh that, this very day, many Jews and Gentiles may take hold of his skirt by a living faith, and so may receive blessing from him, and be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation!

Verses 9-22

[Zechariah 8:9-10](#). *Thus saith the LORD of hosts: Let your hands be strong, ye that hear in these days these words by the mouth of the prophets, which were in the day that the foundation of the house of the LORD of hosts*

was laid, that the temple might be built. For before these days there was no hire for man, nor any hire for beast; neither was there any peace to him that went out or came in because of the affliction: for I set all men every one against his neighbour.

See into what a state sin brought Israel. There was no bread, no work, no wage, no peace. Every man was the enemy of his neighbour.

[Zechariah 8:11](#). *But now I will not be unto the residue of this people as in the former days, saith the LORD of hosts.*

He would change everything, and give them happiness and prosperity.

[Zechariah 8:12](#). *For the seed shall be prosperous; the vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things.*

God can turn our estate as easily as a man turneth his hand. “The Lord can clear the darkest skies, can give us day for night.” As the wheel revolves, so can the whole fortune of a man change speedily under the kind hand of God.

[Zechariah 8:13](#). *And it shall come to pass, that as ye were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing: fear not, but let your hands be strong.*

The Jew had become the very model of a curse. “You are as cursed as a Jew,” said the enemies of Israel; but God would make them to be the very model of a blessing, so that men should say, “You are as blessed as the house of Israel.”

[Zechariah 8:14-15](#). *For thus saith the LORD of hosts; As I thought to punish you, when your fathers provoked me to wrath, saith the LORD of hosts, and I repented not: So again have I thought in these days to do well unto Jerusalem and to the house of Judah: fear ye not.*

It is a very instructive and encouraging passage. When God threatened to punish his people, he did it. He did not play with words. He punished them, and repented not. And so when God promises to bless his people, he will not run back from his word, but he will carry out every jot and tittle of it in the blessing of his people.

[Zechariah 8:16-17](#). *These are the things that ye shall do: Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour: execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates: And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his*

neighbour; and love no false oath: for all these are things that I hate, saith the LORD.

He will have his people true, even if they swear to their own hurt. They must not change. They are to speak the truth, though a thousand calamities should be let loose thereby. May God make us a truth-loving, truth-speaking, truth-doing people.

[Zechariah 8:18](#). *And the word of the LORD of hosts came unto me, saying,*

This is the point that I call your attention to. You had the question when I began to read, and here is the answer.

[Zechariah 8:19](#). *Thus saith the LORD of hosts; The fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts; therefore love the truth and peace.*

Here is an answer to more than they asked for. The messengers only enquired about one fast — what they should do with it — namely, the fast of the fifth month; but they get instruction upon three other fasts. If you come to God's Word upon any point, you will not only be resolved upon that point, but you will be guided in many other ways, for God's Word is full of instruction, and they that are willing to be taught of it shall become wise in all ways. So now they are told that these fasts were to be turned into feasts.

[Zechariah 8:20-21](#). *Thus saith the LORD of hosts; It shall yet come to pass, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities: And the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the LORD, and to seek the LORD of hosts: I will go also.*

It is a fine thing when we invite other people and can always say, "I will go also." There are many people who say, "Do as I do, not as I say"; but if our example keeps pace with our precept, there will be power in our precept. "Let us go," said they; and he that said it added, "I will go also."

[Zechariah 8:22](#). *Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD.*

And it is so, even now. We have received our religion from a Jew. We believe in One who was of the seed of Abraham. We rejoice in him as also the Son of God, and many nations come crowding about the Christ of God.

This exposition consisted of readings from Zechariah 7; [Zechariah 8:9-22](#).

ZECHARIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 9

Verses 1-17

[Zechariah 9:1](#). *The burden of the word of the LORD in the land of Hadrach, —*

Or, Syria, —

[Zechariah 9:1-2](#). *And Damascus shall be the rest thereof: when the eyes of man, as of all the tribes of Israel, shall be toward the LORD. And Hamath also shall border thereby; Tyrus, —*

That is Tyre, —

[Zechariah 9:2-4](#). *And Zidon, though it be very wise. And Tyrus did build herself a strong hold, and heaped up silver as the dust, and fine gold as the mire of the streets. Behold, the Lord will cast her out, and he will smite her power in the sea; and she shall be devoured with fire.*

This prophecy was literally fulfilled. Tyre was attacked by Alexander the Great, and after withstanding a long siege, was destroyed by him. The strength of the city lay in the fact that it was built right out into the sea and that it was protected by a vast, massive hole. Also as a great trading center it possessed enormous wealth, and so was able to hire mercenary soldiers. But all its power and its wealth could not preserve it from destruction; and although we read of Tyre in the New Testament, it is now only a place for the drying of the nets of a few poor fishermen, even as Ezekiel foretold that it would be (36:14). When God foretells destruction, it always comes; but, blessed be his holy name, when he promises blessing, that comes just as surely.

[Zechariah 9:5](#). *Ashkelon shall see it, and fear; Gaza also shall see it, and be very sorrowful, and Ekron; for her expectation shall be ashamed; and the king shall perish from Gaza, and Ashkelon shall not be inhabited.*

When Alexander invaded the country, the Philistines expected that he would be hindered by the Tyrians; but, when Tyre fell, the Philistines were easily conquered. That shows you the meaning of the prophecy, and how literally it was fulfilled.

[Zechariah 9:6](#). *And a bastard —*

Or, stranger —

[Zechariah 9:6-7](#). *Shall dwell in Ashdod, and I will cut off the pride of the Philistines. And I will take away his blood out of his mouth —*

That is, the prey that he had caught; “I will snatch it out of his mouth,”

[Zechariah 9:7](#). *And his abominations from between his teeth: but he that remaineth, even he, shall be for our God, and he shall be as a governor in Judah, and Ekron as a Jebusite.*

There is no doubt that, after the days of Alexander, many Philistines became proselytes to the faith of the Jews, and were absorbed into the Jewish nation, so that an Ekronite became like an Israelite; and this is a symbol of what God is doing all the world over. He takes men, who are strangers and foreigners to the citizenship of Zion, and puts them among his people, and treats the Ekronite as a Jerusalemite. Blessed be his name for this great act of sovereign grace.

[Zechariah 9:8](#). *And I will encamp about mine house because of the army, because of him that passeth by, and because of him that returneth: and no oppressor shall pass through them any more: for now have I seen with mine eyes.*

And so it was. Alexander went to Jerusalem, after destroying Tyre, but he did not attack the city. There was a strange restraint resting upon him, which prevented him from touching the house of the living God. I need not repeat the well-known story of how he was met by the high priest, whom he recognized as the man whom he had seen in a dream, and so, though he smote Tyre and Philistia, he suffered the people of God to go free. But, after that time, something better happened. That great event is marked off by a new paragraph in our Bible, and well it may be: —

[Zechariah 9:9](#). *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: —*

Not Alexander the Great, but “thy King” “Thy King cometh unto thee:

[Zechariah 9:9](#). *He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.*

What a beautiful and faithful description of our Lord Jesus Christ! We wonder that Israel cannot see the Messiah here. Had this verse been written after the coming of Christ, it could not more accurately have described the blessed person and character of our Lord Jesus. His very riding into Jerusalem upon an ass, with her colt trotting by her side, is most plainly foretold here.

[Zechariah 9:10](#). *And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth.*

This is our glorious King, — the King, whose conquests are not achieved by horses, and chariots, and battle-bows, but by the more powerful panoply of truth and love. Blessed are all who dwell beneath the rule of such a King as he is.

[Zechariah 9:11-12](#). *As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water. Turn ye to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope: even to day do I declare that I will render double unto thee;*

Christ has come to set the prisoners free, and to be the stronghold of his people. Therefore turn ye to him, and all manner of precious blessings shall be yours.

[Zechariah 9:13](#). *When I have bent Judah for me, filled the bow with Ephraim, and raised up thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece, and made thee as the sword of a mighty man.*

This is a truly wonderful passage, setting forth how God is going to use his people as the weapons by which he will conquer the world. He will bend Judah, and make her into a bow, and take Ephraim, and make her into an arrow; and then he will shoot his strangely-fashioned shaft against his adversaries and ours! What does this mean but that he is going to use those of us, who are his own saved ones, that he may conquer the world by us? And what a blessed battle this is! “Thy sons O Zion against thy sons, O Greece,” — the simple believer against the cultured man of reason without faith, — the humble truster in the Lord Jesus Christ against the man who proudly boasts of his own learning and eloquence! How will this battle end? We know which side will win, for “the Lord of hosts is with us: the God of Jacob is our refuge.”

[Zechariah 9:14](#). *And the Lord shall be seen over them,*
As he was in the midst of his people of old.

[Zechariah 9:14](#). *And his arrows shall go forth as the lightning: and the Lord God shall blow the trumpet, and shall go with whirlwinds of the south.*

Here you have a foresight of Pentecost, and the grand era which succeeded the outpouring of the Spirit. Oh, that we might once again prove what God’s almighty Spirit can do!

[Zechariah 9:15](#). *The LORD of hosts shall defend them; and they shall devour, and subdue with sling stones and they shall drink, and make a noise as, through wine; and they shall be filled like bowls, and as the corners of the altar.*

You remember that the mockers said, on the day of Pentecost, “These men are full of new wine.” They were not, as Peter plainly declared, “these are not drunken, as ye suppose;” neither does this prophecy mean that they would be so, but that the Spirit of God should fall so copiously upon them as to fill them, like bowls brimming over with precious liquid, or like the corners of the altar drenched for Elijah’s sacrifice. It is a grand thing when believers in Christ are thus filled to overflowing with the Spirit of God, and energy divine; they are the men who will win the battle for the cause of God and truth.

[Zechariah 9:16-17](#). *And the LORD their God shall save them in that day as the flock of his people: for they shall be as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon his land For how great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty! corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids.*

[ZECHARIAH CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 10

Verses 1-12

[Zechariah 10:1](#). *Ask ye of the LORD rain in the time of the latter rain; so the LORD shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field.*

The atheistic philosopher of the present day laughs at such a verse as this, and sneeringly asks, “What possible connection can there be between men and women praying to God and the showers of rain which fall upon the earth?” “Why!” saith he, “according to the laws of nature, showers fall at such-and-such seasons; and if the atmosphere should not happen to be in such-and-such a state, all the praying in the world cannot produce a single drop of rain.” But faith can clearly see where reason is blind; and the prayer of faith moves the arm of God, and the arm of God controls what the philosopher calls the laws of nature, and so the rain descends. Let us learn, from this precept and promise, the power of believing prayer. Prayer hath

the key of nature as well as the key of heaven hanging at her girds. Observe also that, when we have received one mercy from the Lord, we are to go on to pray for another. These people must have had “the former rain”, yet they were to ask for “the latter rain” also; and if you, dear friends, have had “the former rain” of conversion, go on to ask the Lord for “the latter rain” of sanctification. If, in our church-fellowship, we have had “the former rain” of gracious additions to our numbers, we must ask for “the latter rain” by praying that God would continue thus to bless us. When we cease to pray for blessings, God has already ceased to bless us, but when our souls pour out floods of prayer, God is certain temporary floods of mercy.

[Zechariah 10:2](#). *For the idols have spoken vanity, and the diviners have seen a lie, and have told false dreams; they comfort in vain:*

Observe the readiness of man to forsake the great fountain of living waters and to make unto himself broken cisterns which can hold no water. Notice too, that some sort of comfort may, for a time, be derived from a false trust, but it is “comfort in vain.” As a dream yields no comfort when a man wakes up, and finds himself to be not rich, as he had vainly dreamed that he was, but miserably poor, so all confidence in the flesh, all reliance upon anything except the almighty arm of God, even if it should yield us temporary hope and consolation, will only make our grief the greater when its utter failure is discovered.

[Zechariah 10:2](#). *Therefore they went their way as a flock, they were troubled, because there was no shepherd.*

The sheep that belong to Christ’s flock will never find any true shepherd except him who is “the good Shepherd.” If, for a time, they should so lose their spiritual wits as to follow strangers, which, indeed is not a natural thing for them to do, for “a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers;”-they will meet with a thousand troubles because they have no shepherd.

[Zechariah 10:3](#). *Mine anger was kindled against the shepherds, and I punished the goats:*

Whenever people are afflicted with unfaithful ministers, when God comes to visit these people, he will not only punish the ministers, but the religious leaders, the false professors in those churches, the he-goats who led the flock astray. Oh, what a plague and a curse will an unfaithful minister be found to have been at the last day! A well which only yields bitter water like that of Marah, merely mocks a temporary thirst; but a

minister who does not preach the gospel, and who does not live the gospel, mocks the soul's eternal thirst. Whatever I may be, God grant that I may never be an unfaithful preacher of his Word! Surely, if there be an innermost hell, a place where the soul's feet shall be made more feet in the stocks of the pit than anywhere else, it shall be reserved for the man who, professing to be an instructor of the ignorant, and a leader of the flock, taught them falsehood, and led them out of the way. Pray the Lord save us from shepherd against whom his anger must be kindled!

[Zechariah 10:3](#). *For the LORD of hosts hath visited his flock the house of Judah, and hath made them as his goodly horse in the battle.*

As an expert horseman skillfully controls his caparisoned steel, and turns it according to his pleasure in the day of battle, and makes it obey himself alone, so doth the Lord rein in and direct his Church, so that she becomes like a “goodly horse in the battle.”

[Zechariah 10:4](#). *Out of him came forth the corner, out of him the nail, out of him the battle bow, out of him every oppressor together.*

Let us learn from this verse that everything cometh from the Lord of hosts, the God of providence as well as of grace. Those statesmen, who are the corner-stones of the great building of state, must come from him. Those Christian men and women of experience, who seem to be as the corner-stones of our spiritual building, must come from him. Those who are as nails, upon whom weaker Christians seem to hang, come from him. And whoever is, in the day of battle, like God's bow, must also come from him; for, apart from the Lord, there is no strength, nor power, nor wit nor wisdom, amongst all his people. We must learn, then, to lift up our eye unto God, and look to his for ail that we need; whether it be political, social, or religious needs that are to be supplied, all must come from him.

[Zechariah 10:5](#). *And they shall be as mighty men, which tread down their enemies in the mire of the streets in the battle: and they shall fight, because the LORD is with them, and the riders on horses shall be confounded.*

The Jewish infantry often turned to flight the Syrian cavalry, and I may fitly compare the apostles of old to humble fighters upon foot, while heathen and other philosophers were like mighty men on horseback, yet they were turned back by the apparently weaker warriors of the cross, and it is so still. We can well afford to give our adversaries every advantage that they can ask; let them have state patronage, let them have worldly dignity,

let them have learning, let them have wealth; yet, in the name of God will we vanquish them, for the truth of God is mightier than all the wisdom of man and the weakness of God is stronger than the greatest strength of man.

[Zechariah 10:6](#). *And I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph, and I will bring them again to place them; for I have mercy upon them: and they shall be as though I had not cast them off; for I am the LORD their God, and will hear them*

See, beloved, how the everlasting covenant is the great foundation of everything for the saints. “I and Jehovah their God,” says he. The Lord has taken his people to be his own for ever; and therefore, though he may seem temporarily to reject them, yet permanently and everlastingly he will hold them fast, and own them as his people.

[Zechariah 10:7](#). *And they of Ephraim shall be like a mighty man, and their heart shall rejoice as through wine: yea, their children shall see it and be glad; their heart shall rejoice in the LORD.*

Get a firm hold of this promise, believers, and plead it. Are you dull and heavy, desponding and sad? Then plead this promise, “Their heart shall rejoice in the Lord.”

[Zechariah 10:8](#). *I will hiss for them, and gather them; for I have redeemed them: and they shall increase as they have increased.*

The word “hiss” is supposed by some to be an allusion to the Eastern custom of men who managed bees making a sound like hissing in order to gather them into the hive. Others, however, translate the word “piping”, as the shepherd pipes to his flock, and they gather round him. In the words, “I will gather them, for I have redeemed them,” we see that particular redemption is the groundwork of effectual calling; those whom Jesus Christ hath bought with his precious blood the Holy Spirit will call by power out from the rest of mankind.

[Zechariah 10:9-11](#). *And I will sow them among the people and they shall remember me in far countries; and they shall live with their children, and turn again. I will bring them again also out of the land of Egypt, and gather them out of Assyria; and I will bring them into the land of Gilead and Lebanon; and place shall not be found for them. And he shall pass through the sea with affliction,-*

In the restoration of Israel, there is to be an even greater triumph than that which was achieved at the Red Sea.

[Zechariah 10:11](#). *And shall smite the waves in the sea, and all the deeps of the river shall dry up: and the pride of Assyria shall be brought down, and the scepter of Egypt shall depart away.*

For the glory of God in the deliverance of his people is sure to be attended by another form of glory in the destruction of his enemies Christ is a sweet saviour unto God both in them that are saved and in them that perish.

[Zechariah 10:12](#). *And I will strengthen them in the LORD and they shall walk up and down in his name, saith the LORD.*

This exposition consisted of readings from Zechariah 9, , 10.

ZECHARIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 11

Verses 4-17

[Zechariah 11:4](#). *Thus saith the LORD my God; Feed the flock of the slaughter;*

This is a deep prophecy. It may be interpreted concerning many events, but I think it primarily refers to the departure of the people of Israel from God, and their rejection of Christ. It has to do with the first coming of Christ, and the way in which they cast off the great Shepherd, and he cast them off, so that Israel was simply spoiled and scattered throughout the whole earth. The teachers of those days were false to their service.

[Zechariah 11:5](#). *Whose possessors slay them, and hold themselves not guilty: and they that sell them say, Blessed be the LORD for I am rich; and their own shepherds pity them not.*

They bound heavy burdens upon them, grievous to be borne, but they touched them not with one of their fingers. The Scribes and Pharisees were false shepherds, and had clean departed from God in the day of our Lord.

[Zechariah 11:6](#). *For I will no more pity the inhabitants of the land, saith the LORD: but, lo, I will deliver the men every one into his neighbour's hand, and into the hand of his king: and they shall smite the land, and out of their hand I will not deliver them.*

Christ gathered a few round him who were his true sheep, who knew his voice, and these he fed; they were the flock of the slaughter. They, most of them, died a martyr death, and they were the poor and despised among men.

[Zechariah 11:7](#). *And I will feed the flock of slaughter, even you, O poor of the flock. And I took unto me two staves; the one I called Beauty, and the other I called Bands; and I fed the flock.*

The “Beauty” is the loving-kindness of the presence of God; “thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.” By “Bands” we understand binders, the unity of the flock; that which kept the people together. These are the two staves — the two staves with which the good shepherd blessed his flock when he is with them.

[Zechariah 11:8](#). *Three shepherds also I cut off in one month; and my soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred me.*

There is a mutual loathing between God and ungodly men. They, to whom Christ came, were of this character; they loathed him, and he could not endure them. See how he cried to them, “Woe unto you, Scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites; woe unto you teachers of the law.” There was a solemn division between them, and the people themselves called after their shepherds, and we are like them, so that they took up stones again to stone him, and he, with many tears, was forced to pronounce woe upon them.

[Zechariah 11:9-11](#). *Then said I, I will not feed you: that that dieth, let it die; and that that is to be cut off, let it be cut off; and let the rest eat every one the flesh of another. And I took my staff, even Beauty, and cut it asunder, that I might break my covenant which I had made with all the people. And it was broken in that day: and so the poor of the flock that waited upon me knew that it was the word of the LORD.*

The national covenant, as far as Israel was concerned, was broken, and they were cast off and driven from their land. Oh! the sufferings of Israel in those days! The stories were enough to melt the heart of a stone. The great sins of the ages, and, worst of all, the great sin of rejecting Christ, brought upon that people such a doom that we know not where to find its parallel in all the annals of mankind. Still, notice there was always a people that the great Shepherd looked after; “so the poor of the flock that waited upon me knew that it was the word of the Lord.”

[Zechariah 11:12-13](#). *And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. And the LORD said unto me, Cast it unto the potter; a goodly price that I was priced at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the LORD.*

You know how this came to pass, and literally came to pass in that day, when the betrayer cast down the price of his blood, and they bought therewith the potter's field to bury strangers in. This is what Israel did with her great Shepherd — with the Messiah.

[Zechariah 11:14](#). *Then I cut asunder mine other staff, even Bands, that I might break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel.*

They became a scattered people henceforth.

[Zechariah 11:15](#). *And the LORD said unto me, Take unto thee yet the instruments of a foolish shepherd.*

Hard clubs and swords, and such like things, unfit for sheep.

[Zechariah 11:16-17](#). *For, lo, I will raise up a shepherd in the land, which shall not visit those that be cut off, neither shall seek the young one, nor heal that that is broken, nor feed that that standeth still: but he shall eat the flesh of the fat, and tear their claws in pieces. Woe to the idol shepherd that leaveth the flock! the sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye: his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened.*

These were the shepherds to which Israel was left when they rejected Christ. They did nothing for the people; they were a curse to them, and they themselves were blinded; their own power failed. Well now, what took place actually with regard to Israel takes place with regard to any church that casts off Christ and his teaching; it becomes an anti-Christ; and all has surely been fulfilled in the great anti-Christian system, which is not dead even yet, which destroys and injures; and this day its arm is clean dried up, and its right eye is utterly dimmed. We have a terrible description of what God will do to these who turn away from him.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Zechariah 11:4-17](#); [Zechariah 12:1-4](#).

[ZECHARIAH CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 12

Verse 1

12:1. *The burden of the word of the LORD for Israel, saith the LORD, which stretcheth forth the heaven, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him.*

Note how this chapter begins: “The burden of the word of the LORD for Israel,” — not against Israel. The gospel is always, to the true preacher of it, the burden of the Lord, but, to those who receive it, it is a burden of blessing, a load of mercy. To those who reject it, it will become a burdensome stone, crushing them to their eternal ruin. God grant, in his infinite mercy, that none of us may belong to the last class!

[Zechariah 12:2](#). *Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem.*

This is a promise of God’s abounding mercy to his chosen people Israel. When he comes to their aid, they shall be a cup of trembling to their enemies. Those enemies will try to swallow them, but they will find that they are drinking a cup of poison, which will cause their own death. Oh that the day might soon come when God would remember his ancient people, the Jews, and bring them back to their own land, as he certainly will do in the fullness of time, and when he has done it, then it shall come to pass that all who fight against them shall find his people to be as a cup of trembling to them. This promise, which is to be literally fulfilled to God’s chosen people, the seed of Abraham, is also spiritually true to all believers. Christian, your enemies cannot really hurt you. If they could drink you up, as men drink a cup of wine, you would be a cup of trembling to them, they would find that they had taken in more than they wanted. All the persecutors of the Church of God, in smiting this stone, have themselves been broken on it. They have found that they have undertaken a task which has ended in their own destruction. Woe unto the man who fights against the Church of the living God! Victory must always come to the Lord’s people, for greater is he who is with them than all that can be against them.

[Zechariah 12:3](#). *And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it.*

This is true literally, but it is also true spiritually. As the Church of God is to be a cup of trembling to its enemies, so is it also to be a burdensome stone. They do not like it, they cannot bear it. They would, if they could, get rid of the spiritual Church of God; but they cannot get rid of it. There it is: — a stone, cut out of the mountain without hands, which will grow until it fills the whole earth, and breaks in pieces everything that opposes it. Those

who set themselves against God, and against his Christ shall find themselves crushed to atoms by this mighty stone.

[Zechariah 12:4](#). *In that day, saith the LORD, I will smite every horse with astonishment, and his rider with madness:*

The chief strength of Jerusalem's enemies lay in horses and chariots; but God bids his people not to fear them, for he knows how to overcome all power, whether it be the power of cavalry or the power of infantry. He knows how to smite every horse with astonishment, and every rider with madness, for, "as the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people, from henceforth even for ever," and he can protect them against the most powerful foes that may assail them.

[Zechariah 12:4](#). *And I will open mine eyes upon the house of Judah,*

It looked as if the Lord had been asleep, but now he says, "I will open mine eyes upon the house of Judah," — I will look at them, and note their sufferings, pity their griefs, plan for their good, and come forth for their defense."

[Zechariah 12:4](#). *And will smite every horse of the people with blindness.*

Their enemies shall not be able to see them, but God will see them, and he will deliver his people and overthrow all their adversaries.

[Zechariah 12:5-6](#). *And the governors of Judah shall say in their heart, The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength in the LORD of hosts their God. In that day will I make the governors of Judah like an hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf; and they shall devour all the people round about, on the right hand and on the left: and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem.*

The literal prophecy is that the seed of Israel shall go back to their own land and shall prevail over their adversaries; but the spiritual meaning is that the Church of God shall have great power among the people of the earth. They shall have fire put into them, — the fire of the Holy Ghost; and they shall be like a lighted firebrand amongst the wood, or as a flaming torch in a sheaf of corn; and you know how soon the sheaf would be burnt up. If God has put within you fire from heaven, you will be sure to burn, and those with whom you live will soon feel the flame. Place one really gracious man in any district and if he is thoroughly on fire with the Holy Spirit, it will be like throwing a blazing firebrand into a field of dry corn. What a conflagration will there be! The Lord send us many such blessed burnings!

[Zechariah 12:7](#). *The LORD also shall save the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem do not magnify themselves against Judah.*

God will begin by saving the most defenseless. The tents of the people were easily swept away by their powerful foes. “Therefore,” says the prophet, “the Lord shall save the tents of Judah first.” As for the people in the strongly defended city of Jerusalem he would protect them, but he would do it in such a way that they should not take the glory to themselves. God is always very jealous of his own honour. He will save us, but it will be in a way that shall prevent our pride from glorying in it. He will never allow one saved soul to be able to say, “I saved myself,” or “I contributed to the merit which has brought me to heaven.” No; God must have all the glory, — every jot and tittle of it; and all his people are glad that he should have it.

[Zechariah 12:8](#). *In that day shall the LORD defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the LORD before them.*

What a blessed thing it is when the Lord strengthens all his people, so that the weakest amongst them are as strong as that ruddy-faced youth who smote Goliath, and the strongest of them are like the swift-winged angels of God, ready to do his bidding! Oh, that this church might be in that blessed state! You remember how it is written that, when Israel came up out of Egypt, “there was not one feeble person among their tribes.” When will the whole Church of Christ get to be in that condition? O ye feeble ones, lay hold upon the promise now before us, and do not rest till it is fulfilled in you! “He that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David, and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them.”

[Zechariah 12:9-11](#). *And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon.*

No doubt these verses refer, primarily, to the great mourning when King Josiah fell in battle, when all the people wept and mourned for many days

because their king had been slain by the arrows shot by the archers But this is also typical of the lamentation of a heart when it is broken on account of the death of Christ. Sorrow for sin is to be after the fashion of that great national mourning of which Jeremiah sang so plaintively in the book of Lamentations.

[Zechariah 12:12](#). *And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart;*

For this was to be a personal sorrow, in which both husbands and wives must weep on their own account.

[Zechariah 12:12](#). *The family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart;*

Perhaps these names are mentioned to indicate different classes and orders of persons; — the family of the house of David the king shall mourn and the family of the house of Nathan the prophet shall mourn. Both David and Nathan had long since gone, but their descendants were still called by their names.

[Zechariah 12:13](#). *The family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart;*

The priests, as well as the kings and the prophets, were to be represented in this universal mourning.

[Zechariah 12:13](#). *The family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart;*

Shimei, or Simeon, as the Septuagint gives it, — which may either represent the scribes, or else may refer to the people in general. These shall all mourn, personally and separately, for him whom they have pierced.

[Zechariah 12:14](#). *All the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart.*

Why these chapters were divided here, I cannot imagine, for it is clear that the passage should run right on.

[Zechariah 13:1](#). *In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.*

Verses 1-4

[Zechariah 12:1-4](#). *The burden of the word of the LORD for Israel, saith the LORD, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him. Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem. And in that*

day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it. In that day saith the LORD I will smite every horse with astonishment, and his rider with madness; and I will open mine eyes upon the house of Judah, and will smite every horse of the people with blindness.

When God comes to defend his own, then, however despised the people may be, however despised Israel may be, God will make it to be a cup of trembling to them. He will make it to be a burdensome stone which they cannot endure, and they will be glad to be rid of it. I remember a story in one of the legends of the old saints concerning a holy woman who was taken away from her place of retreat by the ungodly, with a view of forcing her into sin. The legend runs that as they carried her, she was quite unable to resist their power, but she became heavier and heavier, so that they could not carry her and were obliged to set her down and then she went back to where she was; and I believe that the legend pictorially sets forth what happens when a true child of God is carried captive by temptation and sin. Bye-and-bye, God comes and makes them to be a burdensome stone, and they are obliged to lay them down.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Zechariah 11:4-17](#); [Zechariah 12:1-4](#).

Verse 10

[Zechariah 12:10-14](#). *And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon. And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart; all the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart.*

[Zechariah 13:1](#). *In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness. And it shall come to pass in that day,*

How much God can crowd into a single day!

[Zechariah 12:2](#). *Saith the LORD of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered: and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land.*

God will not only destroy the idols, but he will cut off the very names of them out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered.

[Zechariah 12:3](#). *And it shall come to pass, that when any shall yet prophesy, then his father and his mother that begat him shall say unto him, Thou shalt not live; for thou speakest lies in the name of the LORD: and his father and his mother that begat him shall thrust him through when he prophesieth.*

It was a part of the law of God in the Book of Deuteronomy that any man who professed to be a prophet, and who sought to turn the people aside to the worship of idols, should be put to death; and it is here declared that, when God had cleansed the land, there would be no false prophets; and, if any man pretended to be a prophet of the Lord when he was not sent of God, his own father and mother would be the first to execute judgment upon him.

[Zechariah 12:4](#). *And it shall come to pass in that day, that the prophets shall be ashamed every one of his vision, when he hath prophesied; neither shall they wear a rough garment to deceive:*

Imitating Elijah's garb, the false prophets hoped to win the attention of the people by the roughness of their dress; but all this would be dropped for the people would be so well instructed that they would refuse to hear the false prophet.

[Zechariah 12:5](#). *But he shall say, I am no prophet, I am an husbandman; for man taught me to keep cattle from my youth.*

They shall be so ashamed of it that, to have kept cattle shall seem to be a far more noble employment than to have falsely set up to be a prophet of the Lord.

[Zechariah 12:6](#). *And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands?*

"You wear the marks usually seen in God's servants; you have scarred yourself as his prophets were accustomed to do, you have, as it were, tattooed yourself with the name of your God, what does it all mean?" But he shall be so ashamed of it that-

[Zechariah 12:6](#). *Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.*

He shall say anything rather than confess that he is a false prophet, he shall be so ashamed of himself. What a mercy it is when God makes men ashamed of sin, and when he makes them so ashamed of false doctrine that they cannot bear it, and will not any longer proclaim it! Oh, that that day were already come!

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 51; and [Zechariah 12:10-14](#); [Zechariah 13:1-6](#).

Verses 10-14

[Zechariah 12:10](#). *And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications:*

This is a promise concerning Israel. Long have the Jews rejected the Christ, but the day is coming when they shall acknowledge Jesus of Nazareth to be the promised Messiah. In that day, this promise will be fulfilled. God must always give “the spirit of grace” ere men will pray aright; and wherever grace is given, there is always true prayer.

[Zechariah 12:10](#). *And they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.*

Discovering that they have rejected the true Messiah, they will be overcome with the most acute grief that was ever endured, grief altogether inconceivable.

[Zechariah 12:11](#). *In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon.*

One of the greatest mournings that was ever known was that when Josiah was lain in battle, and the people lamented that their best of kings was so early taken away from them. Such shall be the sorrow that shall fall upon repenting Israel.

[Zechariah 12:12](#). *And the land shalt mourn, every family apart;*

There shall be universal mourning throughout the whole land; yet it shall be special and particular to each household: “every family apart.”

[Zechariah 12:12-14](#). *The family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart; all the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart.*

True repentance is the distinct act of each individual. It cannot as a rule be performed in the mass. There is a general repentance which, like that of

the Ninevites, has a special excellence about it, because it affects a whole city or nation; but that is not the kind of repentance which is described here. In this case, the sharpness of personal conviction of sin cuts and wounds the conscience of each individual, and there is a bitter cry uttered by each one as if he were the only sinner in the world. Oh, how sincerely you and I would repent if we felt as if we were the only ones who had ever broken God's law; yet such a repentance as that we must feel if we would be personally forgiven.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Zechariah 12:10-14](#); Zechariah , , 13 :1, 2.

ZECHARIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 13

Verses 1-9

[Zechariah 13:1](#). *In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and uncleanness.*

They shall see that pardon when they have truly seen their sin. When once the foulness of their transgression is perceived, then the fount, sin of cleansing shall be perceived, too. No man ever knows the preciousness of the God given remedy till he has felt the force of the terrible disease. No one by faith plunges into the crystal fount of perfect cleansing without first lamenting the filthiness which needs to be removed.

[Zechariah 13:2](#). *And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered: and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land.*

Where there is pardon, there is sure to be sanctification. The idols must fall, and the false prophets must go. We cannot have our sins and have a Saviour too. If we have Christ to blot out our sin, we must have the same Christ to remove sin as to its authority, and power, and dominion over us.

[Zechariah 13:3](#). *And it shall come to pass, that when any shall yet prophesy,—*

When any false prophet shall still pretend to prophesy,—

[Zechariah 13:3](#). *Then his father and his mother that begat him shall say unto him, Thou shalt not live; for thou speakest lies in the name of the*

LORD: and his father and his mother that begat him shall thrust him through when he prophesieth.

So intense shall be the hatred of false prophets, that men shall not spare even their own children. They shall abhor them when they stand up against the Lord of hosts and against his truth.

[Zechariah 13:4](#). *And it shall come to pass in that day, that the prophets shall be ashamed every one of his vision, when he hath prophesied; neither shall they wear a rough garment to deceive:*

They shall give up this wicked employment at once and for ever. Just as when one, who has pretended to tell fortunes, is converted, and he forsakes that evil occupation; so converted men must never be in association with those who are familiar with the spirits of the dead, and who practice sorcery and the like abominations. Everything of the kind is to be, abhorred by godly men, and they must turn away from it with holy horror and disgust.

[Zechariah 13:5-6](#). *But he shall say, I am no prophet, I am an husbandman; for man taught me to keep cattle from my youth. And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands?*

What are these marks of the idol gods and goddesses? Have you not been branded with them? Did you not belong to the accursed fraternity that worship idols, and receive the sigmate in their hands?

[Zechariah 13:6](#). *Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.*

Idolatry shall become so detestable a thing that he will say anything rather than acknowledge that he has had aught to do with idols. Those very marks in which the false prophets once gloried, they shall loathe. The Brahmin shall throw away his sacred thread, and those who have been tattooed in honour of other false gods shall hate the marks of shame that are upon their persons. Now, brethren, inasmuch as the heathen prophets received in their bodies the marks of their gods, we understand something of what Paul meant when he wrote to the Galatians, "From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." He regarded his baptism as a kind of water-mark that could not be removed. He looked upon the marks of the scourge, with which he had been beaten again and again for Christ's sake, as being proofs that he belonged to Jesus. They stamped him with the broad arrow of the great King, so that all men might know that he was dedicated to him and to his service, tattooed with marks in his flesh that were indelible, and never to be removed.

[Zechariah 13:7-8](#). *Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones. And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the LORD, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein.*

So, in the times of God's fiercest judgments, he has a remnant according to the election of grace who shall escape the sword, because that sword has been awakened against him who was their Representative, their Surety, and who stood as Substitute in their place.

[Zechariah 13:9](#). *And I will bring the third part through the fire,—*

“Saved; yet so as by fire.” This is true in a certain sense of all the righteous. They shall certainly be saved, and though the fires of persecution should rage around, the Lord will bring them through the fire. They shall not perish in it, but they shall even derive good from it; “I will bring the third part through the fire,”—

[Zechariah 13:9](#). *And will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried:*

If you are God's people, you will certainly be tried and tested. As surely as ever God has put you in the third part that he will save, he has also ordained that you should pass through the fire. You shall have, both within and without, that which shall test your sincerity, and prove whether your faith is of divine origin or not. There is no easy road to heaven.

“The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown.”

Yet we who believe in Jesus are not an unhappy people. The character of God's saints is still according to Paul's paradoxes; “As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.”

[Zechariah 13:9](#). *They shall call on my name, and I will hear them:*

What a precious little sentence: “they shall call on my name”! And God will give ear to their prayer: “And I will hear them.” The “shall” and the “will” are put close together, and the one is as much the work of God's grace as the other is: “They shall call on my name, and I will hear them.”

[Zechariah 13:9](#). *I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God.*

Note these quick responses,—echoes, as it were. They call and God hears. God speaks, and they reply. God says, “It is my people.” They

answer, “The Lord is my God.” Blessed are you if you can join in these heart-echoes, or can say, with the spouse, “My Beloved is mine, and I am his.” Is there this mutual interchange of love between you and the all-glorious Lord? If so, thrice happy are you; but if not, God grant that you may speedily enter into this secret of the Lord! May he bless to every one of us the reading of his Word, for his dear Son’s sake! Amen.

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CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

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CHAPTER 2

Verses 1-18

[Malachi 3:1](#). *Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me:*

The name Malachi means “my messenger.” The reference here is, of course, to John the Baptist, who was to prepare the way of the Lord.

[Malachi 3:1](#). *And the lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple,*

Now, the temple at Jerusalem is utterly destroyed, so how can the Jews still think the Lord, whom they profess to seek, will suddenly come to his temple? He must have come there already, — so we know he did, — for there is not one stone of the temple left standing upon another: “The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple,” —

[Malachi 3:1](#). *Even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.*

Christ was the great messenger of the covenant, the messenger of mercy; and the Lord’s own people, even in that ancient time, delighted in anticipating the coming of the Christ of God, the anointed and appointed messenger of the Lord of hosts.

[Malachi 3:2](#). *But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner’s fire, and like fullers’ soap:*

All that only looked like religion, but was not real and genuine, was purged away at his coming. He was like a refiner’s fire, consuming the false pretensions of the Pharisees, and the vain boastings of the Scribes. There is, in the religion of Jesus Christ, a power that is a great purgative and a great refiner.

[Malachi 3:3](#). *And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver:*

Christ comes suddenly, but he comes to stay: “He shall sit.” If he comes into our heart at this moment, — and he may come there suddenly, — he will come to stay there, and he will sit there “as a refiner and purifier of silver.”

[Malachi 3:3](#). *And he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness.*

Those men, called to holy service, shall offer unto the Lord offerings in righteousness after he has cleansed and purified them. You cannot worship God aright until you have been cleansed by Christ. Till then, you are like priests with defiled feet, unfit to come into the sanctuary of God; but when Christ has purified you, fail not to draw near to God, and to present your thanks-offering unto him.

[Malachi 3:4-5](#). *Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the LORD, as in the days of old, and as in former years. And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the Lord of hosts.*

See how hard taskmasters are put, by divine inspiration, with sorcerers, and adulterers, and false swearers. They do not think badly of themselves, but the Lord thinks badly of them, and his judgment is always just.

[Malachi 3:6](#). *For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.*

This is their comfort; even the immutability of God is on the side of his people. He is just, and always just, he hates sin, and always hates sin; yet that unchangeableness of his is always on the side of the people of his choice.

[Malachi 3:7](#). *Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts.*

Ye wanderers from God, take this invitation home to your hearts, and act upon it. Arise, and return unto your Father; for when you are yet a great way off, he will see you, and will run to meet you, and have compassion upon you: “Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts.”

[Malachi 3:7](#). *But ye said, Wherein shall we return?*

God takes notice of what men say to him after he has spoken to them. He will take notice of what you say when you go out of this house of prayer. Erring men usually have something to say for themselves. The selfrighteous can always invent some excuse, or ask some question, as they did here: “Wherein shall we return?”

[Malachi 3:8](#). *Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me.*

They were always ready to deny or question a just accusation, instead of letting it operate upon their conscience, so they asked about this charge.

[Malachi 3:8](#). *But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.*

They had kept back from God's service the money which was needful for the carrying on of the worship of his house. We read, in [Nehemiah 13:10](#), that "the Levites and the singers, that did the work, were fled every one to his field," for they could not live at Jerusalem, because "the portions of the Levites had not been given them," — their supply of provisions having been stopped through the meanness of the people who had thus robbed the Lord "in tithes and offerings."

[Malachi 3:9](#). *Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation,*

They could not make out why they were so poor, and why they could not get on; the real reason was that there was a curse resting upon all that they did, because they had robbed God.

[Malachi 3:10](#). *Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.*

They had kept themselves poor by their own meanness. If they had behaved rightly towards God, he would have enriched them with the bounties of his providence; the very windows of heaven would have been thrown open to give them abundance for all their needs.

[Malachi 3:11](#). *And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, with the LORD of hosts.*

The locust and the caterpillar came up and ate their harvests, all because God was angry with them; and he alone could change their miserable circumstances.

[Malachi 3:12](#). *And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightful land, saith the LORD of hosts.*

God is able, simply with a turn of his hand, or a glance of his eye, to enrich or to impoverish. He gives in a thousand ways that we cannot control, and he takes from us in as many ways which perhaps we cannot understand. It is always best to be right with God.

[Malachi 3:13-15](#). *Your words have been stout against me, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, What have we spoken so much against thee? Ye have said, It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the LORD of hosts? And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered.*

Those were indeed bad old times when the mass of the people looked only to their own temporal comfort, when they saw the wicked become rich, they wished that they were wicked too, in order that they might be rich. They thought that it was of no use to serve God; but happily there was another set of people in the land, as there always is, more or less. God never leaves himself without witnesses; and when the wicked are proudest, God's people are often boldest.

[Malachi 3:16](#). *Then —*

At that very time, —

[Malachi 3:16](#). *They that feared the LORD spake often one to another:*

They could not bear to hear their God thus spoken of, so they went to one another's houses, they found one another out, and talked to one another.

[Malachi 3:16](#). *And the Lord hearkened, —*

He loves to listen to the holy talk of a holy people: "The Lord hearkened," —

[Malachi 3:16](#). *And heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name.*

That is a very precious expression; you cannot perhaps, speak much for the Lord, yet you think the more about him; and God remembers those who think upon his name. Yet, often, thinking leads to speaking; and there ought to be no speaking without previous thought. God loves to listen to the thoughtful conversation of a loving people who stand true to him in the midst of an ungodly crowd, and he thinks very highly of them.

[Malachi 3:17](#). *And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels;*

"Others, who thought much of themselves, shall be thrown away like worthless pebbles, but these faithful ones shall be mine in that day when I am putting my jewels into my crown, for they shall be precious in my sight."

[Malachi 3:17](#). *And I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.*

When the sword of the foeman is drawn from its sheath, when disease is putting down its myriads, when God's vengeance has laid hold upon the ungodly, he will be a hiding-place for his people, and will care for them as a man would anxiously care, not only for his son, but for his only son, one who is obedient and faithful to his father: "his own son that serveth him."

[Malachi 3:18](#). *Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked,*

Not now, but then; by-and-by, there shall be a distinguishing mark set upon all mankind: "Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked," —

[Malachi 3:18](#). *Between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.*

This exposition consisted of readings from [Malachi 3:4](#).

[MALACHI CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 4

Verses 1-6

[Malachi 4:1-2](#). *For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you —*

Here is the difference: "But unto you" —

[Malachi 4:2](#). *That fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise—*

Not like a scorching and burning oven as the sun of the heavens is in the East, but he shall arise —

[Malachi 4:2](#). *With healing in his wing; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.*

All is right with those who are right with God.

[Malachi 4:3-6](#). *And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the LORD of hosts.*

Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and

the heart of the children to their father, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse. The Old Testament ends with the mutterings of a curse, but the New Testament begins with a message of blessing concerning the birth of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. What a mercy to come from under the old covenant unto the new!

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Matthew Chapter 1

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER 2

Verses 1-12

[Matthew 2:1-2](#). *Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.*

Observe here that when the Son of God was born into the world, it was in a very lowly village, the village of Bethlehem. Very naturally, the wise men supposed that “the King of the Jews” would be born in the palace, in the metropolis of the country, at Jerusalem; but it pleased the Lord that everything about Christ’s birth should have the stamp of lowliness, that the poorest and humblest of men might understand. that Christ took not upon him the nature of princes, but the nature of men, not of the great ones of the earth, but of our common humanity. Hence Jesus was born of a lowly virgin, and was but roughly cradled in a manger, and the village chosen as the place of his birth was Bethlehem, well-named the “house of bread”, for it is there that the Bread of our souls is found. The holy child Jesus was

born “in the days of Herod the king.” The last spark of sovereignty was just dying out. Herod, an alien, held the kingdom under the Roman Empire. Did not old Jacob’s prophecy say, “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come”? Therefore is it expressly mentioned that Jesus was born “in the days of Herod the king.” We must also remember that, although our Lord’s birth is full of every circumstance of humiliation, it has a wondrous glory about it. The Magi, probably from Persia, “wise men”, philosophers and theologians, heard in far-off lands of his fame; and a star led them to his feet: “There came wise men from the east.” They supposed that the birth of Christ would be well known among the Jews, and be a common theme of conversation; so, when they reached Jerusalem, they enquired, “Where is he that is born King of the Jews?” Ah, when the heart is awakened to the love of Christ, it often dreams that everybody else feels an equal interest in him; but it is not so!

The world is dead and cold to Christ; and men look astonished when we ask the question, “Where is he? We have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.” These wise men were not Unitarians, who disbelieved the deity of Christ. It has been said by some that they only meant that they were come to pay him the homage of a king. Then, why did they not worship Herod, and why did Herod say that he wished to worship him? It will not do, the thought is not to be endured for a single moment. The magi believed that he who was born King of the Jews was more than a human being, and they had come to worship him.

[Matthew 2:3](#). *When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.*

The wise men brought the best news that ever was told, and yet it troubled people. Does the gospel trouble you, my friend? Then I am afraid you must be of Herod’s kith and kin. It is an ill sign of a man’s heart when that which is for the good of all men becomes a trouble to him. It is an ill stomach that turns good meat to poison. I suppose “all Jerusalem” was troubled with Herod because they knew that, whenever this gloomy tyrant had a fit upon him, he was sure to draw blood somewhere; therefore they were troubled with him.

[Matthew 2:4](#). *And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.*

Think of this vile wretch taking to studying his Bible. Yet there are some who do the like still. Reckoning that gain is godliness and therefore turning

godliness into gain for sinister motives, they would be religious, and wish to be instructed in the truths of the Bible. Such was Herod; so he gathered all the chief priests and scribes together, and demanded of them where Christ should be born.

[Matthew 2:5-6](#). *And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.*

Now, you see, what Herod did with an ill design was overruled for good, for thus we know on the highest authority that Christ was born at Bethlehem; the chief priests and scribes, great students of the law, when they were assembled in the presence of Herod, declared that, according to prophecy, Christ was to be born in Bethlehem.

[Matthew 2:7-8](#). *Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.*

Covering his bloody design with the pretense of reverence. There is never a worse sin in the world than that which a man covers over with the cloak of religion; let us ever beware of falling into this evil.

[Matthew 2:9-10](#). *When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.*

You see, the light of the star was taken from them for a time, just as sometimes the delightful presence of God is withdrawn from his people. Then, beloved, you walk by faith alone, and not by sight, as these men did; but oh! when the light comes back again, when, after hearing all the chatter of false priests and scribes, and all the talk of Herod the great one, they see the star again, how glad they are! When God sends to his people clear shinings after rain, the brightness of his presence after a time of gloom, then is it with them as it was with the wise men, “they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.”

[Matthew 2:11](#). *And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him:*

The old Reformers used to say, “Here is a bone that sticks in the throat of the Romanists, and they can neither get it up nor down, for it does not say, They saw Mary and the young child, the young child is put first, they came to see him; and it does not say that ‘they fell down and worshipped them.’” If ever there was an opportunity for Mariolatry, surely this was the one, when the child was as yet newly-born, and depended so much upon his mother. Why did not the magi say, “Ave Maria!” and commence at once their Mariolatry? Ay, but these were wise men; they were not priests from Rome, else might they have done it.

[Matthew 2:11](#). *And when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.*

The best they had, presents fit for a King; offered as the tribute of the country from which they came, gold, and frankincense, and myrrh being found in the east. It is well to bring to Christ the best we have, and the best of the best: “gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.”

[Matthew 2:12](#). And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

Verses 1-23

[Matthew 2:1](#). *Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, —*

Probably from that Assyria which is joined with Israel and Egypt in the remarkable prophecy in [Isaiah 19:24-25](#) : “In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria even a blessing in the midst of the land: Whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance. “Behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,” —

[Matthew 2:2-3](#). *Saying, Where is he that is, born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.*

He was troubled about the kingship which he had no right to possess, for he thought that, if the “King of the Jews” was really coming, he would be dethroned. And all Jerusalem was troubled with him, for the people over whom he reigned never knew what mischief he might do when once his suspicions were excited, for he was a cruel, blood-thirsty tyrant.

[Matthew 2:4-6](#). *And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the prince of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.*

It was something to get a distinct declaration from the Jewish rulers that the Christ was to be born at Bethlehem, for Jesus was born there. Afterwards, they called him, “Jesus of Nazareth.” Nazareth was the place where he was brought up, but Bethlehem was the place of his birth, in fulfillment of the prophecy given hundreds of years before the event.

[Matthew 2:7-8](#). *Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.*

Pretty “worship” was that which he would render to the infant King! He intended to murder him, and, in like manner, how often, under the pretense of worshipping Christ, has the very truth of Christ been murdered. Men invent new sacraments, new doctrines, new forms and Romanies, all avowedly for the edification of the Church and for the glory of Jesus; but really that they may stab at the very heart of God’s gospel, and put to death the living truth.

[Matthew 2:9](#). *When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.*

Yet it was not a wandering star, nor a shooting star; but a traveling star such as they had never seen before.

[Matthew 2:10-12](#). *When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.*

Very providentially, the magi had brought the gold with which Joseph would be able to pay the expenses incurred in journeying to the land of

Egypt, and in supporting his family there till he could return to his home and his business. God always takes care of his own children; and specially did he provide for his firstborn and only-begotten Son.

[Matthew 2:13-14](#). *And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt:*

How obedient Joseph was! He was a man of a docile spirit, who willingly did as God bade him. He has, perhaps, never had his character sufficiently well set forth in the Church of God, for he was eminently honoured by being the guardian of the young child and his mother; and he discharged his duty with singular humility and gentleness.

[Matthew 2:15](#). *And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son.*

Which was true first of Israel, the nation, as God's ion, and now again true of Jesus, the great Son of God. It is true also of all sons of God; we have to be called out of Egypt. By the blood of the Paschal Lamb we too are saved, and we are brought out of Egypt with a high hand and an outstretched arm, in the day when God delivers us from our sin.

[Matthew 2:16](#). *Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men.*

That was the light he put upon it: "that he was mocked of the wise men." He was exceeding wroth, and when he was wroth, his anger was terrible. Augustus said of him that it would be better to be Herod's sow than Herod's son, which was true, for he would not kill a sow, as he held to the Jewish faith. He did not kill swine, but he would not mind killing anybody in his passion: "He was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men." He took a wide range in order, so he thought, to make quite sure that he should kill the Child King whom he especially hated.

[Matthew 2:17-18](#). *Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, slaying, In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.*

It must have been a very sorrowful day in Bethlehem; you can imagine the grief that filled the hearts of the mothers there. There is Herod, who acts the hypocrite, and tries to slay Christ at the first, and there is Judas at the end, acts the hypocrite, too, and betrays his Lord. Thus is the life of Christ begun and ended in sorrow.

[Matthew 2:19-22](#). *But when Herod was dead behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life. And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judaea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither:*

Archelaus was another chip off the old block, and a chip of very hard wood, too, equally cruel, and without his father's greatness of mind. He had all Herod's vices without his mental vigor.

[Matthew 2:22](#). *Notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee:*

He did not follow his own judgment. This man, thoroughly a servant of God, waits for orders; he has his fears, but he will not even act upon them, but he waits till he is warned of God in a dream, and then he turns aside into the parts of Galilee.

[Matthew 2:23](#). *And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth:*

Galilee was despised, but Nazareth was thought to be the worst part of Galilee. Netzar is a word in the Hebrew signifying a sprout or branch, and Nazareth apparently comes from the same root.

[Matthew 2:23](#). *That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.*

This is the name commonly given to our Lord in the Old Testament. "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots." Jesus was the sprout, or the shoot out of the withered stem of Jesse. When the dynasty of David was like the tree cut down, and only the stem of it left there sprang up out of it the Netzar, the Nazarene; so he is found dwelling in a city that is called by that name, and

he also is called a Nazarene. And the name clings to him to this day, there are those who will call him by no name but “the Nazarene.” There was one who threatened to crush the Nazarene, but when he was dying he had to cry, “O Nazarene, thou hast triumphed;” and the Nazarene will always do so. He shall be crowned King of kings and Lord of lords, and he shall reign for ever and ever. Hallelujah!

[MATTHEW CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 3

Verses 1-12

We are going to read three passages relating to John the Baptist’s testimony concerning Christ.

[Matthew 3:1-4](#). *In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, and saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. And the same John had his raiment of camel’s hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey.*

Everything connected with John the Baptist was in harmony with his message. He was the preacher of repentance, so the place where he preached was most suitable; it was in the wilderness, where there was nothing to distract his hearers’ attention, as there would have been in crowded cities. His dress was striking, and everything about him, even down to the food that he ate, went to show that he was the rough pioneer preacher preparing the way for his master. John did not teach the fullness of joy and peace; that was left for our Lord Jesus to proclaim; but John came to prepare the way of the Lord by preaching repentance.

[Matthew 3:5](#). *Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan,*

There seems to have been, about that time, a widespread anticipation of the coming of the Messiah; so, no sooner did the news come that a prophet was preaching in the desert, than great multitudes went out to hear him.

[Matthew 3:6-8](#). *And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to*

flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:

Did he not speak after the style of the prophet Elijah? Yet those bold speeches of his were not at all stronger than the evils of the age required. When the self-righteous Pharisees and the skeptical Sadducees the Ritualists and the “modern thought” men of that day came to him to be baptized, he welcomed them not, but bade them “bring forth fruits meet for repentance,” evidences of a change of heart and life.

[Matthew 3:9](#). *And think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones —*

In the bed of Jordan, where he was baptizing, —

[Matthew 3:9](#). *To raise up children unto Abraham.*

John bade them boast not of their descent from Abraham; yet that was the great thing in which they did glory. They despised the Gentiles as so many does outside the true fold. Note how John the Baptist really preaches the gospel to us indirectly while he is denouncing these people’s confidence in their carnal descent. Regeneration is “not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

[Matthew 3:10](#). *And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.*

Other teachers came, as it were, only to lop and prune the trees, but the time had come for the felling of those that were fruitless. John did this, and so did our Lord Jesus Christ, for his preaching dug up the very roots of sin, superstition, and evil of every kind.

[Matthew 3:11-12](#). *I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.*

Now let us turn to the Gospel according to John, where we have another account of the ministry of John the Baptist.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Matthew 3:1-12](#); [John 1:15-37](#); [John 3:22-36](#).

Verses 1-17

[Matthew 3:1-2](#). *In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, and saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is*

at hand.

There is no entering the kingdom of heaven without leaving the kingdom of darkness. We must repent of sin, or we cannot receive the blessings of salvation. Of every man, whoever he may be, whether outwardly moral or openly wicked, repentance is required. It is the door of hope; there is no other way into the kingdom: "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

[Matthew 3:3-4](#). *For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey.*

His raiment and his food were like his doctrine, rough and simple. There was no mincing of words, no making of pretty phrases with John the Baptist; his message was simply, "Repent ye: repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is coming." We want more of this John the Baptist teaching nowadays, that men may be plainly told their faults, and warned to put away those faults that they may receive Christ Jesus as their Saviour.

[Matthew 3:5-7](#). *Then went out to him Jerusalem, and at Judaea, and out the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come*

These were the influential people of the times; the Pharisees were the Ritualists of that age, and the Sadducees were the Pationalists of the period. Why, John, you ought to have smoothed your tongue a bit, and have said some very pleasant words to these great men; for, by so doing, perhaps you might have won some of these Pharisees, or coaxed some of these Sadducees into the kingdom! Ah, no; that is not John's method! He is plainspoken, and he deals truthfully with his hearers, for he knows that converts made by flattery are but flattering converts that are of no real value.

[Matthew 3:8-9](#). *Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: and think not to say within ourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham*

Pointing to the stones in the River Jordan, and all along the banks, he said to the Pharisees and Sadducees, “There is nothing, after all, in your natural descent from Abraham. God has promised that Abraham shall have a seed, but think not that he is dependent upon you for that seed. - He can fulfill his promise without you. He can turn the very pebbles of the stream into children for Abraham. God is not short of men to save. If some of you will not have him, do not think that he shall have to come a-begging to you. There are others who will have him, and his rich sovereign grace will find them out. Beware, ye that are proud and think much of yourselves, for God will not humble himself to you. He hath regard to the humble and the lowly, but the proud he knoweth afar off.”

[Matthew 3:10-12](#). *And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the holy Ghost, and with fire: - whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.*

The Christ is the minister of mercy, but there is about his doctrine a-searching and a trying power. Only the sincere in heart can endure Christ's winnowing fan. As for the insincere, they are blown away like the chaff on the threshing-floor, and their end is destruction. God gave us to be numbered amongst the wheat that Christ shall gather into his heavenly garner!

[Matthew 3:13-14](#). *Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbid him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?*

It seemed very strange that John, the servant, should be required to baptize Jesus, the Master.

[Matthew 3:15](#). *And Jesus answering said unto him, suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him.*

That is to say the Teacher must himself obey the laws, which he is about to lay down; and inasmuch as he is going to bid others to be baptized, he will set the example, and be himself baptized. I think also that the baptism of Christ was the picture, the type, the symbol of the work, which he afterwards accomplished. He was immersed in suffering; he died, and was

buried in the tomb; he rose again from the grave; and all that is set forth in the outward symbol of his baptism in the River Jordan.

[Matthew 3:16-17](#). *And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: and to a voice from heaven, saying, This in my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased.*

And we are well pleased with him.

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 2, and Matthew 3.

Verses 13-17

[Matthew 3:13-14](#). *Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?*

Who among us would not have felt as John did? Shall the servant baptize the Master, and such a Master, even his Lord and Saviour? But merely the condescension of our blessed Lord. He would do everything that he wished his people afterwards to do; and therefore he would be baptized, and set the example that he would have them all follow.

[Matthew 3:15](#). *And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he suffered him.*

We are never to be so modest as to become disobedient to Christ's commands. We have known some who have allowed their humility to grow alone in the garden of their heart without the other sweet flowers that should have sprung up side by side with it, and thus their very humility has developed into a kind of pride. John was easily persuaded to do what his feelings at first seemed to forbid: "Then he suffered him."

[Matthew 3:16-17](#). *And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: and lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*

It has also happened unto the servants of Christ, as well as to their Master, that in keeping the commandments of God there has been a sweet attestation borne by the Holy Spirit. I trust that we, too, according to our measure of sonship, have heard in our hearts the voice from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved son," and that we have experienced the descending of the dove-like Spirit, bringing us peace of mind and gentleness of nature.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Matthew 3:13-17](#); and [Matthew 4:1-11](#).

[MATTHEW CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 4

Verses 1-11

[Matthew 4:1](#). *Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.*

He had just been baptized, the Spirit of God had descended upon him, and the Father had borne witness to him, saying, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,” yet, immediately after all that, he was led into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. So, after your times of sweetest fellowship with God, after the happiest enjoyment of gospel ordinances. After the sealing of the Spirit within your hearts, you must expect to be tempted of the devil. You must not suppose that, in your Christian life, all will be sweetness, — that all will be spiritual witness-bearing. You have to fight the good fight of faith, and your great adversary will not be slow to begin the encounter. You are a pilgrim in a strange land, so you must expect to find rough places on the road to heaven. Yet, since you are so much weaker than your Master was, you will do well to pray the prayer that he taught to his disciples, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”

[Matthew 4:2-3](#). *And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred. And when the tempter came to him,*

See how Satan seizes opportunities. When he finds us weak, as the Saviour was through long fasting; — when he finds us in trying circumstances, as the Saviour was when hungry in the desert; — then it is that he comes to tempt us. This dastardly foe of ours takes every possible advantage of us, that he may, by any means, overthrow us.

[Matthew 4:3](#). *He said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made into bread.*

He begins with an “if.” He tries to cast a doubt upon the Saviour’s Sonship, and this is the way that he often attacks a child of God now. He says to him, “If thou be a son of God, do so-and-so.” He challenged Christ to work a miracle for himself, — to use his divine power on his own behalf,

but this the Saviour never did. He challenged Christ to distrust the providence of God, and to be his own Provider; and this is still a very common temptation to God's people.

[Matthew 4:4](#). *But he answered and said, It is written, —*

That is the only sword that Christ used against Satan, — “the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.” There is nothing like it; and the old dragon himself knows what sharp edges this sword has. Christ said, “It is written,” —

[Matthew 4:4](#). *Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.*

God can sustain human life without the use of bread, although it is the staff of life; for bread does not sustain life unless God puts power into it to do so, and he can, if it pleases him, use that power without the outward means. Our Lord thus showed that God could provide for him in a desert without his interference with the plans of divine providence by selfishly catering for himself. So the first victory was won,

[Matthew 4:5-6](#) *Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple. And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, —*

Here he plays with the Word of God, for the devil can quote Scripture when it suits his purpose to do so: “It is written,” —

[Matthew 4:6](#). *He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.*

The devil did not quote correctly from [Psalms 91:11-12](#); he left out the most important words: “He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways,” but it was not Christ's way to cast himself down from the pinnacle of the temple. Jesus therefore answered Satan's misquotation with a true quotation.

[Matthew 4:7](#). *Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.*

I know some people, who earn their living in employments which are very hazardous to their immortal souls. They are in the midst of evil, yet they tell me that God can keep them in safety there. I know that he can, but I also know that we have no right to go, voluntarily, where we are surrounded by temptation. If your calling is the wrong one, and you are continually tempted in it, you may not presume upon the goodness of God

to keep you, for it is your business to get as far as you can from that which will lead you into sin. God does not put his servants on the pinnacle of the temple; it is the devil who puts them there; and if they ever are there, the best thing they can do is to get down as quickly and as safely as they can; but they must not cast themselves down, they must look to him who alone can bring them down safely. With some professors, presumption is a very common sin. They will go into worldly amusements and all sorts of frivolities, and say, "Oh, we can be Christians, and yet go there!" Can you? It may be that you can be hypocrites, and go there; that is far easier than going there as Christians.

[Matthew 4:8-10](#). *Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.*

Christ will not endure any more of this talk. When it comes to a bribe the promise that the devil will give him earth's glory if he will but fall down and worship him, Christ ends the whole matter once for all. Thrice assaulted, thrice victorious, blessed Master, enable us also to be more than conquerors through thy grace!

[Matthew 4:11](#). *Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.*

Regarding it as their highest honour to be the servants of their Lord.

Verses 12-24

4:12. *Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee;*

Notice that there were at that time only two great ministers of God, John the Baptist, he must go to prison and to death; — Jesus, the Son of God, he must go to the desert to be tempted of the devil. If any Christians escape temptation, they will not be the leaders of the hosts of God. Those who stand in the van must bear the brunt of the battle. Oh, that all who are called to such responsible positions might be as prepared to occupy them as John was, and as Jesus was!

[Matthew 4:13-16](#). *And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the*

prophet, saying, The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; the people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up.

Oh, the tender mercy of our God! Where the darkness is the deepest, there the light shines the brightest. Christ selects such dark regions as Nephthalim and Zabulon that he may dwell there, and shine in all his glory.

[Matthew 4:17](#). *From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*

He was not afraid to give an earnest exhortation to sinners, and to bid men repent. He knew better than we do the inability of men concerning all that is good, yet he bade them repent.

[Matthew 4:18-23](#). *And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And he said unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him. And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them. And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him. And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.*

I like those words “all manner”— that is, every kind and every sort of sickness and disease Christ met. Perhaps you, dear friend, are afflicted in your soul after a very peculiar fashion. Ay, but this great Physician heals all manner of diseases. None are excluded from the list of patients whom he can cure; twice the words “all manner” are used: “Healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.”

[Matthew 4:24](#). *And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them.*

Our Lord Jesus lived as in a hospital while he was on earth; wherever he went, the sins and sorrows of men were all open before his sympathetic gaze. But oh, what joy it must have been to him to be able to deal so well with them all! Am I addressing any who are sick in soul? Our Master is used to cases just like yours; your malady is not new to him. He has healed

many like you; of all that were brought to him, it is written, “he healed them.” Lie before him now, in all your sin and misery, and breathe the prayer, “Thou Son of David, have mercy on me,” and he will surely hear you, and heal you, for he delights to bless and save all who trust him.

This exposition consisted of readings from [John 1:19-51](#); and [Matthew 4:12-24](#).

[MATTHEW CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 5

Verses 1-12

[Matthew 5:1](#). *And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him:*

You notice that the Preacher sat down, and that his disciples stood around him. If you find it somewhat warm and trying tonight, remember that you have the best of it, for you sit while the speaker stands. Concerning our Lord, we read: “When he was set, his disciples came unto him:” —

[Matthew 5:2](#). *And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,* —

Perhaps someone says, “He could not have taught them without opening his mouth” I have found that a great many try to teach without opening their mouths; but the earnest preacher speaks with all his might. So did Jesus in the open air on the mountain side: “He opened his mouth, and taught them.” Such grand things as he had to say ought to come from open portals, so he mumbled not, but” opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,” —

[Matthew 5:3](#). *Blessed are the poor in spirit: for their’s is the kingdom of heaven.*

“Blessed.” See how Jesus begins his Sermon on the Mount, he begins with benedictions. He is a cloud that is full of rain, and that empties itself upon the earth. The moment you begin to know Christ, you begin to have blessings; and the more you know of him, the more blessed you will be. “Blessed are the poor in spirit:” not those who boast themselves of spiritual riches and personal goodness, but the lowly, the meek, the trembling, the humble, the poor in spirit, “for their’s is the kingdom of heaven.”

[Matthew 5:4](#). *Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.*

Let them be comforted now in the prospect of future comfort. There are no mourning hearts that mourn over sin, and mourn after God, that shall be

deserted by their God: “they shall be comforted.”

[Matthew 5:5](#). *Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.*

They do in the truest sense enjoy even this life; their contented spirit makes them monarchs. The great man, with all his wealth, is often uneasy with a craving ambition for more; but the quiet spirits of God’s people find a kingdom everywhere. The mountains and the valleys belong really to him who can, with happy eye, look upon them, and then lift his face to heaven, and feel, “My Father made them all.”

[Matthew 5:6](#). *Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness:*

They want to be better; they are hungry and thirsty after more holiness. They boast not of personal perfection, they are hungering and thirsting after righteousness, but they have not attained to it yet.

[Matthew 5:6](#). *For they shall be filled.*

God will fill them; and when he fills men with his fullness, they are full indeed.

[Matthew 5:7](#). *Blessed are the merciful:*

The forgiving, the generous, the kind: “Blessed are the merciful:” —

[Matthew 5:7-8](#). *For they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.*

There is such a connection between purity of heart and purity of understanding that the man whose eye is clarified by holiness shall see God.

[Matthew 5:9](#). *Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.*

They shall not only be the children of God, but people shall call them by that name. There is something so Godlike in trying to put away discord, and to remove anger, and to promote love, that it makes men feel that peacemakers must be the children of God.

[Matthew 5:10-11](#). *Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.*

It is not when men truthfully speak evil concerning you, but when they say it falsely; not when they say evil against you because of your ill tempers which provoke them, but when they do it falsely, for Christ’s sake, then, “blessed are ye.”

[Matthew 5:12](#). *Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.*

And you are treading in their steps, so you are entering into their heritage. You have your beginning with them, and you shall have your end with them. If persecuted with them, you shall also reign with them.

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 149.; and [Matthew 5:1-12](#).

Verses 1-30

[Matthew 5:1-2](#). *And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,-*

Our Saviour soon gathered a congregation. The multitudes perceived in him a love to them, and a willingness to impart blessing to them, and therefore they gathered about him. He chose the mountain and the open air for the delivery of this great discourse, and we should be glad to find such a place for our assemblies; but in this variable climate we cannot often do so. “And when he was set.” The Preacher sat, and the people stood. We might make a helpful change if we were sometimes to adopt a similar plan now. I am afraid that ease of posture may contribute to the creation of slumber of heart in the hearers. There Christ sat, and “his disciples came unto him.” They formed the inner circle that was ever nearest to him, and to them he imparted his choicest secrets, but he also spoke to the multitude, and therefore it is said that “he opened his mouth,” as well he might when there were such great truths to proceed from it, and so vast a crowd to hear them: “He opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,” —

[Matthew 5:3](#). *Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

This is a gracious beginning to our Saviour’s discourse, “Blessed are the poor.” None ever considered the poor as Jesus did, but here he is speaking of a poverty of spirit, a lowliness of heart, an absence of self-esteem. Where that kind of spirit is found, it is sweet poverty: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

[Matthew 5:4](#). *Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.*

There is a blessing which often goes with mourning itself; but when the sorrow is of a spiritual sort,-mourning for sin,-then is it blest indeed.

“Lord, let me weep for nought but sin,
And after none but thee;

And then I would-oh, that I might-
A constant mourner be!”

[Matthew 5:5](#). *Blessed are the meek:*

The quiet-spirited, the gentle, the self-sacrificing,-

[Matthew 5:5](#). *For they shall inherit the earth.*

It looks as if they would be pushed out of the world but they shall not be, “for they shall inherit the earth.” The wolves devour the sheep, yet there are more sheep in the world than there are wolves, and the sheep, continue to multiply, and to feed in green pastures.

[Matthew 5:6](#). *Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness:*

Pining to be holy, longing to serve God, anxious to spread every righteous principle,-blessed are they.

[Matthew 5:6-7](#). *For they shall be filled.*

Blessed are the merciful: Those who are kind, generous, sympathetic, ready to forgive those who have wronged them,-blessed are they.

[Matthew 5:7-8](#). *For they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart:-*

It is a most blessed attainment to have such a longing for purity as to love everything that is chaste and holy, and to abhor everything that is questionable and unhallowed: blessed are the pure in heart:-

[Matthew 5:8](#). *For they shall see God.*

There is a wonderful connection between hearts and eyes. A man who has the stains of filth on his soul cannot see God, but they who are purified in heart are purified in vision too: “they shall see God.”

[Matthew 5:9](#). *Blessed are the peacemakers:*

Those who always end a quarrel if they can, those who lay themselves out to prevent discord,-

[Matthew 5:9-10](#). *For they shall be called the children of God.*

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. They share the kingdom of heaven with the poor in spirit. They are often evil spoken of, they have sometimes to suffer the spoiling of their goods, many of them have laid down their lives for Christ’s sake, but they are truly blessed, for “theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

[Matthew 5:11](#). *Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shalt say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.*

Mind, it must be said falsely, and it must be for Christ's sake, if you are to be blessed; but there is no blessing in having evil spoken of you truthfully, or in having it spoken of you falsely because of some bitterness in your own spirit.

[Matthew 5:12](#). *Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.*

You are in the true prophetic succession, if you cheerfully bear reproach of this kind for Christ's sake, you prove that you have the stamp and seal of those who are in the service of God.

[Matthew 5:13](#). *Ye are the salt of the earth:*

Followers of Christ, "ye are the salt of the earth." You help to preserve it, and to subdue the corruption that is in it.

[Matthew 5:13](#). *But if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted?*

A professing Christian with no grace in him, a religious man whose very religion is dead, what is the good of him? And he is himself in a hopeless condition. You can salt meat, but you cannot salt salt.

[Matthew 5:13](#). *It is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.*

There are people who believe that you can be children of God today, and children of the devil tomorrow; then again children of God the next day and children of the devil again the day after; but, believe me, it is not so. If the work of grace be really wrought of God in your soul, it will last through your whole life, and if it does not so last, that proves that it is not the work of God. God does not put his hand to this work a second time. There is no regeneration twice over, you can be born again, but you cannot be born again, and again, and again, as some teach there is no note in Scripture of that kind. Hence I do rejoice that regeneration once truly wrought of the Spirit of God, is an incorruptible seed which liveth and abideth for ever. But beware, professor, lest you should be like salt that has lost its savor, and that therefore is good for nothing.

[Matthew 5:14](#). *Ye are the light of the world.*

Christ never contemplated the production of secret Christians, Christians whose virtues would never be displayed, pilgrims who would travel to heaven by night, and never be seen by their fellow-pilgrims or anyone else.

[Matthew 5:14-15](#). *A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it*

giveth light unto all that are in the house.

Christians ought to be seen, and they ought to let their light be seen. They should never even attempt to conceal it. If you are a lamp, you have no right to be under a bushel, or under a bed; your place is on the lampstand where your light can be seen.

[Matthew 5:16](#). *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*

Not that they may glorify you, but that they may glorify your Father who is in heaven.

[Matthew 5:17-18](#). *Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.*

No cross of a “t” and no dot of an “i” shall be taken from God’s law. Its requirements will always be the same; immutably fixed, and never to be abated by so little as “one jot or one tittle.”

[Matthew 5:19-20](#). *Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees,-*

Who seemed to have reached the very highest degree of it; indeed, they themselves thought they went rather over the mark than under it, but Christ says to his disciples, “Unless your righteousness goes beyond that,-

[Matthew 5:20](#). *Ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

These are solemn words of warning. God grant that we may have a righteousness which exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, a righteousness inwrought by the Spirit of God, a righteousness of the heart and of the life!

[Matthew 5:21](#). *Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment:*

Antiquity is often pleaded as an authority; but our King makes short work of “them of old time.” He begins with one of their alterations of his Father’s law. They added to the saved oracles. The first part of the saying which our Lord quoted was divine; but it was dragged down to a low level by the addition about the human court, and the murderer’s liability to

appear there. It thus became rather a proverb among men than an inspired utterance from the mouth of God. Its meaning, as God spake it, had a far wider range than when the offence was restrained to actual killing, such as could be brought before a human judgment-seat. To narrow a command is measurably to annul it. We may not do this even with antiquity for our warrant. Better the whole truth newly stated than an old falsehood in ancient language.

[Matthew 5:22](#). *But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.*

Murder lies within anger, for we wish harm to the object of our wrath, or even wish that he did not exist, and this is to kill him in desire. Anger “without a cause” is forbidden by the command which says “Thou shalt not kill;” for unjust anger is killing in intent. Such anger without cause brings us under higher judgment than that of Jewish police-courts. God takes cognizance of the emotions from which acts of hate may spring, and calls us to account as much for the angry feeling as for the murderous deed. Words also come under the same condemnation: a man shall be judged for what he “shall say to his brother.” To call a man Raca, or a worthless fellow, is to kill him in his reputation, and to say to him, “Thou fool,” is to kill him as to the noblest characteristics of a man. Hence all this comes under such censure as men distribute in their councils; yes, under what is far worse, the punishment awarded by the highest court of the universe, which dooms men to “hell fire.” Thus our Lord and King restores the law of God to its true force, and warns us that it denounces not only the overt act of killing, but every thought, feeling, and word which would tend to injure a brother, or annihilate him by contempt.

[Matthew 5:23-24](#). *Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.*

The Pharisee would urge as a cover for his malice that he brought a sacrifice to make atonement, but our Lord will have forgiveness rendered to our brother first, and then the offering presented. We ought to worship God thoughtfully, and if in the course of that thought we remember that our brother hath ought against us, we must stop. If we have wronged another,

we are to pause, cease from the worship, and hasten to seek reconciliation. We easily remember if we have ought against our brother, but now the memory is to be turned the other way. Only when we have remembered our wrong doing, and made reconciliation can we hope for acceptance with the Lord. The rule is-first peace with man, and then acceptance with God. The holy must be traversed to reach the Holiest of all. Peace being made with our brother, then let us conclude our service towards our Father, and we shall do so with lighter heart and truer zeal. I would anxiously desire to be at peace with all men before I attempt to worship God, lest I present to God the sacrifice of fools.

[Matthew 5:25-26](#). *Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.*

In all disagreements be eager for peace. Leave off strife before you begin. In law-suits, seek speedy and peaceful settlements. Often in our Lord's days, this was the most gainful way, and usually it is so now. Better lose your rights than get into the hands of those who with will only fleece you in the name of justice, and hold you fast so long as a semblance of a demand can stand against you, or another penny can be extracted from you. In a country where "just fee" meant robbery, it was wisdom to be robbed, and to make no complaint. Even in our own country, a lean settlement is better than a fat law-suit. Many go into the court to get wool, but come out closely shorn. Carry on no angry suits in courts, but make peace with the utmost promptitude.

[Matthew 5:27-28](#) *Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.*

In this case our King again sets aside the glosses of men upon the commands of God, and makes the law to be seen in its vast spiritual breadth. Whereas tradition had confined the prohibition to an overt act of unchastity, the King shows that it forbade the unclean desires of the heart. Here the divine law is shown to refer, not only to the act of criminal conversation, but even to the desire, imagination, or passion which would suggest such an infamy. What a King is ours, who stretches his scepter over

the realm of our inward lusts! How sovereignly he puts it: “But, I say unto you”! Who but a divine being has authority to speak in this fashion? His word is law. So it ought to be, seeing he touches vice at the fountain-head, and forbids uncleanness in the heart. If sin were not allowed in the mind, it would never be made manifest in the body this, therefore, is a very effectual way of dealing with the evil. But how searching? how condemning! Irregular looks, unchaste desires and strong passions are of the very essence of adultery; and who can claim a life-long freedom from them? Yet these are the things which defile a man. Lord, purge them out of my nature, and make me pure within!

[Matthew 5:29](#). *And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.*

That which is the cause of sin is to be given up as well as the sin itself. It is not sinful to have an eye, or to cultivate keen perception; but if the eye of speculative knowledge leads us to offend by intellectual sin, it becomes the cause of evil, and must be mortified. Anything, however harmless, which leads me to do, or think, or feel wrongly, I am to get rid of as much as if it were in itself an evil. Though to have done with it would involve deprivation, yet must it be dispensed with, since even a serious loss in one direction is far better than the losing of the whole man. Better a blind saint than a quick-sighted sinner. If abstaining from alcohol caused weakness of body, it would be better to be weak, than to be strong and fall into drunkenness. Since vain speculations and reasonings land men in unbelief, we will have none of them. To “be cast into hell” is too great a risk to run, merely to indulge the evil eye of lust or curiosity.

[Matthew 5:30](#). *And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.*

The cause of offence may be rather active as the hand than intellectual as the eye, but we had better be hindered in our work than drawn aside into temptation. The most dexterous hand must not be spared if it encourages us in doing evil. It is not because a certain thing may make us clever and successful that therefore we are to allow it, if it should prove to be the frequent cause of our falling into sin, we must have done with it, and place ourselves at a disadvantage for our life-work, rather than ruin our whole being by sin. Holiness is to be our first object; everything else must take a

very secondary place. Right eyes and right hands are no longer right if they lead us wrong. Even hands and eyes must go that we may not offend our God by them. Yet, let no man read this literally, and therefore mutilate his body, as some foolish fanatics have done. The real meaning is clear enough.

Verses 13-26

[Matthew 5:13](#). *Ye are the salt of the earth:*

The earth would go putrid if there were no salt of grace to preserve it. So, dear friends, if God's grace is in you, there is a pungent savor about you which tends to preserve others from going as far into sin as otherwise they would have done; "Ye are the salt of the earth:"

[Matthew 5:13](#). *But if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted?*

If the God-given grace could be taken from you altogether, if you had no sanctifying power about you at all, what could be done with you? You would be like salt that has lost its savor.

[Matthew 5:13](#). *It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.*

Mark this, then, either the saints must persevere to the end, or else the grace of God has done nothing for them effectually. If they do not continue to be saints, and to exercise a saintly influence, there is no hope for them. There cannot be two new births for the same person; if the divine work has failed once, it will never be begun again. If they really have been saved, if they have been made the children of God, and if it be possible for them to lose the grace which they have received, they can never have it again. The Word of God is very emphatic upon that point: "If they shall fall away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance" Falling may be retrieved, but falling away never can be happy. There are countries where there is found salt from which the pungency has completely gone. It is an altogether useless article; and if there are men, who ever did possess the grace of God, and who were truly God's people, if the divine life could go out of them, they would be in an utterly hopeless case. Perhaps there are no powers of evil in the world greater than apostate churches; who can calculate the influence for evil that the Church of Rome exercises in the world today?

[Matthew 5:14](#). *Ye are the light of the world.*

The Bible is not the light of the world, it is the light of the Church; but the world does not read the Bible, the world reads Christians; "Ye are the light of the world."

[Matthew 5:14](#). *A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.*

You Christians are like a city built upon a hilltop, you must be seen. As you will be seen, mind that you are worth seeing.

[Matthew 5:15](#). *Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.*

God's intent is, first, to light you; and, secondly, to put you in a conspicuous position, where men can see you.

[Matthew 5:16](#). *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*

Let the light of your purity and your good works be as bright as possible, yet let not the light be to your own praise and glory; but let it be clearly seen that your good works are the result of sovereign grace, for which all the glory must be given to "your Father which is in heaven."

[Matthew 5:17-18](#). *Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.*

See how the great Lord of the New Testament confirms the Old Testament. He has not come to set up a destructive criticism that will tear in pieces the Book of Deuteronomy, or cut out the very heart of the Psalms, or grind Ezekiel to powder between his own wheels; but Christ has come to establish yet more firmly than before all that was written aforetime, and to make it stand fast as the everlasting hills.

[Matthew 5:19](#). *Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.*

A true man may make mistakes, and so he may teach men to violate some one or other of the divine commandments. If he does so, he shall not perish, for he was honest in his blunder; but he shall be among the least in the kingdom of heaven. But he, who earnestly, perseveringly, and conscientiously teaches all that he knows of the divine will, "the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven"

[Matthew 5:20](#). *For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

Christ does not teach a lower kind of morality than the Pharisees taught. They were very particular about little things, jots and tittles; but we must go further than they went; we must have more righteousness of life than they had, although they seemed to their fellow-men to be excessively precise. Christ aims at perfect purity in his people, and we must aim at it too, and we must really attain to more holiness than the best outward morals can produce.

[Matthew 5:21](#). *Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment:*

God had said, “Thou shalt not kill;” but the remainder of the verse was the gloss of the Rabbis, a true one, yet one that very much diminishes the force of the divine command.

[Matthew 5:22](#). *But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment;*

And a far higher judgment than that of men;

[Matthew 5:22](#). *And whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, —*

A word of very uncertain meaning, a kind of snubbing word, a word of contempt which men used to one another, meaning that there was nothing in them: “Whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca,” —

[Matthew 5:22](#). *Shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hellfire.*

Christ will not have us treat men with anger, or with contempt, which is a very evil form of hate, akin to murder, because we as good as say, “That man is nobody;” that is, we make nothing of him, which is morally to kill him. We must not treat our fellow-men with contempt and derision, nor indulge any angry temper against them, for anger is of the devil, but “love is of God.”

[Matthew 5:23-24](#). *Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.*

Note that this injunction is addressed to the man who has offended against his brother; why is this? Because he is the least likely to try to make up the quarrel. It is the man who has been offended who usually exhibits the nobler spirit; but the offender is almost always the last to seek a reconciliation, and therefore the Saviour says to him, “If thy brother hath ought against thee, it is but right that thou shouldst be the first to seek

reconciliation with him. Leave thy gift, go away from the prayer-meeting, turn back from the Lord's table, and go and first be reconciled to thy brother."

[Matthew 5:25](#). *Agree with thine adversary quickly,*

Always be ready to make peace, — not peace at any price; but, still, peace at any price except the sacrifice of righteousness.

[Matthew 5:25-26](#). *Whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.*

And there are some debts of which we cannot pay the uttermost farthing; and there is a prison out of which no man shall come, for the uttermost farthing demanded there shall never be paid. God grant that we may none of us ever know what it is to be shut up in that dreadful dungeon!

Verses 17-48

[Matthew 5:17](#). *Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.*

The life, work, and words of Christ are not an emendation of the Old Testament, or an abrogation of it. It stands fast and firm, fulfilled, carried to perfection, filled to the full in Christ.

[Matthew 5:18-19](#). *For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.*

It is vain to teach the commandments without first doing them. The doing must always precede the teaching. If a man's example cannot be safely followed, it will be unsafe to trust his words.

[Matthew 5:20](#). *For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

The scribes and Pharisees were supposed to be righteous beyond all others. "Nay," saith Christ; "you must go beyond them." They were, after all, superficial, flimsy, pretentious, unreal in their righteousness; and we must have a far nobler character than they ever attained, or we "shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

[Matthew 5:21](#). *Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment.*

This is a proof that Christ did not come to abolish the law, or to abate its demands in any degree whatsoever.

[Matthew 5:22](#). *But I say unto you, —*

Oh, what divine dignity there is in this majestic Person. He claims authority to speak, even though he should contradict all the Rabbis and all the learned men that went before him: “I say unto you,” —

[Matthew 5:22](#). *That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.*

Christ here shows us that the commandment, “Thou shalt not kill,” deals with anger, with angry words, with words of cursing, with words of derision, for all these are killing things, hurting and wounding things, and the passion of anger is forbidden under the command, “Thou shalt not kill.” Men have not thought so, but it really is so, for he who is angry with his brother is a murderer; there is the spirit, the essence of that which leads to murder in the passion which breeds malice and revenge. The law is spiritual; it touches the emotions, the thoughts, the desires, as well as the words and actions of men. If I desire ill for a man, I have within me that which would desire his death; and what is that, after all, but murder in the heart? How strict is this law, and yet how just and right!

[Matthew 5:23-24](#). *Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.*

It is said that, in Hindustan, there is a complete divorce of religion from morality, so that a man may be supposed to be eminently religious even while living in the utmost filthiness and vice; but it must never be so among us. We must never imagine that God can accept an offering from us while we harbor any enmity in our hearts. Perhaps, after reading this passage, you say, “If I had anything against my brother, I would go to him at once, and seek to be reconciled to him.” That would be quite right; but you must go further than that, for Christ says, “If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee.” It is much more easy to go to the man who has wronged you than to the one whom

you have wronged. Yet the second is evidently the clearer duty, and should be attended to at once: neither can we expect the Lord to attend to us unless we attend to this duty.

[Matthew 5:25-26](#). *Agree with thine adversary quickly, while thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.*

There is nothing like ending disputes at once, before the rancor grows, and your adversary becomes determined to push you to extremes. Oh, for more of that spirit of yielding! You know how people say, "If you tread on a worm: it will turn;" but, brethren, a worm is not an example for a Christian, even if the poor wounded creature does turn toward you in its agony. If you turn, turn to kiss the hand that smites you, and to do good to them that evil entreat you.

[Matthew 5:27-28](#). *Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.*

So that the unholy desire, the lascivious glance, everything that approximates towards licentiousness, is here condemned; and Christ is proved to be not the Abrogator of the law, but the Confirmer of it. See how he shows that the commandment is exceedingly broad, wide as the canopy of heaven, all-embracing. How sternly it condemns us all, and how well it becomes us to fall down at the feet of the God of infinite mercy, and seek his forgiveness.

"'Tis mercy — mercy we implore,
We would thy pity move;
Thy grace is an exhaustless store,
And thou thyself art Love."

[Matthew 5:29-30](#). *And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.*

Give up the dearest, choicest, and apparently most needful thing, if it leads you into sin. The same rule that bids you avoid sin, bids you also avoid all that leads to sin. If adultery be forbidden, so also is that glance with which the sin usually begins. We are to turn away our eyes from beholding that which leads towards sin, and we are not to touch or taste that which would readily lead us into iniquity. Oh, that we had sufficient decision of character to make short work of everything which tends towards evil! Many persons, when their right eye offends them, put a green shade over it; and when their right hand offends them, they tie it up in a sling. But that is not obeying the command of Christ. He charges you to get rid of everything that would lead you wrong; make a clean sweep of it. You are wrong enough at your best, so do not permit anything to appertain to you, which would lead you still further astray,

[Matthew 5:31-32](#). *It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: but I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, —*

Which is a sufficient and justifiable reason for divorce, —

[Matthew 5:32](#). *Causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced —*

That is to say, who is divorced without sufficient cause, —

[Matthew 5:32](#). *Committeth adultery.*

Among the Jews, divorce was the easiest thing in the world. A man might, in a fit, utter words which would divorce his wife. The Saviour abolished that evil once for all, and made divorce a crime, as it always is “saving for the cause of fornication.”

[Matthew 5:33-34](#). *Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: but I say unto you, Swear not at all:-*

Christ thus abolishes the whole system of swearing, as it ought to be abolished in every place; and he goes on to show that he did not mean merely unclean, false oaths, or oaths taken as some men take them blasphemously, but every form and kind of oath, for he says, “Swear not at all” —

[Matthew 5:34-37](#). *Neither by heaven; for it is God’s throne: Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not*

make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.

If words mean anything, this command of Christ is an utter abolishment of oaths taken before magistrates as well as everywhere else. I can make nothing else out of it; indeed, it must mean that, because Christ contrasts his teaching with that of former ages: “It hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: but I say unto you, Swear not at all.’ A man who cannot be believed upon his word certainly cannot be believed upon his oath; and, usually, when a man tells a lie, the next thing he does is to swear to it. When Peter denied his Master, the next thing he did was to curse and to swear, because he thought it likely that they would not imagine that he was a follower of Christ if he did curse and swear; so he gave that as a pretty clear proof that he had not been with Christ, and was not one of his disciples. Alas, that we should need anything beside “Yea, yea,” and “Nay, nay!”

[Matthew 5:38-43](#). *Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.*

Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away. Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. There are many who do the second of those two things, but not the first.

[Matthew 5:44-45](#). *But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.*

God constantly does that which many people regard almost as a crime, namely, doing good to the undeserving. It is the very genius of Christianity to help those who are utterly unworthy, — to be kind and generous even to those who are pretty certain to repay us with ingratitude and malice.

[Matthew 5:46-48](#). *For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only,*

what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

Stretch towards the highest conceivable standard, and be not satisfied till you reach it.

Verses 31-42

[Matthew 5:31-32](#). *It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: But I say unto to you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.*

This time our King quotes and condemns a permissive enactment of the Jewish state. Men were wont to bid their wives “begone,” and a hasty word was thought sufficient as an act of divorce. Moses insisted upon “a writing of divorcement,” that angry passions might have time to cool and that the separation, if it must come, might be performed with deliberation and legal formality. The requirement of a writing was to a certain degree a check upon an evil habit, which was so engrained in the people that to refuse it altogether would have been useless, and would only have created another crime. The law of Moses went as far as it could practically be enforced; it was because of the hardness of their hearts that divorce was tolerated; it was never approved. But our Lord is more heroic in his legislation. He forbids divorce except for the one crime of infidelity to the marriage-vow. She who commits adultery does by that act and deed in effect sunder the marriage-bond, and it ought then to be formally recognized by the State as being sundered; but for nothing else should a man be divorced from his wife. Marriage is for life, and cannot be loosed, except by the one great crime which severs its bond, whichever of the two is guilty of it. Our Lord would never have tolerated the wicked laws of certain of the American States, which allow married men and women to separate on the merest pretext. A woman divorced for any cause but adultery, and marrying again, is committing adultery before God, whatever the laws of man may call it. This is very plain and positive; and thus a sanctity is given to marriage which human legislation ought not to violate. Let us not be among those who take up novel ideas of wedlock, and seek to deform the marriage laws under the pretense of reforming them. Our Lord knows better than our modern social reformers. We had better let the laws of God alone, for we shall never discover any better.

[Matthew 5:33-37](#). *Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: but I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither of heaven; for it is God's throne: nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.*

False swearing was forbidden of old, but every kind of swearing is forbidden now by the word of our Lord Jesus. He mentions several forms of oath, and forbids them all, and then prescribes simple forms of affirmation or denial, as all that his followers should employ. Notwithstanding much that may be advanced to the contrary, there is no evading the plain sense of this passage, that every sort of oath, however solemn or true, is forbidden to a follower of Jesus. Whether in court of law, or out of it the rule is, "Swear not at all." Yet, in this Christian country we have swearing everywhere, and especially among law-makers. Our legislators begin their official existence by swearing. By those who obey the law of the Saviour's kingdom, all swearing is set aside, that the simple word of affirmation or denial, calmly repeated, may remain as a sufficient bond of truth. A bad man cannot be believed on his oath, and a good man speaks the truth without an oath; to what purpose is the superfluous custom of legal swearing preserved? Christians should not yield to an evil custom, however great the pressure put upon them; but they should abide by the plain and unmistakable command of their Lord and King.

[Matthew 5:38](#). *Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:*

The law of an eye for an eye, as administered in the proper courts of law was founded in justice, and worked far more equitably than the more modern system of fines; for that method allows rich men to offend with comparative impunity, but when the *lex talionis* came to be the rule of daily life, it fostered revenge, and our Saviour would not tolerate it as a principle carried out by individuals. Good law in court may be very bad custom in common society. He spoke against what had become a proverb and was heard and said among the people, "Ye have heard that it hath been said." Our loving King would have private dealings ruled by the spirit of love and not by the rule of law.

[Matthew 5:39](#). *But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.*

Non-resistance and forbearance are to be the rule among Christians. They are to endure personal ill-usage without coming to blows. They are to be as the anvil when bad men are the hammers, and thus they are to overcome by patient forgiveness. The rule of the judgment seat is not for common life; but the rule of the cross and the all-enduring Sufferer is for us all. Yet how many regard all this as fanatical, utopian, and even cowardly! The Lord, our King, would have us bear and forbear, and conquer by mighty patience. Can we do it? How are we the servants of Christ if we have not his spirit?

[Matthew 5:40](#). *And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also.*

Let him have all he asks, and more. Better lose a suit of cloth than be drawn into a suit in law. The courts of our Lord's day were vicious, and his disciples were advised to suffer wrong sooner than appeal to them. Our own courts often furnish the surest method of solving a difficulty by authority, and we have known them resorted to with the view of preventing strife. Yet even in a country where justice can be had, We are not to resort to law for every personal wrong. We should rather endure to be put upon than be for ever crying out, "I'll bring an action." At times this very rule of self-sacrifice may require us to take steps in the way of legal appeal, to stop injuries which would fall heavily upon others; but we ought often to forego our own advantage, yea, always when the main motive would be a proud desire for self-vindication. Lord, give me a patient spirit, so that I may not seek to avenge myself, even when I might righteously do so!

[Matthew 5:41](#). *And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.*

Governments in those days demanded forced service through their petty officers. Christians were to be of a yielding temper, and bear a double exaction rather than provoke ill words and anger. We ought not to evade taxation, but stand ready to render to Caesar his due. "Yield" is our watchword. To stand up against force is not exactly our part; we may leave that to others. How few believe the long-suffering, non-resistant doctrines of our King!

[Matthew 5:42](#). *Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.*

Be generous. A miser is no follower of Jesus. Discretion is to be used in our giving, lest we encourage idleness and beggary; but the general rule is, “Give to him that asketh thee.” Sometimes a loan may be more useful than a gift, do not refuse it to those who will make right use of it. These precepts are not meant for fools, they are set before us as our general rule; but each rule is balanced by other Scriptural commands, and there is the teaching of a philanthropic common-sense to guide us. Our spirit is to be one of readiness to help the needy by gift or loan, and we are not exceedingly likely to err by excess in this direction; hence the boldness of the command.

Verses 41-48

[Matthew 5:41](#). *And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.*

If you can do him any service, do it cheerfully, do it readily. Do what he wants of you.

[Matthew 5:42](#). *Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.*

This is the spirit of the Christian — to live with the view of doing service.

[Matthew 5:43-46](#). *Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye?*

You have done what anybody would do.

[Matthew 5:46-48](#). *Do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.*

Rise out of ordinary manhood. Get beyond what others might expect of you. Have a high standard. “Be ye, therefore, perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”

This exposition consisted of readings from [Matthew 5:41-48](#); [Matthew 6:1-8](#)

Verses 43-48

[Matthew 5:43](#). *Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy.*

In this case a command of Scripture had a human antithesis fitted on to it by depraved minds and this human addition was mischievous. This is a common method, to append to the teaching of Scripture a something which seems to grow out of it, or to be a natural inference from it, which something may be false and wicked. This is a sad crime against the Word of the Lord. The Holy Spirit will only father his own words. He owns the precept, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor," but he hates the parasitical growth of "hate thine enemy." This last sentence is destructive of that out of which it appears legitimately to grow, since those who are here styled enemies are, in fact, neighbors. Love is now the universal law; and our King, who has commanded it, is himself the pattern of it. He will not see it narrowed down, and placed in a setting of hate. May grace prevent any of us from falling into this error!

[Matthew 5:44-45](#). *But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.*

Ours it is to persist in loving, even if men persist in enmity. We are to render blessing for cursing, prayers for persecutions. Even in the cases of cruel enemies, we are to "do good to them, and pray for them." We are no longer enemies to any, but friends to all. We do not merely cease to hate, and then abide in a cold neutrality, but we love where hatred seemed inevitable. We bless where our old nature bids us curse, and we are active in doing good to those who deserve to receive evil from us. Where this is practically carried out, men wonder, respect, and admire the followers of Jesus. The theory may be ridiculed, but the practice is revered, and is counted so surprising that men attribute it to some Godlike quality in Christians, and own that they are the children of the Father who is in heaven. Indeed, he is a child of God who can bless the unthankful and the evil; for in daily providence the Lord is doing this on a great scale, and none but his children will imitate him. To do good for the sake of the good done, and not because of the character of the person benefited, is a noble imitation of God. If the Lord only sent the fertilizing shower upon the land of the saintly, drought would deprive whole leagues of land of all hope of a

harvest. We also must do good to the evil, or we shall have a narrow sphere, our hearts will grow contracted, and our sonship towards the good God will be rendered doubtful.

[Matthew 5:46](#). *For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?*

Any common sort of man will love those who love him; even tax gatherers and the scum of the earth can rise to this poor, starveling virtue. Saints cannot be content with such a groveling style of things. “Love for love is manlike,” but “love for hate” is Christlike. Shall we not desire to act up to our high calling?

[Matthew 5:47](#). *And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?*

On a journey, or in the streets, or in the house, we are not to confine our friendly greetings to those who are near and dear to us. Courtesy should be wide, and none the less sincere because general. We should speak kindly to all, and treat every man as a brother. Anyone will shake hands with an old friend, but we are to be cordially courteous towards every being in the form of man. If not, we shall reach no higher level than mere outcasts. Even a dog will salute a dog.

[Matthew 5:48](#). *Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.*

Or, “Ye shall be perfect.” We should reach after completeness in love, fullness of love to all around us. Love is the bond of perfectness; and if we have perfect love, it will form in us a perfect character. Here is that which we aim at, perfection like that of God; here is the manner of obtaining it, namely, by abounding in love; and this suggests the question of how far we have proceeded in this heavenly direction, and also the reason why we should persevere in it even to the end, because as children we ought to resemble our Father. Scriptural perfection is attainable, it dies rather in proportion than in degree. A man’s character may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing; and yet such a man will be the very first to admit that the grace which is in him is at best in its infancy, and though perfect as a child in all its parts, it has not yet attained to the perfection of full-grown manhood. What a mark is set before us by our Perfect King, who, speaking from his mountain-throne, saith, “Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect”! Lord, give what thou dost command; then both the grace and the glory will be thine alone.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Matthew 5:43-48](#); and [Matthew 6:1-4](#).

[MATTHEW CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 6

Verses 1-4

[Matthew 6:1](#). *Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.*

“You cannot expect to be paid twice, if therefore you take your reward in the applause of men, who give you a high character for generosity, you cannot expect to have any reward from God.” We ought to have a single eye to God’s accepting what we give, and to have little or no thought of what man may say concerning our charitable gifts.

[Matthew 6:2](#). *Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.*

And they will have no more; there is, in their case, no laying up of any store of good works before God. Whatever they may have done, they have taken full credit for it in the praise of men.

[Matthew 6:3](#). *But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth:*

“Do it so by stealth as scarcely to know it thyself; think so little of it with regard to thyself that thou shalt scarcely know that thou hast done it. Do it unto God; let him know it.”

[Matthew 6:4](#). *That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.*

There is a blessed emphasis upon that word “himself” for, if God shall reward us, what a reward it will be! Any praise from his lips, any reward from his hands, will be of priceless value. Oh, to live with an eye to that alone!

This exposition consisted of readings from [Matthew 5:43-48](#); and [Matthew 6:1-4](#).

Verses 1-8

[Matthew 6:1](#). *Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.*

Our blessed Lord does not tell his disciples to give alms, but he takes it for granted that they do that. How could they be his disciples if they did not so? But he tells them to take care that they do not do this in order to get honour and credit from it. Oh! how much is done in this world that would be very good, but it is spoilt in the doing through the motive done to be seen of men. “Ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.”

[Matthew 6:2](#). *Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you. They have their reward.*

So that they will never have another. They have been paid once for it by the approbation of their fellow-men. They will never have any further reward.

[Matthew 6:3-5](#). *But when thou doest alms let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly. And when thou prayest,*

He does not tell his disciples to pray, but again takes it for granted that they do so, and he cannot be a Christian who does not pray. “A prayerless soul is a Christless soul.” “When thou prayest.”

[Matthew 6:5](#). *Thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.*

All they will ever get. People say, “What a wonderfully pious man he is to pray up at the street corner.” Ay, but that is the reward. The prayer will die where it was offered.

[Matthew 6:6](#). *But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet,*
Get into some quiet nook — some secret place, no matter where.

[Matthew 6:6](#). *And when thou hast shut thy door,*

So that nobody can hear you — not wishing anybody to know even that you are at prayer. “When thou hast shut thy door.”

[Matthew 6:6-8](#). *Pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard*

for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

Prayers are never measured by the yard in heaven. They are estimated by their weight. If there is earnestness in them, truth, sincerity, God accepts them, however brief they are. Indeed, brevity is often an excellence in prayer. Let us never, therefore, use vain repetitions.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Matthew 5:41-48](#); [Matthew 6:1-8](#)

Verses 1-24

[Matthew 6:1](#). *Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.*

The motive which leads a man to give, will form the true estimate of what he does. If he gives to be seen of men then when he is seen of men he has the reward he sought for, and he will never have any other. Let us never do our alms before men, to be seen of them.

[Matthew 6:2-5](#). *Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly. And when thou prayest, thou shall not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.*

I have heard very great commendation give to certain Easterns, because at the hour of the rising of the sun, or the hour when the sound is heard from the summit of the mosque, wherever they may be, they put themselves in the posture of prayer. God forbid I should rob them of any credit they deserve, but far be it from us ever to imitate them. We are not to be ashamed of our prayers, but they are not things for the public street. They are intended for God's eye, and God's ear.

[Matthew 6:6-7](#), *But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. But when ye pray use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think they shall be heard for their much speaking.*

It is not very easy to repeat the same words often without it becoming a vain repetition. A repetition, however, is not forbidden, but a “vain” repetition. And how greatly do they err who measure prayers by the yard. They think they have prayed so much because they have prayed so long, whereas it is the work of the heart — the true pouring out of the desire before God — that is the thing to be looked at. Quality not quantity: truth, not length. Oftentimes the shortest prayers have the most prayer in them.

[Matthew 6:8-9](#). *Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what thing ye have need of, before ye ask him. After this manner therefore pray ye:*

And then he gives us a model of prayer, which never can be excelled, containing all the parts of devotion. They do well who model their prayers upon this.

[Matthew 6:9-13](#) *Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.*

Our Saviour now makes a remark upon this prayer, and on one particular part of it which has stumbled a great many.

[Matthew 6:14-15](#). *For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*

There are some who have altered this, and pray in this fashion, “Forgive us our debts as we desire to forgive our debtors.” It will not do. You will have to desire God to forgive you, and desire in vain, if you pray in that fashion. It must come to this point of literal immediate, completed forgiveness of every offence committed against you if you expect God to forgive you. There is no wriggling out of it. The man who refuses to forgive, refuses to be forgiven. God grant that we may, none of us, tolerate malice in our hearts. Anger glances in the bosom of wise men: it only burns in the heart of the foolish. May we quench it, and feel that we do freely, and fully, and heartily forgive, knowing that we are forgiven.

[Matthew 6:16](#). *Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.*

Simpletons praise them — think much of them, and they plume themselves thereon, and think themselves the very best of men. They have their reward.

[Matthew 6:17-18](#). *But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face: That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.*

Yet have I heard persons speak of certain emaciated ecclesiastics as being such wonderfully holy men. “How they must have fasted! They look like it. You can see it in their faces.” Probably produced by a fault in their digestion much more likely, than by anything else and if not — if we are to suppose that the spareness of a person is to be the token of his holiness — then the living skeleton was a saint to perfection. But we are not beguiled by such follies as these. The Christian man fasts but he takes care that no one shall know it. He wears no ring or token even when his heart is heavy. Full often he puts on a cheerful air, lest by any means he should communicate unnecessary sorrow to others, and he will be cheerful and happy, apparently, in the midst of company, to prevent their being sad, for it is enough for him to be sad himself, and sad before his Father’s face.

[Matthew 6:19-21](#). *Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*

There is many a way of sending your treasure before you to heaven. God’s poor are his money boxes — his exchequer. You can pass your treasure over to heaven by their means. And the work of evangelizing the world by the labours of God’s servants in the ministry of the gospel — you can help this also. Thus also ye can pass your treasure over into the King’s exchequer, and your heart will follow it. I have heard of one who said his religion did not cost him a shilling a year, and it was remarked that very probably it would have been expensive at the price. You will find people form a pretty accurate estimate of the value of their own religion by the proportion which they are prepared to sacrifice for it.

[Matthew 6:22](#). *The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single,*

If thy motive be single — if thou hast only one motive, and that a right one — the master one of glorifying God — if thy eye be single.

[Matthew 6:22-23](#). *Thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!*

When a man's highest motive is himself, what a dark and selfish nature he has; but when his highest motive is his God, what brightness of light will shine upon all.

[Matthew 6:24](#). *No man can serve two masters:*

He can serve two persons very readily. For the matter of that, he can serve twenty, but not two masters. There cannot be two master principles in a man's heart, or master passions in a man's soul. "No man can serve two masters."

[Matthew 6:24](#). *For either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.*

Though some men's lives are a long experiment of how far they can serve the two.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Matthew 6:1-24](#). [1 Corinthians 3:1-16](#).

Verses 5-34

[Matthew 6:5](#). *And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men.*

We ought to pray in the synagogue, and we may pray at the corners of the streets; but the wrong is to do it to "be seen of men," that is, to be looking for some present reward in the praises that fall from human lips.

[Matthew 6:5-7](#). *Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.*

They seem to attribute a sort of power to a certain form of words, as if it were a charm, and they repeat it over and over again. Not only do the poor Mohammedans and heathens "use vain repetitions," but the members of the Romish and other churches that I might name do the same thing; words to which they attach but very slight meaning, and into which they put little or

no heart, are repeated by them again and again, as if there could be some virtue in the words themselves. Let it not be so with you beloved. Pray as long as you like in secret, but do not pray long with the idea that God will hear you simply because you are a long while at your devotions.

[Matthew 6:8](#). *Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before you ask him.*

He does not need to be informed, nor even to be persuaded. Mere words are of no value in his ears. If you must needs use many words, ask them to lend you their ears, for they may have little else to do with them; but God careth not for words alone, it is the thought, the desire of the heart to which he ever hath regard.

[Matthew 6:9](#). *After this manner therefore pray ye:*

Here is a model prayer for you to copy as far as it is suited to your case:

—
[Matthew 6:9-13](#). *After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.*

And then, as it there was one part of the prayer that would be sure to arrest the attention of his hearers, namely, that concerning forgiving our debtors, the Saviour makes the following remarks: —

[Matthew 6:14-15](#). *For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*

Therefore, in order to succeed in prayer, we must have a heart purged from a spirit of revenge and from all unkindness; we must ourselves be loving and forgiving, or we cannot expect that God will hear our supplications when we come to crave his forgiveness.

[Matthew 6:16](#). *Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast.*

They seemed to say to everyone who looked at them, “We have been so engrossed with our devotions that we have not found time even to wash our faces.” But the Saviour says to his followers, “Do not imitate those

hypocrites; do not make public our private religious exercises, perform them unto God, and not unto men. As for those hypocrites,” —

[Matthew 6:16](#). *Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.*

And a poor reward it is.

[Matthew 6:17-18](#). *But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.*

May God give us that modest, unselfish spirit which lives unto him, and does not want to walk in the sham light of men’s esteem! What matters it, after all, what men think of us? The hypocrite proudly boasts if he wins a little praise from his fellows but what is it except so much wind? If all men should speak well of us, all that we should gain would be this, “Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets.”

[Matthew 6:19-20](#). *Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: Bbut lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:*

Christ here first teaches us how to pray, and then teaches us how really to live. He turns our thoughts from the object in life which allures and injures so many, but which is, after all, an object unworthy of our search; and he bids us seek something higher and better: “Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven,” —

[Matthew 6:21](#). *For where your treasure is there will your heart be also.*

It is sure to be so: your heart will follow your treasure. Send it away therefore up to the everlasting hills, lay up treasure in that blessed land before you go there yourself.

[Matthew 6:22-23](#). *The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!*

If thine eye be brooked up with gold dust, or if thou art living for self and this world, thy whole life will be a dark life, and the whole of thy being will dwell in darkness. “But,” says someone, “may I not live for this world and the next too?” listen: —

[Matthew 6:24](#). *No man can serve two masters:*

He may serve two individuals, who have conflicting interests but they cannot both be his masters.

[Matthew 6:24](#). *For either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.*

Either the one or the other will be master, they are so opposed to each other that they will never agree to a divided service. “Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” It is the Lord Jesus Christ who says this, so do not attempt to do what he declares is impossible.

[Matthew 6:25](#). *Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life,*

—

It should be, “Take no distracting thought for your life,” —

[Matthew 6:25](#). *What ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?*

You are obliged to leave your life with God, why not leave with him all care about your food and your raiment?

[Matthew 6:26](#). *Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, or gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?*

Do you believe that, after all your earnest labour and your industry, God will permit you to starve, when these creatures, that labour not, yet are fed?

[Matthew 6:27-29](#). *Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was never arrayed like one of these.*

Christ asks then whether, by taking thought, they can add a single cubit to their lives, for I take his question to mean, whether they could, by any means, make the standard of existence any longer than it was. They could not do so, they could shorten it, and very often, carking care has brought men to their graves. Then Christ bade them note how the lilies grow, so that even Solomon could not excel them for beauty.

[Matthew 6:30-33](#). *Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore, take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?*

(For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

If you want string and brown paper, you need not go into a shop to buy them, but if you buy certain articles, you get string and brown paper in the bargain. So, when you go to God, seeking first his kingdom and his righteousness, these other things, which are but the packing, as it were, the string and the brown paper, are given to you in the bargain. He who giveth you the golden treasures of heaven will not allow you to want for the copper treasures of earth.

[Matthew 6:34](#). *Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.*

You cannot live in tomorrow, so do not fret about tomorrow. You live in today, so think of today, spend today to God's glory, and leave the care about tomorrow until tomorrow comes.

[MATTHEW CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 7

Verses 1-8

[Matthew 7:1-2](#). *Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.*

Use your judgment, of course: the verse implies that you will judge in a right sense. But do not indulge the criticizing faculty upon others in censorious manner, or as if you were set in authority, and had a right to dispense judgment among your fellows. If you impute motives, and pretend to read hearts, others will do the same towards you. A hard and censorious behaviour is sure to provoke reprisals. Those around you will pick up the peck measure you have been using, and measure your corn with it. You do not object to men forming a fair opinion of your character, neither are you forbidden to do the same towards them, but as you would object to their sitting in judgment upon you, do not sit in judgment upon them. This is not the day of judgment, neither are we his Majesty's judges, and therefore we may not anticipate the time appointed for the final assize, nor usurp the

prerogatives of the Judge of all the earth. Surely, if I know myself aright, I need not send my judgment upon circuit to try other men, for I can give it full occupation in my own Court of Conscience to try the traitors within my own bosom.

[Matthew 7:3-5](#). *And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cut out the mote out of thy brother's eye.*

The judging faculty is best employed at home. Our tendency is to spy out splinters in other men's eyes, and not to see the beam in our own. Instead of beholding, with gratified gaze, the small fault of another, we should act reasonably if we penitently considered the greater fault of ourselves. It is the beam in our own eye which blinds us to our own wrong doing; but such blindness does not suffice to excuse us, since it evidently does not shut our eyes to the little error of our brother. Officiousness pretends to play the oculist; but in very truth it plays the fool. Fancy a man with a beam in his eye pretending to deal with so tender a part as the eye of another, and attempting to remove so tiny a thing as a mote or splinter! Is he not a hypocrite to pretend to be so concerned about other men's eyes, and yet he never attends to his own? Jesus is gentle, but he calls that man a "hypocrite" who fusses about small things in others and pays no attention to great matters at home in his own person. Our reformations must begin with ourselves, or they are not true, and do not spring from a right motive. Sin we may rebuke, but not if we indulge it. We may protest against evil, but not if we willfully practice it. The Pharisees were great at censuring, but slow at amending. Our Lord will not have his kingdom made up of hypocritical theorists, he calls for practical obedience to the rules of holiness. After we are ourselves sanctified, we are bound to be eyes to the blind, and correctors of unholy living; but not till then. Till we have personal piety, our preaching of godliness is sheer hypocrisy. May none of us provoke the Lord to say to us, "Thou hypocrite"!

[Matthew 7:6](#). *Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.*

When men are evidently unable to perceive the purity of a great truth, do not set it before them. They are like mere dogs, and if you set holy things before them they will be provoked to “turn again and rend you”: holy things are not for the profane. “Without are dogs”: they must not be allowed to enter the holy place. When you are in the midst of the vicious, who are like “swine,” do not bring forth the precious mysteries of the faith, for they will despise them, and “trample them under their feet” in the mire.

You are not needlessly to provoke attack upon yourself, or upon the higher truths of the gospel. You are not to judge, but you are not to act without judgment. Count not men to be dogs or swine; but when they avow themselves to be such, or by their conduct act as if they were such, do not put occasions in their way for displaying their evil character. Saints are not to be simpletons; they are not to be judges, but, also, they are not to be fools. Great King, how much wisdom thy precepts require! I need thee, not only to open my mouth, but also at times to keep it shut.

[Matthew 7:7-8](#). *Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.*

To men you may not always speak of heavenly things, but to God you may. “Ask, seek, knock”; let your prayer be adapted to the case; let it increase in intensity, let it advance in the largeness of its object. To receive a gift is simple, to find a treasure is more enriching, to enter into a palace is best of all. Each form of prayer is prescribed, accepted, and rewarded in a manner suitable to its character. The promise is universal to all who obey the precept. The commands are in opposition to the methods of carking care which have been denounced in the former chapter; and they are encouragements to the precepts of giving and non-recessional set forth previously, since he that can have of God for the asking may well give to men who ask, and even yield to those who unjustly demand. With such boundless stores at command, we should not be either niggardly or litigious. Lord, help me to have done with fretting, and to abound in asking, seeking, knocking; so shall I soon overflow with thanksgiving.

Verses 1-29

[Matthew 7:1-2](#). *Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again.*

Some people are of a censorious disposition; they see nothing in others to praise, but everything to blame, and such people generally find that they are condemned according to their own wicked rule. Other people begin to judge those who are so fond of judging. If they are so wise, and so discriminating, others expect more from them; and not finding it, they are not slow to condemn them. It is an old proverb that chickens come home to roost, and so they do. If you judge ill of others, that judgment will, sooner or later, come home to yourself.

[Matthew 7:3-5](#). *And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye! Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.*

At the bottom of all censoriousness lies hypocrisy. An honest man would apply to himself the judgment which he exercises upon others, but it usually happens that those who are so busy spying out other people's faults have no time to see their own; and what is this, at the bottom, but insincerity and hypocrisy?

[Matthew 7:6](#). *Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.*

Zeal should always be tempered by prudence. There are times when it would be treason to truth to introduce it as a topic of conversation, -when men are in such a frame of mind that they will be sure rather to cavil at it than to believe it. Not only speak thou well, but speak thou at the right time, for silence is sometimes golden. See that thou hast thy measure of golden silence as well as of silver speech.

[Matthew 7:7](#). *Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:*

Here is a three-fold encouragement to us to pray. When we cannot use one style of prayer, let us use another, for each shall be successful at the right time. O child of God, let nothing keep thee from prayer! It has been well said that a Christian may be hedged in, but he cannot be roofed in; there is always a passage way upwards to the throne of the great Father; and asking, knocking, seeking, he shall be sure to be successful with his suit.

[Matthew 7:8](#). *For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.*

Ask the people of God whether it is not so. Go among them, and question them upon this matter. They know the power of prayer, so let them tell you whether they have been deceived or not. Well, then, as it has been so with them, let this encourage you to expect that it shall be the same with you also.

[Matthew 7:9-12](#). *Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him.? Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them for this is the law and the prophets.*

Is there a connection between this conduct on our part and answers to our prayer? Undoubtedly it is so from the position of the text. If we will never grant the requests of those who need our help, in oases where we should expect to be ourselves helped, how can we go to God with any confidence, and ask him to help us? I doubt not that many a man has received no answer to his prayer because that prayer has come out of a heart hard and untender, which would not permit him to grant the requests of others. O child of God, do thou to others as thou wouldst that they should do to thee, then canst thou go to thy God in prayer with the confidence that he will hear and answer thee!

[Matthew 7:13](#). *Enter ye in at the strait gate:*

Do not be ashamed of being called Puritanical, precise, and particular:
Enter ye in at the narrow gate.”

[Matthew 7:13](#). *For wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction,*

Do not choose that way.

[Matthew 7:13-21](#). *And many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth-evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good*

fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father, which is in heaven.

That still remains as the great test of the true heir of heaven, the doing of the divine will. All the talking, thinking, posturing in the world will not save a man. There must be in him such a faith as produces holiness.

[Matthew 7:22-25](#). *Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house;-*

Whoever you are, and whatever you build, it will be tried. No matter how firm is the rock beneath you, the winds will blow, and the rains will pour down upon your building. Whether you are in a palace or in a hovel, trial and testing must and will come to you: “The floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house,-

[Matthew 7:25](#). *And it fell not:*

There is the mercy “it fell not.”

[Matthew 7:25-27](#). *For it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house,*

Even if you live to the world, or live unto Satan, you will not live without trial. The ungodly, who have their portion in this life, have to eat some bitter herbs with it, and have to dip their morsel in vinegar quite as much as believers do. “The floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house;

[Matthew 7:27](#). *And it fell:*

Just when the tenant most needed shelter, it fell. He did not need it so much till the floods came, and the winds blew; but now, when he would fain have crouched down beneath his roof-tree, and have been at peace from the howling hurricane, then “it fell.”

[Matthew 7:27](#). *And great was the fall of it.*

The fall was so great because he could never build again.

[Matthew 7:28-29](#). *And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.*

Not quoting Rabbi so-and-so, to show how well he was acquainted with his writings, but speaking as one who knew what he had to say, and who spoke, out of the fullness of his heart, truth that was evidently inspired; and his hearers felt the force of the solemn message which he thus delivered.

Verses 7-29

[Matthew 7:7](#). *Ask, and it shall be given you;*

He that will not ask for it deserves to go without it. Have you ever asked for it? If not, whose fault is it that you have it not?

[Matthew 7:7](#). *Seek, and ye shall find;*

How can you hope to find if you do not seek? Have you never found it? Have you never sought it? And if you have never sought it, how do you excuse yourselves for your neglect?

[Matthew 7:7](#). *Knock, and it shall be opened unto you:*

Is that all-knock? Is the gate of heaven not opened to you? Have you never knocked? Do you wonder, therefore, that the door is shut? Take care; for the time may come when you will knock, and the door will not be opened to you; for, "when once the Master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door," then knocking shall be in vain. But at present this verse is still God's gracious word of command and promise; let me read it to you again: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

[Matthew 7:8](#). *For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.*

When you are dealing with men, this is not always true. You may ask, and not receive; you may seek, and not find; you may knock, and not have the door opened to you. But when you deal with God, there are no failures or refusals. Every true asker receives; every true seeker finds; and every true knocker has the door opened to him. Will you not try it, and prove for yourself that it is even so?

[Matthew 7:9-11](#). *Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?*

You not only give, but you know how to give so as not to disappoint the asker. It is most blessedly so with the great Father in heaven. He will not give you that which will mock and disappoint you: he will give you bread, not a stone; fish, not a serpent; nay, more, he will give you the bread of life, and the water of life, that you may live for ever.

[Matthew 7:12](#). *Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.*

This is rightly called “the golden rule.” Christ says of it that it is “the law and the prophets.” It is the essence of them, it is the sum and substance of the highest morality. What you would that others should do to you, do that to them. Do not let that golden rule remain merely as a record in this Book, but take it out with you into your daily life. If we did all act to others as we would that others should act to us, how different would the lives of many men become! Ours would be a happy world if this law of Christ were the law of England, and the law of all nations. God send us the Spirit by whom alone we shall be able to obey so high a rule!

[Matthew 7:13](#). *Enter ye in at the strait gate*

The narrow gate

[Matthew 7:13-14](#). *For wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*

Do not try to go with the majority; truth is usually with the minority. Do not count heads, and say, “I am for that which has the most on its side;” but prefer that which is least liked among men, choose that which is most difficult, most trying to flesh and blood, that which gives you least license, because “strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” You will not hit upon it, then, in a “happy-go-lucky” sort of style. Heaven’s gate is not found open by accident; there never was anybody yet who was saved by accident. No: “few there be that find it,” is still true. God grant that we may be among the few! And why should we not be?

[Matthew 7:15](#). *Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.*

There are always plenty of them about; there is nothing of the sheep about them but the skin, and there is no connection between that skin and those that wear it.

[Matthew 7:16-20](#). *Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.*

You may judge men as well as trees that way; and you may judge doctrines that way. That which gives a license to sin cannot be true; but that which makes for holiness is true; for, somehow, truth of doctrine and holiness of life run together. We cannot expect holiness to grow out of falsehood, but we may expect all manner of evil to come out of false teaching.

[Matthew 7:21](#). *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father, which is in heaven.*

Practice is the true test, not words. Not he that saith, “Lord, Lord,” but “he that doeth the will of God;” not he that merely has good words on his tongue, but he that has the will of God laid up in his heart, and wrought out in his life, that is the man who “shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

[Matthew 7:22-23](#). *Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*

If our lives are evil, it does not matter to what denomination we belong; we may be clever preachers, or mighty teachers, we may fancy that we have had dreams and visions, we may set ourselves up to be some great ones; but if we have not done the will of God, we shall at the last hear Christ say to us, “Depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”

[Matthew 7:24-25](#). *Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.*

He was a good man, and a practical man; yet he was also a tried man. His house was built on the rock, but that did not prevent the rain descending, and the floods coming, and the winds blowing. The highest type of godliness will not save you from troubles and trials; it will, in some

measure, even necessitate them. But, blessed be God, here lies the gem of the parable or narrative: “It fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.” It could stand the strain and endure the test, for it had a good foundation.

[Matthew 7:26-27](#). *And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.*

He was a great hearer, but he was a bad doer; yet he thought that he was a good doer, for he built a house. Alas, the house was on the sand! There was no real obedience to Christ, no true trusting in him; and so, when the time of trouble came, and trouble will come even to the hypocrite and to the false professor, we read of his house, “It fell: and great was the fall of it,” because it could never be built up again. It fell hopelessly; it fell forever; therefore, “Great was the fall of it.”

[Matthew 7:28-29](#). *And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.*

There was a force and power about what Jesus said, he spoke from the heart, he spoke with the accent of conviction; whereas the scribes and Pharisees only spoke magisterially and officially, with no heart in their utterance, and there was therefore no power about it. God give to all of us the grace to know the power of the words of Christ! Amen.

Verses 13-23

[Matthew 7:13-14](#). *Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*

Be up and on your journey. Enter in at the gate at the head of the way, and do not stand hesitating. If it be the right road, you will find the entrance somewhat difficult, and exceedingly narrow; for it demands self-denial, add calls for strictness of obedience, and watchfulness of spirit. Nevertheless, “enter ye in at the strait gate.” Whatever its drawbacks of fewness of pilgrims, or straitness of entrance, yet choose it and use it. True, there is another road, broad and much frequented; but it leadeth to destruction. Men go to ruin along the turnpike road, but the way to heaven is a bridle-path. There may come other days, when the many will crowd the narrow way; but, at this time, to be popular, the road must be broad — broad in doctrine,

in morals, and in spirituals. But those on the strait road shall go straight to glory, and those on the broad road are all abroad. All is well that ends well: we can afford to be straitened in the right way rather than enlarged in the wrong way; because the first endeth in endless life, and the second hastens down to everlasting death. Lord, deliver me from the temptation to be “broad,” and keep me in the narrow way, though few find it!

[Matthew 7:15](#). *Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.*

We have need of our judgments, and we must try the Spirits of those who profess to be sent of God. There are men of great gifts who are “false prophets.” These affect the look, language and spirit of God’s people, while really they long to devour souls, even as wolves thirst for the blood of sheep. “Sheep’s clothing” is all very fine, but we must look beneath it and spy out the wolves. A man is what he is inwardly. We had need beware. This precept is timely at this hour. We must be careful, not only about our way, but about our leaders. They come to us; they come as prophets; they come with every outward commendation; but they are very Balaams, and will surely curse those they pretend to bless.

[Matthew 7:16](#). *Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?*

Their teaching, their living, and their effect upon our minds will be a sure test to us. Every doctrine and doctrinaire may thus be tried. If we gather grapes of them, they are not thorns; if they produce nothing but thistle-down, they are not fig-trees. Some object to this practical method of test; but wise Christians will carry it with them as the ultimate touchstone. What is the effect of modern theology upon the spirituality, the prayerfulness, the holiness of the people? Has it any good, effect?

[Matthew 7:17-18](#). *Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.*

Every man produces according to his nature; he cannot do otherwise. Good tree, good fruit; corrupt tree, evil fruit. There is no possibility of the effect being higher and better than the cause. The truly good does not bring forth evil; it would be contrary to its nature. The radically bad never rises to produce good, though it may seem to do so. Therefore, the one and the other may be known by the special fruit of each. Our King is a great teacher of prudence. We are not to judge; but we are to know, and the rule for this

knowledge is as simple as it is safe. Such knowledge of men may save us from great mischief which would come to us through associating with bad and deceitful persons.

[Matthew 7:19](#). *Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Here is the end to which evil things are tending, The ax and the fire await the ungodly, however fine they may look with the leafage of profession.*

Only let time enough be given, and every man on earth who bears no good fruit will meet his doom. It is not merely the wicked, the bearer of poison berries, that will be cut down but the neutral, the man who bears no fruit of positive virtue must also be cast into the fire.

[Matthew 7:20](#). *Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.*

It is not ours to hew or to burn, but it is ours to know. This knowledge is to save us from coming under the shadow or influence of false teachers. Who wants to build his nest upon a tree which is soon to be cut down? Who would choose a barren tree for the center of his orchard? Lord, let me remember that I am to judge myself by this rule. Make me a true fruit-bearing tree.

[Matthew 7:21](#). *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.*

No verbal homage will suffice: "Not every one that saith." We may believe in our Lord's Deity, and we may take great pains to affirm it over and over again with our "Lord, Lord"; but unless we carry out the commands of the Father, we pay no true homage to the Son. We may own our obligations to Jesus, and so call him "Lord, Lord"; but if we never practically carry out those obligations, what is the value of our admissions? Our King receives not into his kingdom those whose religion lies in words and ceremonies, but only those whose lives display the obedience of true discipleship.

[Matthew 7:22-23](#). *Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*

An orthodox creed will not save if it stands alone, neither will it be sure to do so if accompanied by official position and service. These people said, "Lord, Lord," and, in addition, pleaded their prophesying or preaching in

his name. All the preaching in the world will not save the preacher if he does not practice. Yes, and he may have been successful — successful to a very high degree — “and in thy name have cast out devils,” and yet, without personal holiness, the caster-out of devils will be cast out himself. The success boasted of may have had about it surprising circumstances of varied interest — “and in thy name done many wonderful works”; and yet the man may be unknown to Christ. Three times over the person is described as doing all “in thy name”; and yet the Lord, whose name he used so freely, so boldly, knew nothing of him, and would not suffer him to remain in his company. The Lord cannot endure the presence of those who call him “Lord, Lord,” and then work iniquity. They professed to him that they knew him, but he will “profess unto them, I never knew you.” How solemn is this reminder to me and to others! Nothing will prove us to be true Christians but a sincere doing of the Father’s will! We may be known by all to have great spiritual power over devils, and men, and yet our Lord may not own us in that great day, but may drive us out as impostors whom he cannot tolerate in his presences.

Verses 13-29

[Matthew 7:13](#). *Enter ye in at the strait gate.*

It is very unpopular. The great ones will recommend to you great liberality and breadth; but enter yet in at the strait gate.

[Matthew 7:13](#). *For wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat .’*

That is a rule that is very unfashionable in these times; but depend upon it, the Lord, who gave it to us, meant it for all times. That which seems narrow, which costs you self-denial — that which is contrary to the will of the flesh — that which does not seem to charm the eye and fascinate the senses — go after that “Enter ye in at the strait gate.” You will not be likely to err much, or too much on that side. Let this be a gauge to you. That kind of preaching which allows you to indulge in sin — that sort of teaching which lowers the standard of God’s Word for you, and makes you think more of your own judgment than of the teachings of Christ — away with it. Let others have it if they like. “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat.”

[Matthew 7:14](#). *Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that of it.*

It is still so. Indeed, none find it, unless grace finds them. He who made that gate must go after the wandering sheep, and bring them through that gate. They will never choose it of themselves.

[Matthew 7:15](#). *Beware of false prophets.*

Some honour and esteem all prophets. “Is not it a very high office? Is not a prophet a man sent from God?” Yes, and for that very reason there are counterfeits whom God has never sent. Beware of false prophets.

[Matthew 7:15](#). *Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.*

They look just like sheep. They look just like shepherds, but it is only their clothing. The mere hypocrite is the goat in sheep’s clothing. But a false prophet is a wolf in sheep’s clothing, because he can do so much more harm, and will do, so much more damage to the church of God.

[Matthew 7:16](#). *Ye shall know them by their fruits.*

They are sure to come out in their actions. If you have not got the knowledge of theology, and the like, to be able to judge their teaching, yet the simplest persons can judge their actions.. “You shall know them ‘by their fruits,’ which are sure to come out sooner or later.

[Matthew 7:16](#). *Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?*

Did you ever find a cluster of grapes growing upon a thorn-bush? Grapes and figs are pleasant fruit, and holy living, true devotion, communion with God — these are the things that are sweet to God and to good men. But they come not of false doctrine. They are not seen in false prophets. Such prophets despise such things as these. They are for worldly ways, and places of worldly gaiety they can frequent. Not so the servants of God.

[Matthew 7:17-19](#). *Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit: but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.*

That is what comes of it in the end. It may spread itself abroad, and may gather much admiration, to itself for its verdure, but there is an axe being sharpened, and a fire being kindled

[Matthew 7:20](#). *Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.*

You cannot judge them by their bark, or by the spread of their branches, or by the verdure of their leaves, or even by the beauty of their blossoms in spring time. “By their fruits ye shall know them.” The Saviour here gives us

a very earnest and very necessary warning, lest we should be deceived, for there are such who are not only deceived by their own sins, but deceived by false prophets, who are among Satan's best agents.

[Matthew 7:21](#). *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven;*

They were very sound in doctrine. They called Jesus "Lord." They believed in his Deity. Apparently, they were very devout. They said, "Lord." They worshipped him. They were very importunate and earnest. They said, "Lord, Lord," ewing to him again and again. But "not everyone that saith unto me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter into the kingdom of heaven." External utterances, however orthodox; professions, however sound, are not enough.

[Matthew 7:21](#). *But he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.*

Oh! dear friends, there must be holiness in us, for without holiness no man can see the Lord. It is not knowing the will of the heavenly Father, but doing it which is the mark of divine election. If God's grace has really entered into us, we, like the prophets, shall be known by our fruits; and if we are not doing the will of our Father who is in heaven, we shall not come to the heaven where he is.

[Matthew 7:22](#). *Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name?*

Yes, so did Balaam. Was not Saul also among the prophets, and yet neither Balaam nor Saul was accepted of God, but they were castaways, "Have we not prophesied in thy name?" A man may be a preacher, and an eloquent preacher, and he may even have some blessing upon his preaching, and yet be cast away for ever.

[Matthew 7:22](#). *And in thy name have cast out devils;*

Yes, and there was one that cast out devils, and he was a devil himself, namely, Judas Iscariot, which also betrayed him. He went out and wrought miracles in the name of Christ, and then sold Christ for pieces of silver.

[Matthew 7:22](#). *And in thy name done many wonderful works?*

Yes, and we may do many wonderful works, and yet be wonderfully deceived. It is not wonderful works: it is holy works; not works that amaze men, but works that please God, which are the proof of grace in the soul. Well, there will be some who will be able to say that they prophesied — that they cast out devils — that they did wonders.

[Matthew 7:23](#). *And then, will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*

[MATTHEW CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 8

Verses 1-13

[Matthew 8:1](#). *When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him.*

There was a charm about his preaching, not that he modified his doctrine, or that he cut down his precepts; he spoke very plainly, very searchingly, and yet the people came to hear him. There is a something in the conscience of man that makes him turn away from that which flatters him, and makes him hear, almost against his liking, that which searches him.

[Matthew 8:2](#). *And, behold,*

Never mind about the crowd; fix your eye on the one man; behold, etc. — here is a mark of attention.

[Matthew 8:2](#). *There came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.*

He could not live in the city, but he might be found on the mount, in the outskirts of the crowd, where he would hear that gracious voice; and he came and “worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean,” in which I detect no unbelief, but rather a very strong faith. “If thou dost but will, I can be made clean.” And Jesus, seeing the man was willing to dispense with any outward form used one.

[Matthew 8:3](#). *And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him,*

Not making himself unclean, as any other man would have done, but making him clean whom he touched.

[Matthew 8:3](#). *Saying, I will;*

A word of encouragement.

[Matthew 8:3](#). *Be thou clean.*

A word of power.

[Matthew 8:3](#). *And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.*

Christ’s grace, which usually wrought at once, in an instant, wrought for ever — the man was cleansed, never to be sick again; cured perfectly; the

leprosy was cleansed.

[Matthew 8:4](#). *And Jesus said unto him, See thou tell no man;*

Do not spread the news, the crowd is inconvenient already. It was not only Christ's modesty, but Christ's wisdom to keep down the throng a little, for they were too many which gathered about him.

[Matthew 8:4](#). *But go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.*

While the ceremonial law stood, Christ was very careful to pay it honour. He came not to destroy, but he came to build up and to fulfill. He would have this man go and get a certificate from the priest that he was cleansed. Perhaps if he did not go at once, when it was found out that Christ healed him, the certificate might have been denied, and the man might not have been able to mingle with the company, so he sent him away quickly, to go to the priest with his offering to get the assurance that he was really cleansed. When Christ's work is certified by Christ's voice, then is it sure indeed.

[Matthew 8:5](#). *And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum,*

Which I may call his headquarters, he seems to have taken up his abode here for a time, to have gone to and fro to Capernaum.

[Matthew 8:5](#). *There came unto him a centurion,*

An officer over a hundred men, of some importance in those days; a small band of the Roman army placed in Herod's territory, perhaps to keep watch.

[Matthew 8:5-6](#). *Beseeching him, and saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented.*

Sir Risdon Bennett tells us that there is a species of palsy which is accompanied with great pain, and we know, even from the apocrypha, there is a case there of a man grievously tormented with palsy — not exactly the same thing, perhaps, that we call palsy nowadays.

[Matthew 8:7](#). *And Jesus said unto him, I will come and heal him.*

He did not say, "I will come and see him"; that would have been kind — he did not say what you and I would say, "I will come and pray with him"; that is all we can do — but "I will come and heal him." Here is the tenderness of man and the power of God.

[Matthew 8:8-9](#). *The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof; but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority,*

Here was a great point — here was a man commissioned, a man authorized, girt with authority; and he looked upon Christ in the same manner, sent of God, under divine authority, girt about with a heavenly commission.

[Matthew 8:9](#). *Having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth: and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.*

He did not further explain. It is a pity sometimes when we explain things to God in prayer, as I am afraid we often do, God knows what we mean. And so here he did not explain his meaning; we can see it clearly enough. “Thou too, O Christ, art under the authority of God, and sent by him, and thou hast the powers of nature under thy control. Thou hast but to say the word, and they go; do this, and they do it.”

[Matthew 8:10](#). *When Jesus heard it, he marveled,*

He had marveled at men’s unbelief; now he marvels at their faith, so that the thing which touches the wonder of God is man’s unbelief and man’s faith.

[Matthew 8:10](#). *And said to them that followed, Verily, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel,*

This man is not an Israelite; he is a Roman soldier; but I have never found so much faith in those to the manner born as I find in this stranger.

[Matthew 8:11](#). *And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west,*

From differing lands and extreme distances.

[Matthew 8:11](#). *And shall sit down*

Or recline in ease and rest.

[Matthew 8:11-12](#). *With Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom,*

Those born in Israel, who belong to the promised seed.

[Matthew 8:12-13](#). *Shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way, and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the self same hour.*

It is greatly important not only that we believe, but that we believe as much as ever we can, that we believe all that Christ has spoken. Some people, when they are converted, believe that they may fall from grace, and they do; according to their faith, so is it unto them. If they could believe for

eternal life and lay hold on everlasting life, they would find it so, for generally it is according to their faith that it is unto them.

Verses 1-27

[Matthew 8:1-2](#). *When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him. And, behold, there came a leper —*

You see that particular mention is made of this one special case, and, in any congregation, while it may be recorded that so many people came together, the special case that will be noted by the recording angel will be that of anyone who comes to Christ with his own personal distresses, and who thereby obtains relief from them: “Behold, there came a leper” —

[Matthew 8:2-3](#). *And worshipped him, saying, Lord if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus put forth his hand and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.*

His faith was not as strong as it might have been. There was an “if” in it; but, still, it was genuine faith, and our loving Lord fixed his eye upon the faith rather than upon the flaw that was in it, and if he sees in you, dear friend, even a trembling faith, he will rejoice in it, and bless you because of it. He will not withhold his blessing because you are not as strong in faith as you should be. Probably, you will have a greater blessing if you have greater faith; but even little faith gets great blessings from Christ. The leper said to him, “If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean;” so Christ answered to the faith that he did possess,” and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.”

[Matthew 8:4-7](#). *And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man; but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them. And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion beseeking him, And saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him.*

He had not asked Christ to “come and heal him.” He wished his servant to be healed, but he considered that it was too great an honour for Christ to come to him. I am not sure, but I think that this man’s judgment is correct, — that, for Christ to come to a man is better than for healing to come to him. Indeed, brethren and sisters, all the gifts of Christ fall far short of himself. If he will but come, and abide with us, that means more than all else that he can bestow upon us.

[Matthew 8:8-9](#). *The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.*

From his own power over his soldiers and servants, he argued that Christ must have at least equal power over all the forces of nature; and, as a centurion did not need to go and do everything himself, but gave his orders to his servant, and he did it, so, surely, there could be no need for the great Commander, to whom he was speaking to honour the sick man with his own personal presence. He had simply to utter the command and it would be obeyed, and the centurion's servant would be healed. Do you think this is an ingenious argument? It is so, certainly, but it is also a very plain and very forcible one. I have read or heard many ingenious arguments for unbelief, and I have often wished that half the ingenuity thus vainly spent could be exercised in discovering reasons for believing so, I am pleased to notice that this commander of a hundred Roman soldiers did but argue from his own position, and so wrought in his mind still greater confidence in Christ's power to heal his sick servant. Is there not something about yourself, from which, if you would look at it in the right light, you might gather arguments concerning the power of the Lord Jesus Christ?

[Matthew 8:10](#). *When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel.*

“Not in Israel,” — where the light and the knowledge were, there was not such faith as this centurion possessed. This Roman soldier, rough by training and experience, who was more familiar with stern fighting men than with those who could instruct him concerning Christ, had more faith than Jesus had so far found “in Israel.”

[Matthew 8:11-12](#). *And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

This is a strange thing, yet it is continually happening still, despite its strangeness, that the persons, who are placed in such positions of privilege, that you naturally expect that they would become believers, remain unbelievers, while others, who are placed at a terrible disadvantage,

nevertheless often come right out from sin, and right away from ignorance, and become believers in Christ. Oh, that none of us, who sit under the sound of the gospel from Sabbath to Sabbath, might be sad illustrations of this truth, while others, unaccustomed to listen to the Word, may be happy instances of the way in which the Lord still takes strangers, and adopts them into his family.

[Matthew 8:13](#). *And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the self same hour.*

Jesus will treat all alike according to this rule: “As thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee.” If thou canst believe great things of him, thou shalt receive great things from him. If thou dost think him good, and great, and mighty, thou shalt find him to be so. If thou canst conceive greater things of him than anyone else has ever done, thou shalt find him equal to all thy conceptions, and thy greatest faith shall be surpassed. It is a law of his kingdom, from which Christ never swerves: “According to thy faith, be it unto thee.”

[Matthew 8:14-15](#). *And when Jesus was come into Peter’s house, he saw his wife’s mother laid, and sick of a fever, And he touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose and ministered unto them.*

That was, perhaps, the most remarkable thing of all; for, when a fever is cured, it usually leaves great weakness behind it. Persons recovered of fever cannot immediately leave their bed, and begin at once to attend to household matters, but Peter’s wife’s mother did this. Learn, hence, that the Lord Jesus can not only take away from us the disease of sin, but all the effects of it as well. He can make the man, who has been worn out in the service of Satan, to become young again in the service of the Lord; and when it seems as if we never, even if converted, could be of any use to him, he can take away the consequences of evil habits, and make us into bright and sanctified believers. What is there that is impossible to him? In the olden time, kings claimed to have the power of healing with a touch. That was a superstition; but this King can do it, all glory to his blessed name! May he lay his gracious hand upon many of you; for, if it could heal before it was pierced, much more can it now heal every sin-stricken soul it touches.

[Matthew 8:16-18](#). *When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word,*

and healed all that were sick: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses. Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about him, he gave commandment to depart unto the other side.

For he neither loved nor courted popularity, but did his utmost to shun it. It followed him like his shadow but he always went before it, he never followed it, or sought after it: “When Jesus saw great multitudes about him, he gave commandment to depart unto the other side.”

[Matthew 8:19](#). *And a certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.*

How bold he is with his boasting! But Jesus knows that the fastest professors are often just as fast deserters, so he tests him before he takes him into the band of his followers.

[Matthew 8:20](#). *And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.*

Christ means, — “Can you follow the Son of man when there is no reward except himself, — not even a place for your head to rest upon, or a home wherein you may find comfort? Can you cleave to him when the lone mountain side shall be the place where he spends whole nights in prayer while the dews falls heavily upon him? Can you follow him then? “This is a test of love which makes many to be “found wanting.”

[Matthew 8:21-22](#). *And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead.*

It must be Christ first, and father afterwards. We pay no disrespect to our dearest relatives and friends when we put them after Christ, that is their proper place. To put them before Christ, to prefer the creature to the Creator, is to be traitors to the King of kings. Whoever may come next, Christ must be first.

[Matthew 8:23-26](#). *And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him. And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep. And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish. And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds; and the sea; and there was a great calm.*

Probably no calm is so profound as that which follows the tempest of the soul which Jesus stills by his peace-speaking word. The calm of nature, the calm of long-continued prosperity, the calm of an easy temper, — these are all deceitful, and are apt to be broken by sudden and furious tempests. But, after the soul has been rent to its foundations, — after the awful ground-swell, and the Atlantic billows of deep temptation, — when Jesus gives peace, there is “a great calm.”

[Matthew 8:27](#). *But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!*

We have often marvelled in the same way, but we know that it is not any “manner of man” alone, but that he, who was truly man, who was also “very God of very God,” the God-man, the man Christ Jesus, the mediator between God and men.

Verse 16

[Matthew 8:16](#). *When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits, with his word, and healed all that were sick:*

It was the evening after the Sabbath. They did not venture even to bring out their sick till the day of rest was ended; and the Saviour, saying nothing about their lingering superstition, began to work mightily among them. “He cast out the spirits with his word.” What a power there is in the word of Jesus! There is nothing like it for the casting out of devils. All our philosophies will not do what it does, the enemy will say, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are ye?” “He cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick.”

[Matthew 8:17](#). *That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.*

It does not look like a fulfillment, except upon the wondrous principle of the power of substitution. Jesus takes the sickness, and therefore he removes it from us. He heals our infirmities because he took them upon Himself. Is it so, do you think, that every miracle of healing that Christ wrought took something out of him? We remember that, when the woman with the issue of blood was cured by touching his garment, Jesus said, “I perceive that virtue is gone out of me.” Was it so that he suffered while he was thus relieving the suffering? It was the joy of his heart to bless mankind; but every blessing that he gave was very costly to him. I think that truth lies embedded in the Evangelist’s declaration.

[Matthew 8:18](#). *Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about him, he gave commandment to depart unto the other side.*

This again looks like a non sequitur. You and I would have said, "If there are great multitudes about us, let us speak to them while we are here." But then, again, you see, we may not always judge by the apparent usefulness of the present moment, we have to consider the rest of our career. Our Saviour knew that the governors of the country were very jealous, and that if people came together in large numbers, they might suspect insurrections and revolutions, and they would be there with their troops, and many innocent folk might be slain, and, speaking after the manner of men, his work of usefulness might be quickly brought to an end. Therefore, when he saw the great multitudes, he judged it wise to go elsewhere. Besides, he was no lover of popularity; he looked upon it as a shadow which necessarily followed him, rather than as a thing to be sought after. This he showed in the intense humility of his spirit, and in that love of solitude which was so natural to one who walked in continual fellowship with God. Sometimes we shall really do more by apparently for the moment doing less.

[Matthew 8:19-20](#). *And a certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath nowhere to lay his head.*

We hear no more of this man. Our Saviour's faithfulness probably dismissed him.

[Matthew 8:21](#). *And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.*

Now this man was a disciple, mark you, and, according to Luke, the Lord had said to him, "Follow me," yet he urged this plea, "Suffer me first to go and bury my father."

[Matthew 8:22](#). *But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead.*

Nothing, not even the duties of filial love, must be allowed to come in conflict with the command of Christ, "Follow me." I take it that this is not so much a word to the common disciple as to a disciple called out to a special ministry: "Your ministry is to be your first, your main, your only occupation: 'follow me: and let the dead bury their dead.' Let the politicians attend to the politics; let the reformers see to the reforms; but, as for you,

keep to your own work, and follow me.” When God’s ministers come to this point, that they have to win souls, and that this is their only business, then souls will be won. There are plenty of dead people to bury the dead, there are plenty of moral people to see after the ordinary affairs of morality. As for us, let us follow Christ, and keep to our one business.

[Matthew 8:23](#). *And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him.*

He went first, and they followed afterwards. If the ship be the type of the Church, then Christ is the first on board, he is the Captain, and the disciples make up the crew: “His disciples followed him.”

[Matthew 8:24](#). *And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep.*

What! a tempest where Christ is? Yes, it is generally so. If all seems very calm, thou mayest question whether Christ is there, but when he goes into the ship, and his disciples follow him, it is not remarkable that the devil comes after him. “The ship was covered with the waves.” That sea of Galilee lies very deep indeed, and it is surrounded by lofty crags and yawning chasms that act like funnels to the wind, so that to this day it is very dangerous for those who are on it in a boat. “The ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep.” Here is the weakness of humanity; and here is also the strength of faith. Jesus went to sleep because that boat was in his Father’s hands, and he would take care of it. “He was asleep.” Sometimes, the best thing that we can do is to go to bed. You are worrying and troubling yourself, and you can do nothing; go to sleep, brother. It is the climax of faith to be able to shake off all care, and to feel, “If the Lord careth for me, why should I not sleep? “Remember what Alexander the Great said of his friend Parmenio: “Alexander may sleep, for Parmenio watches, “and surely we, who have a far greater friend than Parmenio, can say at any time, “We may sleep, for God watches.” “He was asleep.” To sleep was the best thing that Jesus could do to recruit his bodily energies and to prepare himself for the time when his efforts would be needed for the deliverance of his disciples from danger.

[Matthew 8:25-26](#) *And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish. And he saith unto them: Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?*

The disciples might have answered, “Lord, how canst thou ask us why we are fearful? The ship is covered with waves, the sea threatens to

swallow it and all of us up.” Still, they might have thought, “If Christ be on board the ship, will he allow it to sink? Can he be drowned? We carry Christ and all his fortunes, is not our vessel thus insured beyond all risk? He may well say to us, ‘Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?’”

[Matthew 8:26](#). *Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.*

“A great calm.” No ordinary stillness of the sea; but it was a great calm, as the tempest had been great which had preceded it. What! and all on a sudden too? Storms sob themselves to sleep through lengthened intervals of fretfulness, but when Jesus gives the word of command, the storm is gone at once. “There was a great calm.”

[Matthew 8:27](#). *But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?*

They did not know their Lord yet; nor do we. Perhaps we have to go to sea to learn more of him, I mean that troubles and trials of a greater sort than we have known before may yet have to come to be our schoolmasters to teach us what Jesus is. “They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters, these see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep.” You landsmen are thankful for your quiet, but you do not see so much of Jesus as others of his disciples do, you must go to sea to be able to cry, “What manner of man is this?”

[Matthew 8:28-29](#). *And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way. And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time?*

They know that there is a time when he will judge them, and when their torment will begin. Say what you please, sin in men or devils will be followed with torment, with sorrow indescribable, unutterable; and these devils knew it, and they were obliged to confess the truth. They were afraid lest Jesus had come to inflict upon them the penalty of their evil deeds before that last great day.

[Matthew 8:30](#). *And there was a good way off from them an herd of many swine feeding.*

The owners of these animals had no business to have any swine there; swine were forbidden in that holy country, and they should not have been kept there.

[Matthew 8:31](#). *So the devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine.*

What a wonderful creature a man is, as compared with an animal! A legion of devils could be packed away into these two men, but they needed a whole herd of swine to contain them all. How much greater is a man than a beast; that is to say, how much more capable of spiritual influence for evil as well as for good!

[Matthew 8:32](#). *And he said unto them, Go.*

Jesus never wastes words upon devils; he is always short and sharp with them: “Go.”

[Matthew 8:32](#). *And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine: and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters.*

The proverb has it, “They run fast whom the devil drives,” they run to destruction, even as these swine perished in the waters.

[Matthew 8:33-34](#). *And they that kept them fled, and went their ways into the city, and told every thing, and what was befallen to the possessed of the devils. And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus:*

You feel that they are going to worship him, or at least to ask him to come, and teach them the way of salvation; nothing of the sort.

[Matthew 8:34](#). *And when they saw him, they besought him that he would depart out of their coasts. And there are many still who try all they can to get Christ to go away from them. Woe be to them if he grants their desire!*

[Matthew 9:1](#). *And he entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into his own city.*

I think I see the departing sail, — love, hope, and peace melting away upon the distant horizon, and the Gergesenes left to perish. O God, do not so with any of us! Say not, “Ephraim is joined to idols. Let him alone.”

Verses 23-34

Matthew’s Gospel is the Gospel of the Kingdom, and of the King. Here you see the King amid the storms of nature.

[Matthew 8:23-24](#). *And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him. And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep.*

In the quiet confidence of faith, resting upon his God.

[Matthew 8:25-26](#). *And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish. And he saith unto them, Why are ye*

fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.

As great a calm as there had been tempest. After great trouble, expect deep, delightful rest and peace, if you are a child of God.

[Matthew 8:27](#). *But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!*

Now see the King in conflict with the powers of darkness.

[Matthew 8:28-31](#). *And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way. And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time? And there was a good way off from them an herd of many swine feeding. So the devils besought him,*

How the demons crouched at his feet! The dogs of bell knew the power of his tongue; that was a whip whose lash they had felt before.

[Matthew 8:31-32](#). *Saying, If thou, cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine. And he said unto them, Go.*

He never wastes words on demons.

[Matthew 8:32-34](#). *And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine: and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters. And they that kept them fled, and went their ways into the city, and told every thing, and what was befallen to the possessed of the devils. And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus: and when they saw him, they besought him that he would depart out of their coasts.*

A sad prayer; yet Jesus granted their request. Men may once too often ask the Holy Spirit to depart from them. They may grieve him once more, and then he will have done with them for ever. Now we shall see the King in conflict with the diseases of mankind, and with human sin.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Matthew 8:23-34](#); [Matthew 9:1-13](#).

[MATTHEW CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 9

Verses 1-13

[Matthew 9:1-2](#). *And he entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into his own city. And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith —*

The faith of the bearers, and the faith of the palsied man himself, —

[Matthew 9:2](#). *Said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.*

It was remarked, by a mediaeval writer, that we do not find Christ calling any of the apostles, not even the very chief of them, by the name that he gave to this palsied man, “Son.” This is the title that he gives to a sin-sick sinner, lying on a bed before him, waiting to be healed. Oh, the tenderness of Christ to sin and misery! He puts a kind of sonship upon this man which he had not possessed before.

[Matthew 9:3](#). *And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth.*

“He arrogates to himself the prerogative of God. Who can forgive sins but God only?”

[Matthew 9:4-8](#). *And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house. And he arose, and departed to his house. But when the multitudes saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men.*

They rightly saw in this miracle, wrought by Christ, power given to man for, as you observe, Christ said, “The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins;” and these people magnified God that one Man should have such power granted to him. There is an elevation to the whole of manhood in the alliance of Christ with it; through him the Lord hath given great power unto men.

[Matthew 9:9](#). *And as Jesus passed forth from thence,*

The King is now going to show his power over the human will.

[Matthew 9:9](#). *He saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him.*

Everything bows before him. Is he not King of kings, and Lord of lords? Have we ever comprehended the true measure of his divine and human nature? Even when he was on earth, and known as the Son of man, what

gleams of his divine glory shone forth in these truly royal acts of his! Yet bow condescending was our King! Where is his court? Who are his attendants? Listen, —

[Matthew 9:10](#). *And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples.*

Lord of the sea, Conqueror of demons, Healer of the sick, Forgiver of sin, and now he has for his company publicans and sinners! When the Pharisees saw it, they did not see condescension in it, but they saw wickedness in it.

[Matthew 9:11](#). *And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?*

Ah! why, indeed? You and I know; that is a secret that has made us love him better than almost anything beside.

[Matthew 9:12](#). *But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.*

He has come here on purpose that he might heal our sicknesses. Oh, you who feel tonight sick with sin, and sick of sin, come and sit down with him! He add, “Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out,” and he will not cast you out, notwithstanding your sinnership, if you come unto him by faith.

[Matthew 9:13](#). *But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.*

Let us never forget that Jesus is the sinner’s Saviour. He does not come to save saints; he comes to save sinners, and the saints who are saved are kept from becoming sinners by his almighty love.

May God bless this reading of the Scriptures to us! Amen.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Matthew 8:23-34](#); [Matthew 9:1-13](#).

Verses 1-17

[Matthew 9:1-2](#). *And he entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into his own city. And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.*

Our Lord dealt first with the greater evil, for sin is worse than even such a dreadful disease as the palsy. Forgiveness of sin is an even greater mercy

than the healing of sickness.

[Matthew 9:3-7](#). *And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth. And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house. And he arose, and departed to his house.*

Jesus first proved his divinity by reading the secret thoughts of the caviling scribes, and then gave a further evidence of it by working this very notable miracle.

[Matthew 9:8-9](#). *But when the multitudes saw it, they marveled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men. And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him.*

This was another notable miracle, and equally set forth the power of divine grace.

[Matthew 9:10-11](#). *And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciple. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?*

He was more at home with publicans and sinners than with scribes and Pharisees, and they were more likely to welcome him as their Lord and Saviour.

[Matthew 9:12-13](#). *But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.*

If he had come to call the righteous, where would he have found them? His call was not likely to be heeded by the self-righteous, but sinners heard it with joy, and so were made righteous by him.

[Matthew 9:14](#). *Then came to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?*

We must not suppose that, because a thing is proper for ourselves, it must therefore be binding upon everybody else. It might be fit and right that the disciples of John should fast often, their circumstances might require it;

but it might be quite wrong for the disciples of Christ to fast, as they might be in very different circumstances.

[Matthew 9:15](#). *And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them?*

Could Christ's disciples fast while Christ fed them with heavenly foods? While his presence was to them like heaven begun below, it would have been inconsistent for them to be mourning and fasting.

[Matthew 9:15](#). *But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast.*

And nobody would say that they were turncoats if, when their circumstances had so greatly altered, they acted in harmony with their changed circumstances. The disciples could not mourn while Christ was with them; can you, believer, fast while Christ is with you? It cannot be; but when he has gone from you, then you will sorrow fast enough. So we must neither judge others by ourselves, nor judge ourselves at one time by what we were at some other time.

[Matthew 9:16](#). *No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, —*

When it shrinks, —

[Matthew 9:16](#). *And the rent is made worse.*

There must be a fitness about things; do not impose fasting upon a joyful heart, or the singing of joyful hymns upon a sad spirit.

[Matthew 9:17](#). *Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved.*

Do not expect from a young beginner that which would be unsuitable to him, even though it should be most comely and seemly in an aged Christian; and do not expect to see in an aged Christian all the vigor and alertness of spirit that you look for in ardent souls in all the fervor of their first love to Christ. Let us mind the relations of things.

Verses 1-38

[Matthew 9:1](#). *And he entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into his own city.*

Our Lord had given these Gergesenes an opportunity of becoming his disciples, the kingdom of God had come very near to them, but as they accounted themselves unworthy of it, and besought him to depart out of their coasts, he did not force himself upon them. Take heed, dear friends, if

you do but hear the gospel once, that you do not reject it, for you may never have the opportunity of hearing it again.

[Matthew 9:2](#). *And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.*

He saw the faith of the one man who was brought to him, and also the faith of the four bearers who had let him down through the roof.

[Matthew 9:3-4](#). *And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth. And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?*

His knowledge of the thoughts of their hearts ought to have convinced them that he was divine, and that therefore he had the right to forgive sins. They were not, however, in a condition to learn anything, for they thought that they already knew everything.

[Matthew 9:5](#). *For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk?*

Each of these actions needed divine power; but divinity being present, there was no difference as to the manifestation of this power between the forgiveness of sins and the healing of sickness.

[Matthew 9:6-7](#). *But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house. And he arose, and departed to his house.*

Carrying the mattress whereon he had lain. Would he keep that bed stored, think you, for a memorial? Or if he used it in future to sleep upon would he not by night upon his bed wake up, and praise the Lord for what he had done for him? I think that we should treasure up in our memory the deeds of Christ on our behalf, if indeed we know his great salvation. I should not wonder if there is a mattress that you have somewhere at home, a bed, or a book, or something with which there is connected the remembrance of some deed of infinite love and almighty grace.

[Matthew 9:8](#). *But when the multitudes saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men.*

They did not think deeply enough, and go really to the bottom of the matter, but they concluded that it was a wonderful thing that any man — that any men, as they put it, — should have such power given unto them.

[Matthew 9:9](#). *And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom:*

Notice how Matthew describes himself: “As Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom.”

[Matthew 9:9](#). *And he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him.*

See how everything is obedient to Christ. Paralysis leaves the palsied man, and hardness of heart departs from the tax-gatherer.

[Matthew 9:10](#). *And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples.*

Note the modesty of these early recorders; Matthew does not say that it was his own house where this gathering took place, nor that he was the giver of the feast. Mark and Luke supply this information.

[Matthew 9:11-13](#). *And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners? But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice:*

God prefers the doing of good to all outward ritual and ordinances, even the best of them: “I will have mercy, and not sacrifice:”

[Matthew 9:13-22](#). *For I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Then came to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not? And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast. No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse. Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved. While he spake these things unto them, behold, there came a certain ruler, and worshipped him, saying, My daughter is even now dead: but come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live. And Jesus arose, and followed him, and so did his disciples. And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment: For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole. But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of*

good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour.

See how he scatters mercy all around. He is charged to the full with the divine electricity of health, and whoever comes in his way gets a blessing. Oh, for the presence of that full and overflowing Christ in the midst of every worshipping assembly, for there are still many sick folk who need a Saviour as much as these people did in the days of Jesus!

[Matthew 9:23](#). *And when Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the minstrels and the people making a noise,*

They were gathered together for the funeral of this young girl.

[Matthew 9:24](#). *He said unto them, Give place: for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn.*

They did not understand his expression; yet, apparently, sleep only differs from death in this respect, that the sleeper wakes again, and returns to consciousness. The Lord Jesus Christ did not mean that the maiden was not dead; but he meant that, as she was soon coming to life again, it was, as it were, only like the image of death. To her, death was not a cul-de-sac, a dark cave without an opening at the further end; it was rather a tunnel through which she was passing back again into life.

[Matthew 9:25-26](#). *But when the people were put forth, he went in, and took her by the hand, and the maid arose. And the fame hereof went abroad into all that land.*

And well it might; this was the marvel of marvels that he should even raise the dead.

[Matthew 9:27](#). *And when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed him, crying, and saying, Thou son of David, have mercy on us.*

See, my brethren, how miracle follows upon miracle, how the way of Christ is, as it were, paved with mercy upon mercy.

[Matthew 9:28](#). *And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him: and Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this?*

It is a great thing to have faith about the particular point that most concerns us: "Believe ye that I am able to do this?" Some can believe everything except the one thing for which faith is most needed,

[Matthew 9:28](#). *They said unto him, Yea, Lord.*

Can you, dear friend, say, "Yes, Lord," about yourself?

[Matthew 9:29-31](#). *Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you. And their eyes were opened; and Jesus straitly charged them, saying, See that no man know it. But they, when they were departed, spread abroad his fame in all that country.*

This was very wrong of them, for they ought to have obeyed Christ's orders. They were doing much mischief, although, no doubt, they thought they were doing good. The Saviour, first of all, was modest, and did not wish his cures reported. In the next place, he wanted to have an opportunity of doing more good, and the reporting of this cure brought him immense crowds who encumbered him, and also excited the animosity of the Pharisees, who would the more persecute him. Moreover, our Lord did not wish the Pharisees to think that he cured people that they might simply advertise him. I do think that we often err in imagining that making known every little thing that happens, and even every great thing, is the best course to pursue. There is a way of walking in wisdom toward them that are without, and Christ knew that way; and these blind men whose eyes he had opened should not have disobeyed him.

[Matthew 9:32](#). *As they went out, behold, they brought to him a dumb man possessed with a devil.*

"As they went out." Do notice what a succession of mercies Christ dispersed; it was a sort of tempest of blessing, peal upon peal, following almost without intermission.

[Matthew 9:33-34](#). *And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake: and the multitudes marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel. But the Pharisees said, He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils.*

How does Christ answer this wicked taunt?

[Matthew 9:35](#). *And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.*

That is the best answer to give to cavillers, do more good than ever. There is no stopping the barking of dogs; so go you on your way, as the moon shines, let the hounds bay as they may. Oh, the glory of the Master! Like a cloud that dispenses showers of blessing wherever it moves, so did he continue to do his life-work.

[Matthew 9:36-38](#). *But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest*

truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.

Or, “that he will thrust forth labourers into his harvest.” He who does the most is always the one who wants to see more done. This blessed Christ, with his hands so full of holy work, is the one who bows his knee, and cries to the great Lord of the harvest to thrust forth labourers into his harvest. Let us imitate him both in the working and in the praying.

Verses 18-38

[Matthew 9:18](#). *While he spake these things unto them, behold, there came a certain ruler, and worshipped him, saying, My daughter is even now dead: but come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live.*

This was grand faith on the ruler’s part, believing that the touch of Christ’s hand would raise his dead daughter to life; we do not wonder that the Saviour honoured such faith as that at once.

[Matthew 9:19-20](#). *And Jesus arose, and followed him, and so did his disciples. And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment:*

This was while he was on the way to the ruler’s house. Jesus Christ can work many miracles while he is on the way to work other miracles.

[Matthew 9:21](#). *For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole.*

This also is wonderful faith again; in this chapter we get among the great believers. The man believes that the touch of Jesus can raise the dead the woman believes that the touch of his garment will make her whole

[Matthew 9:22](#). *But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour.*

Christ never comes short of our faith, but he often goes beyond it.

[Matthew 9:23](#). *And when Jesus came into the ruler’s house, and saw the minstrels and the people making a noise,*

These were hired men and women who were brought in to act as mourners

[Matthew 9:24-25](#). *He said unto them, Give place: for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn. But when the people were put forth, he went in, —*

There is a good deal that has to be “put forth” before the Lord Jesus Christ will fully reveal his power to bless. He would have you put forth

your doubts, your fears, your wandering thoughts, your self-trust, in fact, everything that is contrary to his righteous rule. “When the people were put forth, he went in,” —

[Matthew 9:25-27](#). *And took her by the hand, and the maid arose. And the fame hereof went abroad into all that land. And when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed him, crying, and saying, Thou son of David, have mercy on us.*

See how busy our Lord was, and how ready for every application that was made to him, and note how he adapted his power to every case that came before him. First he heals an issue of blood, then he raises the dead, and now he is ready to open blind eyes. I wish the Lord might have such blessed business among us here, and he may have, for, if thou wilt cry to him for thy child, dead in trespasses and sins, he will make her to live; if thou wilt bring thy blind eyes to him, he will open them; and if thou wilt come to him with a disease that is sapping thy very life, he will heal thee.

Give the Lord plenty of this holy work to do. Drawn wells, they say, are sweetest; and a Saviour who is constantly used is most enjoyed.

[Matthew 9:28](#). *And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him: and Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this?*

That is the question the Lord puts to any who are in soul trouble. “Believe ye that I am able to do this?” — to forgive your sins once for all, — to give you a new nature at this very moment, — to make you, a sinner, into a saint, — to save you, not merely for the next few weeks, but to save you eternally so that you shall see my face in glory with exceeding joy; — ‘Believe ye that I am able to do this?’”

[Matthew 9:28-29](#). *They said unto him, Yea, Lord. Then touched he their eyes, saying, according to your faith be it unto you.*

That is what Jesus says to every person here, “According to your faith be it unto you. “If you believe Christ a little, he will bless you a little, but if you believe him up to the hilt, he will bless you to the full. Your faith shall never outrun the manifestations of divine love. Believest thou this? Then thou shalt see it. “According to your faith be it unto you.”

[Matthew 9:30-32](#). *And their eyes were opened; and Jesus straitly charged them, saying, See that no man know it. But they, when they were departed, spread abroad his fame in all that country. As they went out, behold, they brought to him a dumb man possessed with a devil.*

These miracles were wrought so rapidly, and they concerned such different cases that, as we read of them, we rejoice to see how Christ Was ready for anything, and ready for everything. It did not matter what case was brought to him, he was never taken aback. Here he is just as fully prepared to heal the dumb as just now he was to cure the blind.

[Matthew 9:33](#). *And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake: —*

There is nothing like going at once to the root of the matter. Christ did not heal the dumb man, and leave the devil in him, but he first cast the devil out, and then “ the dumb spake. “And this is his way of saving men. He renews them by his Spirit, he casts the devil out, and then their despair goes, their prayerlessness disappears, their love of vice is killed. All evil is expelled when once the root of the evil is pulled up. “When the devil was cast out, the dumb spake:” —

[Matthew 9:33](#). *And the multitudes marveled, saying, It was never before seen in Israel.*

Christ had wrought such miracles as the multitudes had never before seen, and they might well marvel.

[Matthew 9:34-35](#). *But the Pharisees said, He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils. And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, —*

What the Pharisees said was of such very small consequence that, for the time being, Christ vouchsafed them no answer but this, “Jesus went about all the cities and villages.” In like manner, it will be your best plan not to reply to slander. There are some lies that smell so strongly of the pit from which they came that everybody will recognize their origin, and therefore you need not take the trouble to point out that they are falsehoods. And the best reply to all scandal and slander is to go on with your work just as if you had never heard it. The Pharisees said that Christ cast out devils through the prince of the devils, and the very next sentence is, “And Jesus went about all the cities and villages,” —

[Matthew 9:35-36](#). *Teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, —*

Yet Christ, while upon the earth in the flesh, never saw such multitudes as are gathered in London today, he never saw such multitudes as make up this nation; there never passed before the eyes of the Redeemer such multitudes as are crowded together in China and India today. No; the

population of the world has wondrously increased since those days, so what must be the compassion of his heart when he sees the multitudes that are living in the world today! “When he saw the multitudes he was moved” — in the original, this is a very striking word; it signifies that he trembled with emotion, his inmost powers were moved, his heart was stirred “with compassion on them,” —

[Matthew 9:36-37](#). *Because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few;*

Not the preachers, but the labourers are few; not the talkers, but the labourers, — the patient, plodding, resolute, disinterested, industrious toilers who really go in for winning souls for Christ, — the men and women who do real work for God, and do not play at Christian service as some do, making it a kind of amusement to go and do some little good now and then it is these labourers who are few. You know the difference between a dock labourer, or a farm labourer, and the gentleman who takes a tool in his hand just for a pastime now and then.

[Matthew 9:38](#). *Pray ye therefore the lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.*

It is earnest workers that we are to pray God to thrust forth into his harvest, for still the harvest is plenteous, and the labourers are few.

Verses 27-35

[Matthew 9:27](#). *And when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed him, crying, and saying, Thou Son of David, have mercy on us.*

No sooner does Jesus move than fresh candidates for his bounty appear: the blind seek sight from him. Two sightless men had become companions in affliction, they may have been father and son. They were in downright earnest, for they “followed him, crying, and saying, Have mercy on us.” Persevering, vehement, yet intelligent was their appeal. They were of one mind in reference to Jesus, and therefore they went one way, and used one prayer, to one and the same person. Our Lord is here called by his royal name: “Thou Son of David.” Even the blind could see that he was a king’s son. As Son of David, he is entreated to show mercy, and act according to his royal nature. It is mercy which gives us our faculties, and mercy alone can restore them. This prayer suits us when we perceive our own darkness of mind. When we cannot see our way into truth, let us appeal to the Lord

for gracious instruction, ever remembering that we have no claim except that which originates in his mercy.

[Matthew 9:28](#). *And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him: and Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yea, Lord.*

They were most eager for the boon. They gave him no leisure: they pressed into the house where he had sought privacy and rest: they came to him, even to Jesus himself. The Lord would have them express their faith, and so he makes inquiry of them as to what they believe about himself. Jesus makes no inquiry about their eyes, but only about their faith this is ever the vital point. They could not see, but they could believe, and they did so.

They had a specific faith as to the matter about which they prayed; for our Lord put it plainly, “Believe ye that I am able to do THIS?” “They had also a clear view of the character of him to whom they applied; for they had already styled him “Son of David,” and now they called him “Lord.”

[Matthew 9:29](#). *Then touched he their eyes, saying, according to your faith be it unto you.*

Again he arouses their faith; and this time he throws the whole responsibility upon their confidence in him. “According to your faith be it unto you.” He touched them with his hand; but they must also touch him with their faith. The word of power in the last sentence is one upon which he acts so continually, that we may call it, as to many blessings, a rule of the kingdom. We have the measuring of our own mercies; our faith obtains less or more according to its own capacity to receive. Had these men been mere pretenders to faith they would have remained blind. If we will not in very truth trust our Lord, we shall die in our sins.

[Matthew 9:30](#). *And their eyes were opened; and Jesus straitly charged them, saying, See that no man know it.*

They both saw the double miracle was wrought at the same moment. Comrades in the dark, they are now companions in the light. Singular that for two souls there should thus be one destiny! It was a singular double fact, and deserved to be made widely known; but our Lord had wise reasons for requiring silence He “straitly charged them.” He left them no option: he demanded complete silence. He that opened their eyes closed their mouths. Jesus did not desire fame, he wanted less crowding; he wished to avoid

excitement; and therefore he was express and peremptory in his order: “See that no man know it.”

[Matthew 9:31](#). *But they, when they were departed, spread abroad his fame on all that country.*

They most industriously published what they were bidden to conceal till “all that country” rang with the news. In this they erred greatly, and probably caused the Saviour so much inconvenience by the pressure of the crowd, that he had to remove from the town. We may not hope that we are doing right if we disobey our Lord. However natural disobedience may appear to be, it is disobedience, and must not be excused. Even if the results turned out to be advantageous, it would not make it right to break the command of our Lord. Silence is more than golden when our King commands it. He doth not seek applause, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets that he may be known to be doing a great work. His followers do well to copy his example. We do not wonder that our Lord’s name became famous when there were such persons to advertise it. How earnestly and eloquently would the two formerly blind men tell the story of how he opened their eyes! We are not forbidden, but exhorted to make known the wonders of his grace. Let us not fail in this natural, this necessary, this useful duty. More and more let us “spread abroad his fame.”

[Matthew 9:32](#). *As they went out, behold, they brought to him a dumb man possessed with a devil.*

As a pair of patients leave the surgery, another poor creature comes in. Note the “behold.” The case is striking. He comes not freely, or of his own accord: “they brought” him: thus should we bring men to Jesus. He does not cry for help, for he is “a dumb man.” Let us open our mouths for the dumb. He is not himself, but he is “possessed with a devil.” Poor creature! Will anything be done for him?

[Matthew 9:33](#). *And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake: and the multitudes marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel.*

Our Lord does not deal with the symptoms, but with the source of the disorder, even with the evil spirit. “The devil was cast out”; and it is mentioned as if that were a matter of course when Jesus came on the scene. The devil had silenced the man, and so, when the evil one was gone, “the dumb spake.” How we should like to know what he said! Whatever he said it matters not; the wonder was that he could say anything. The people confessed that this was a wonder quite unprecedented; and in this they only

said the truth: "It was never so seen in Israel." Jesus is great at surprises: he has novelties of gracious power. The people were quick to express their admiration yet we see very little trace of their believing in our Lord's mission. It is a small thing to marvel, but a great thing to believe. O Lord, give the people around us to see such revivals and conversions, as they have never known before!

[Matthew 9:34](#). *But the Pharisees said, He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils.*

Of course, they had some bitter sentence ready. Nothing was too bad for them to say of Jesus. They were hard pressed when they took to this statement which our Lord in another place so easily answered. They hinted that such power over demons must have come to him through an unholy compact with "the prince of the devils." Surely this was going very near to the unpardonable sin.

[Matthew 9:35](#). *And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.*

This exposition consisted of readings from [Matthew 9:27-35](#); and [Matthew 20:29-34](#).

Verses 27-38

[Matthew 9:27-28](#). *And when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed him, crying, and saying, thou son of David, have mercy on us. And when he was come into the house,*

I suppose the house at Capernaum, where he was wont to stay.

[Matthew 9:28](#). *The blind men came to him;*

Forced their way in. They must be attended to. Hunger breaks through stone walls, they say, and an earnest heart will follow after what it seeks.

[Matthew 9:28-29](#). *And Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yea, Lord. Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith, be it unto you.*

That is, "If you do not believe, you shall not see, but if there be faith in you, behold you shall have sight."

[Matthew 9:30-32](#). *And their eyes were opened; and Jesus straitly charged them, saying, See that no man know it. But they, when they were departed, spread abroad his fame in all that country. As they went out, behold, they brought to him a dumb man possessed with a devil.*

Here we have had the dead, those that were bleeding to death, the blind, and the dumb, and the possessed of a devil.

[Matthew 9:33](#). *And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake: and the multitudes marvelled, saying, it was never so seen in Israel.*

No; but Jesus does wonders. Something off the common, and altogether out of the ordinary way, his work of grace must be.

[Matthew 9:34](#). *But the Pharisees said, He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils.*

There is always somebody or other who has got an ugly word to put in. It matters not how much God may bless the gospel, there is no stopping the sneers and objections; but the mercy is that it does not matter much. Our Lord was not hurt, and the work went on, notwithstanding all the cavilling of the Pharisees.

[Matthew 9:35](#). *And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.*

That was the answer to the Pharisees. Christian activity, fervent devotion to the cause of God, is the best answer that can be given to cavillers of any sort or every sort. In your work hold on, my brother, and those who cavil at thee now may come to honour thee one of these days.

[Matthew 9:36-37](#). *But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few.*

We are all loiterers, but where are the labourers? Where are they with the sharp sickle that can cut down the wheat, and, with a ready hand, can bind it, and, with a strong shoulder, carry it? Alas! in this great city, the harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few!

[Matthew 9:38](#). *Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will sent forth labourers into his harvest.*

Verse 35

9:35. *And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.*

This was his answer to the blasphemous slanders of the Pharisees. A glorious reply it was. Let us answer calumny by greater zeal in doing good.

Small places were not despised by our Lord: he went about the villages as well as the cities. Village piety is of the utmost importance, and has a close relation to city life. Jesus turned old institutions to good account: the “synagogues” became his seminaries. Three-fold was his ministry: expounding the old, proclaiming the new, healing the diseased. Observe the repetition of the word “every” as showing the breadth of his healing power. All this stood in relation to his royalty; for it was “the gospel of the kingdom” which he proclaimed. Our Lord was “the Great Itinerant”: Jesus went about preaching, and healing. His was on a Medical Mission as well as an evangelistic tour. Happy people who have Jesus among them! Oh, that we might now see more of his working among our own people!

[Matthew 9:36](#). *But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.*

A great crowd is a demand upon compassion, for it suggests so much sin and need. In this case, the great want was instruction: “they fainted” for want of comfort; they “were scattered abroad” for lack of guidance. They were eager to learn, but they had no fit teachers. “Sheep having no shepherd” are in an ill plight. Unfed, unfolded, unguarded, what will become of them? Our Lord was stirred with a feeling which agitated his inmost soul. “He was moved with compassion.” What he saw affected not his eye only, but his heart. He was overcome by sympathy. His whole frame was stirred with an emotion which put every faculty into forceful movement. He is even now affected towards our people in the same manner. He is moved with compassion if we are not.

[Matthew 9:37-38](#). *Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.*

His heavy heart sought solace among “his disciples”, and he spake to them. He mourned the scantiness of workers. Pretenders were many, but real “labourers” in the harvest were few. The sheaves were spoiling. The crowds were ready to be taught, even as ripe wheat is ready for the sickle; but there were few to instruct them, and where could more teaching men be found? God only can thrust out, or “send forth labourers.” Man-made ministers are useless. Still are the fields encumbered with gentlemen who cannot use the sickle. Still the real ingatherers are few and far between. Where are the instructive, soul-winning ministries? Where are those who

travail in birth for their hearers' salvation? Let us plead with the Lord of the harvest to care for his own harvest, and send out his own men. May many a true heart be moved by the question, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" to answer, "Here am I! Send me."

10:1. *And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.*

See the way of making apostles. They were first disciples, and afterwards teachers of others: they were specially his, and then they were given to be a blessing to men. They were "called unto him"; and thus their higher call came to them. In the presence of their Lord they received their equipment:

"He gave them power." Is that so with us in our own special office? Let us come to him, that we may be clothed with his authority and girded with his strength. Their power was miraculous; but it was an imitation of their Lord's, and the words applied to it are very much the same as we have seen in use about his miracles of healing. The twelve were made to represent their Lord. We, too, may be enabled to do what Jesus did among men. Oh, for such an endowment!

This exposition consisted of readings from [Matthew 9:35-38](#); [Matthew 10:1](#); [Matthew 13:3-8](#); Matthew , 18-23.

Verses 36-38

[Matthew 9:36](#). *But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.*

The sight that Christ saw with his eye, deeply affected his heart: "He was moved with compassion on them." The expression is a very strong one indicating that his whole being was stirred with an emotion which put every faculty into forceful movement.

[Matthew 9:37-38](#). *Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.*

Pretenders were many, but real "labourers" were few. God only can thrust out or "send forth labourers." Man-made ministers are useless, yet they abound all around us; but where are the instructive soul-winning ministries? Let us plead with the Lord of the harvest to care for his own harvest, and to thrust out his own harvestmen.

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 80; and [Matthew 9:36-38](#); Matthew , 10.

[MATTHEW CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 10

Verses 1-27

[Matthew 10:1-4](#). *And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease. Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him.*

The lesson to be learnt from these names are, first, that these men are mentioned in couples, and I think that, as a rule, God's servants work best in pairs. In other senses than the matrimonial one, it is not good that man should be alone. Moses needs Aaron; Peter needs Andrew; James needs John. It is well to be of such a temperament and disposition that you can work harmoniously with another of your Lord's servants. If ye cannot, pray God to alter you. Notice that expression, in the 3rd verse, "and Bartholomew." I think there is not a single instance in the New Testament where Bartholomew is mentioned without the word "and" before or after his name, — "and Bartholomew," or "Bartholomew and" someone else. Perhaps he was not a man who ever began any work by himself, but he was a grand man to join in and help it on when somebody else had started it. So, dear friend, if you are not qualified to be a leader in the Church of Christ, be willing to be Number Two; but do serve the Master, in some capacity or other, with all your might. Be a brother who carries an "and" with him wherever he goes; be like a horse, that has his harness on, and is ready to be hooked into the team. That is the lesson of the two words "and Bartholomew." The last lesson from the names is at the end of the 4th verse: "and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him." He preached of Christ, he worked miracles in the name of Christ, he was ordained as one of the apostles of Christ, yet he was "the son of perdition." Oh! let none of us be

content merely with our official position, or trust in the good which we hope we have done, or in any gifts with which the Master has entrusted us. Judas Iscariot had all these marks of distinction, yet he betrayed his Lord. God grant that no one among us may turn out to be a Judas Iscariot!

[Matthew 10:5-6](#). *These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*

The gospel is now to be preached to every creature in all the world; but, in those days, it was to be proclaimed first to the Jews, then to the Samaritans, and afterwards to the Gentiles as a whole. The largeness of our commission to "preach the gospel to every creature" need not prevent our following providential directions to make it known in one place rather than in another. It is well for the servants of Christ always to ask their Master where they are to go. You know how it is recorded, in the Acts of the Apostles, that Paul and Silas "essayed to go into Bithynia; but the Spirit suffered them not." Ask the Lord, therefore, where thou shalt work, as well as what thy work shall be, for thy Master knows how thou canst best serve him.

[Matthew 10:7](#). *And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.*

That blessed kingdom, which is now set up among men, of which Christ is the King, and I hope many of us are the subjects. That kingdom was then "at hand."

[Matthew 10:8](#). *Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.*

"Exercise your healing arts most freely. They cost you nothing; let them not cost anything to those who receive the benefit of them."

[Matthew 10:9-10](#). *Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, Nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat.*

They were to "quarter on the enemy," as we say. Wherever they went, they would be furnished with food, and raiment, and shelter, if they faithfully executed the commission with which their Master had entrusted them.

[Matthew 10:11-13](#). *And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, enquire who in it is worthy; and there abide till ye go thence. And when ye*

come into an house, salute it. And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you.

How about your houses, dear friends. Are they “worthy” houses, in this New Testament sense? If an apostle came there, could he bring “peace” to it? Or would he have to take the peace away with him to some other house that was more worthy to receive it?

[Matthew 10:14-15](#). *And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city.*

Despised and rejected privileges make the fiercest fuel for the fires of hell. They who might have heard the gospel, and would not hear it, shall find the hand of God more heavy upon them than it will be even upon the accursed Sodomites. Woe, then, unto such as live in London, yet who will not hear the Word of the Lord, or, when they do hear it, will not accept it!

[Matthew 10:16-17](#). *Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men:*

“Do not trust yourselves with them.”

[Matthew 10:17-19](#). *For they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; and ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak.*

“Let it not fret you that you are not orators, that you are not men of culture; speak what God the Holy Spirit shall teach you to say, and leave the result with him.”

[Matthew 10:20](#). *For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.*

Oh! that is grand, — when a man has so communed with God that the very Spirit of the Father has entered into him. Then shall there be a wondrous power about his speech; men may not understand whence it came, but they will be obliged to feel the force of it.

[Matthew 10:21](#). *And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death.*

Read the marterologies, and see whether it was not exactly as our Lord foretold that it would be. In martyr times, men often burst all the bonds of natural affection, and betrayed even their own fathers or children to death. Yet the saints quaffed not; they were content to let every earthly tie be snapped so that the tie of their heavenly and eternal relationship might be confirmed. So may it be with us also!

[Matthew 10:22-27](#). *And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved. But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come. The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household! Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known. What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops.*

God help us so to do, for Christ's sake! Amen.

Verses 1-42

[Matthew 10:1](#). *And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.*

They were first Christ's disciples, and then he sent them forth as his apostles, clothed with power and authority very similar to his own.

[Matthew 10:2-4](#). *Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddeu;, Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him.*

The twelve apostles linked the spiritual Israel with the twelve tribes of the literal Israel which had typified it. They are mentioned in pairs, but this last couple is not a pair, for Simon the Zealot had little in common with the cool, cunning, calculating Judas Iscariot. There were only twelve apostles, yet one of them was a traitor; among the leaders of the nominal Christian Church today, is it possible that there is one traitor in every twelve?

[Matthew 10:5-6](#). *These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*

This was “a mission to the Jews” only, meant for the general arousing of the chosen nation. It was a mission from Israel to Israel; not to the Gentiles, and not even to the people who were most like the Jews: “Into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not.” After our Lord’s resurrection he gave the wider commission, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.”

[Matthew 10:7-8](#). *And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.*

They were to be medical missionaries, preaching the gospel, and healing the sick, and it was all to be done “freely.”

[Matthew 10:9-10](#). *Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, Nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat.*

The people at that time were favourably disposed to our Lord, and thus his apostles might expect treatment of a more generous kind than can be looked for in these times. Certain of these regulations were altered on a subsequent mission, when the people were less favourably disposed.

[Matthew 10:11-15](#). *And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, enquire who in it is worthy; and there abide till ye go thence. And when ye come into an house, salute it. And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you. And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake of the dust of your feet. Verily I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city.*

Disclaim all fellowship with those who will not have fellowship with your Lord; let them know that you quit them because they refuse to receive your Master’s message. If they continue to reject the Saviour, their doom will be even more terrible than that of Sodom and Gomorrah.

[Matthew 10:16](#). *Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves:* “Behold, I send you forth.” What power there is in the word of the King of kings! “I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves.’ You are like

sheep, helpless and defenseless; yet 'I send you forth,' and therefore it is right for you to go even into 'the midst of wolves.'" We might have imagined that the wolves would have devoured the sheep yet, at the present time, there are a great many more sheep in the world than there are wolves. Sheep have always been weak and helpless, yet they have multiplied, wolves have always been strong and savage, yet they have diminished until there is not one of them left in this land, and in many other countries the same thing has happened. So, the weak, the helpless, who come under the care of "our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep," shall be preserved from all the wolves that would devour them, and even from the devil, who, "as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."

[Matthew 10:16](#). *Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.*

"Be ye harmless because ye are like sheep, but be ye wise as serpents because you have to dwell with wolves." You, too, beloved, ought to be very wise because of the wisdom which has been imparted to you by the Master who has sent you forth, and you ought to use your best wits in his service, yet never use that wisdom with any ill intent, for the Christ who sends you does no harm to men, but only good.

[Matthew 10:17-18](#). *But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles.*

"Do not try to live on popular applause, 'but beware of men.' Expect ill treatment from them; if they can persecute you with the scourge, they will do so, but if that is out of their power, they will persecute you with their tongues. You will be misunderstood, misrepresented, maligned; expect such treatment for I, your Lord and Master, have had it before you."

[Matthew 10:19-20](#). *But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.*

It is very remarkable what wise answers many of the martyrs often gave. Illiterate men, when confronted by the learned ones of the earth, completely baffled them; and weak women nonplused their assailants and judges. A notable instance of that is recorded in the history of the brave Anne Askew. After they had tortured her upon the rack, and her poor body was full of

pain, she sat upon the cold slabs of her prison, and put such questions to the popish bishops and inquisitors as utterly confounded them: and Christ still, by his Holy Spirit, enables his faithful followers to triumph over all the craft and malice of men.

[Matthew 10:21-22](#). *And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.*

When we give ourselves to Christ, we must do it without any reserve and be prepared to follow him even to the bitter end if necessary. If all men should forsake us, if death should be our portion because of our allegiance to Christ, we dare not draw back. To do that, would lead to our destination; but to endure unto the end, this is eternal salvation.

[Matthew 10:23](#). *But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come.*

I suppose Christ here alludes to that wondrous coming of his in the destruction of Jerusalem. They had but a short time in which to evangelize that land, so they had to be quick in gathering out the Lord's elect ere he came in that terrible judgment. This same truth ought to quicken the action of every servant of Christ today. Be quick about your work, for your Master is on the road, and will soon be here. You may almost hear the rattling of his chariot wheels, for long ago he said "Surely I come quickly." The trumpets are beginning to sound, and you will scarcely have gone over all the cities of the world before the Son of man shall come unless you hasten with the great task which he has entrusted to you.

[Matthew 10:24-25](#). *The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?*

I do not know what worse names they might give to us than they gave to our master, but, no doubt, they might do so; for, as the servants are worse and less than their master, the world might, if it acted upon the rule of proportion, apply much worse names to us than it has ever done to our blessed Lord and Master. Are we to be esteemed and revered in a world that persecuted and crucified Christ our Lord and Saviour? Be not so foolish

as to think so; and when you receive scorn and contumely, accept it as being the lot of follower of Christ.

[Matthew 10:26](#). *Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known.*

When men slander you, they cannot take away your good name before God. There will be a resurrection of reputations as well as a resurrection of bodies; and good men, though their good names lie deeply buried, will certainly have a resurrection. There is Wycliffe, how little, comparatively, has ever been said about probably the greatest man since the time of the apostle Paul; but his name and fame will yet arise, and all history will ring with the praise of it. Depend upon it, no man, who has faithfully served his Saviour, shall miss the honour which he has truly deserved. "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father," so be content to wait.

[Matthew 10:27](#). *What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops.*

There must first be that quiet lonely hearing,-that calm still sitting at the Master's feet to learn the lesson; and then afterwards must come the brave telling of it out,-speaking out though kings should hear, and never being silenced because of sinful shame.

[Matthew 10:28-31](#). *And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.*

Do you not see the force of this argument? These little creatures, that are of so little account among men, are watched over by your Heavenly Father. They cannot die, nay they cannot even light upon the ground, without your Father noting it; can he then forget you, who are worth so much more than many sparrows? Will he not deal very gently, and tenderly, and considerately with you?

[Matthew 10:32-33](#). *Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.*

You own Christ here, and Christ will own you there. Dare to bear reproach for him, and you shall be glorified together with him by-and-by, but if the tenor of your life be that you do not own Christ, if you practically live as if there were no Saviour, ignoring him, depriving him of the trust which he deserves, and the honour which he has earned, then, when he comes in the glory of the Father, he will say, "You never knew me, and I never knew you. Depart!"

[Matthew 10:34](#). *Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.*

That is to say, the first consequence of Christ's coming will not be that we shall lead easy and comfortable lives, but, on the contrary, he comes to enlist us in his army, and to make soldiers of us, and soldiers have to endure many hardships.

[Matthew 10:35-36](#). *For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.*

Many of the children of God have found this to be true, greatly to their sorrow. No foes can wound us so sorely as those of our own household. They get at our hearts, and cut us to the very quick, while others can only give us flesh wounds. Well, it must be so. Wherever light comes, darkness will be opposed to it. Truth will always find error ready to devour it if it can. Expect this, and half the bitterness of it will be gone when it comes because you did expect it. "To be forewarned" here "is to be forearmed."

[Matthew 10:37-42](#). *He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.*

He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it. He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me. He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward, and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward. God's great reward for little service are given, not of debt, but of grace, "according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 80; and [Matthew 9:36-38](#); Matthew , 10.

Verses 16-23

[Matthew 10:16](#). *Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.*

It is a strange errand that you are sent upon — not as dogs to fight with the wolves. Yet you are to fight with them, but you are to go as lambs in the midst of wolves. Expect, therefore that they will rend you. Bear much, for ever in that you shall conquer. If they kill you, you shall be honoured in your death. As I have often said, the fight looks very unequal between sheep and wolves, yet at the present moment there are vastly more sheep in the world than wolves, the sheep having outlived the wolves. In this country at any rate, the last wolf is gone, and the sheep, with all their weaknesses, continue to multiply. “That is due,” you say, “to the shepherd.” And to him shall your safety and your victory be due. He will take care of you. “I send you forth as sheep among wolves.” But do not, therefore, provoke the wolves. “Be wise as serpents.” Have a holy prudence. “Be as harmless as doves,” but not as silly as doves

[Matthew 10:17-19](#). *But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak.*

And very remarkable were the answers given by the martyrs to those who persecuted them. In some cases they were altogether unlettered men, feeble women, unused to the quibbles and the catches which ungodly wise men use, and yet with is holy ability they answered all their adversaries and often stopped their mouths. It is wonderful what God can make of the weakest of men when he dwelleth in them, and speaks through them.

[Matthew 10:20-21](#). *For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you. And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death.*

Strange venom of human nature. It never grows so angry against anything as against God’s truth. Why is this? False religions will tolerate one another but they will not tolerate the religion of Christ. Is not this all

accounted for by that old dark saying at the gates of Eden, “I will put enmity between thee and the woman — between thy seed and her seed.” That enmity is sure to come up as long as the world stands.

[Matthew 10:22-23](#). *And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved. But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come.*

They had not been able to get all through Palestine before the destruction of Jerusalem. Perhaps we shall scarcely have been able to preach the gospel in every part of the world before our Master’s speedy footsteps shall be heard.

Verses 16-33

[Matthew 10:16-25](#). *Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues. And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you. And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise against their parents, and cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved. But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come. The disciple is not above his master, nor his servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord.*

It is more than enough, for the disciple might expect to fare more hardly than his Master, and the servant to have less comfort than the lord. So it is in worldly things — that our Lord and Master has such fellowship with his people that he does not put it so, but he says, “It is enough for the disciple that he be as his Master, and the servant as his Lord.”

[Matthew 10:25](#). *If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?*

But they cannot call them any more or any worse. They have given our Master the blackest of all the epithet, and any hard and opprobrious titles

that can ever be applied to us must fall short of these which were applied to him. Surely we ought not to wince: not for a single moment.

[Matthew 10:26](#). *Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known.*

They may cover your name and character with temporary dishonour, but the covering will break off soon. Like fire hidden under autumn leaves, it will burn up by-and-by, and there will be a resurrection of reputations, as well as of persons; and what a wondrous resurrection that will be for those who are cast out as the off-scouring of all things; when they shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father!

[Matthew 10:27](#). *What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops.*

There is a secret learning, but there must be a public teaching. Christ takes us aside to reveal himself, that afterwards we may boldly go forth to others, and tell them what we have learned in private. Oh! child of God, if you have a sweet morsel in the chamber by yourself, do not be so selfish as to keep it to yourself. Go and tell your brethren, and your house, and of the same place, the things which you have learned. If any of you have had a very choice experience, and a more than usual manifestation of divine love, be sure to let others be enriched with your riches. Hast thou found honey? Eat it not all thyself, but, like Samson, when he found it in the carcase of the lion, go to father, and mother, and friends with thy hands full of the secret, and let them eat it also.

[Matthew 10:28](#). *And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.*

Oh! fearful destruction! This is what we may well fear — both body and soul, to undergo everlasting ruin, broken in pieces and destroyed as to all excellency, and happiness, and peace,. This we may fear.

[Matthew 10:29](#). *Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.*

He over-rules all things, the least as well as the greatest. We see his hand in the tempest, and we look at the black wing of the storm and see that God rides it. But the wing of the tiny sparrows, so insignificant in value, is equally directed by his power and wisdom.

[Matthew 10:30](#). *But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.*

Minute is the providence of God, taking care of you, even as to that part of your person which is not vital, and without which you could still live on. “The very hairs of your head are all numbered.” The tiniest and most insignificant benefits are all ordered by his eternal purpose.

[Matthew 10:31-33](#). *Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows, Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men,*

And you see from the connection, that here the denying means not confessing. “Whosoever shall deny me before men.”

[Matthew 10:33](#). *Him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.*

The attempt, therefore, to avoid all publicity in religion — to endeavor to slink into heaven by the back gate — to somehow or other find an underground road to salvation, is a futile attempt. Christ requires that we should own him, seeing that he so graciously owns us. He puts it as a solemn command; and I would press it upon the conscience of any believer here who has never confessed his faith. You miss, at any rate, the promise here: you miss some others besides. You are walking in the path of disobedience. You are to some extent guilty of putting Christ to shame, for if others see that you are ashamed of him, they conclude that there is something to be ashamed of in him. Your prudence dishonours him.

Wherefore should you hold back? Are you not going to take your place among his people? You tell me that they have many faults. Have they more than you? If you never join a church till you find a perfect one, you will never join one this side of heaven, and if the church were perfect when you joined it, it would certainly cease to be so then, for you would bring your shortcomings and imperfections into it. I have lived among the people of God now these many years, and I, as pastor of this church, have had to mourn over many a man for his faults; but still, there is no people like God’s people, and of his house I will say: —

“Here my best friends — my kindred — dwell:

Here God my Saviour reigns.”

Some of the best and noblest spirits that ever lived have not been ashamed to associate with their fellow-Christians, though they perceived their errors, but they have rather cast in their lot with them, poor and

despised as they were, and have accounted it even their honour if they might but be numbered with the redeemed among men.

[Matthew 10:34](#). *Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace but a sword.*

The ultimate result of Christ's mission will be peace. Swords shall be broken into ploughshares, and the spears into pruning hooks; but on the way to peace there will be war. On the way to universal peace there will be a general confusion. When true religion comes into a man's heart, it makes him a warrior at once. He begins to contend against evil — to contend against contention. He fights for peace, though it may seem strange that it should be so.

[Matthew 10:35-36](#). *For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.*

They will drive us back when they perceive that our face is set towards heaven. When you see a fish swimming with the stream, it is almost always a dead one. The living fish goes against the stream; and the true child of God has to go against the current of mankind, and oftentimes the hardest push in life is to go against father, mother, brother, sister, far Christ's sake and the gospel.

Verses 24-42

Our Lord had been sending forth his twelve apostles to preach the gospel of the kingdom, and to work miracles in his name. Having given them their commission, he warned them of the treatment they must expect to receive, and then fortified their minds against the persecutions they would have to endure.

[Matthew 10:24-25](#). *The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his Lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?*

The name, Beelzebub or Beelzebul, meaning the god of filth, or as some say, the god of flies, was applied by the Jews to the very worst of the evil spirits. They supposed that there were some devils worse than others, and the very head and master of them all they called Beelzebub, and now they supplied this title to our Lord Jesus himself. Well then, if men should give us ill names and evil characters, need we marvel? Shall Christ be spit upon

and despised, and shall you and I be honoured and exalted? You have heard of Godfrey de Bouillon, the crusader, who entered Jerusalem in triumph, but who refused to have a golden crown put upon his head because he said, he never would be crowned with gold where Christ was crowned with thorns. So do you expect to be honoured in the world where your Lord was crucified?

[Matthew 10:26](#). *Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known.*

“They will misrepresent you, slander you, and speak evil of you; but if your good name be covered up now, it shall be revealed one of these days, perhaps in this life; but if not in this life, certainly at the day of judgment, when the secrets of all hearts shall be made known.” It really is marvellous how sometimes in this life, misrepresented men suddenly obtain a refutation of their calumniators, and then it seems as if the world would serve them as the Greeks did their successful runners or wrestlers when they lifted them upon their shoulders, and carried them in triumph.

[Matthew 10:27](#). *What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops.*

This is what we are to preach, what Christ tells us, and this is how we are to get the matter of our discourses, be alone with Christ, let him talk to us in the darkness, in the quietude of the closet where we commune with him in prayer. Then this is where we are to preach, “upon the housetops.” “We cannot literally do this here in this land upon our slanting roofs; but, in the East, “the housetops” were the most public places in the city, and all of them flat, so that anyone proclaiming anything from the housetops would be sure of an audience, and especially at certain times of the day. Preach ye, then, ye servants of God, in the most public places of the land. Where ever there are people to hear, let there not be any lack of tongues to speak for God.

[Matthew 10:28](#). *And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.*

A philosopher — Anaxarchus, I think it was, — was wont to say when a certain tyrant had threatened to kill him, “You cannot kill me; you may crush this body, but you cannot touch Anaxarchus.” So fear not those who cannot kill the soul, if that be safe, you are safe. Even Seneca frequently asserted that it was not in the power of any man to hurt a good philosopher,

“for,” said he “even death is gain to such a man;” and certainly it is so to the Christian. For him to die is indeed gain. But oh! fear that God who can destroy the soul, for then the body also is destroyed with a terrible and tremendous destruction: “fear him.”

[Matthew 10:29-30](#). *Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.*

So, then, God takes more care of us than we take of ourselves. You never heard of a man who numbered the hairs of his head. Men number their sheep and their cattle, but the Christian is so precious in God’s esteem that he takes care of the meatiest parts of his frame, and numbers even the hairs of his head.

[Matthew 10:31-32](#). *Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows. Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.*

What a glorious promise is this! “I will confess him to have been bought with my blood, I will confess him to have been my faithful follower and friend I will confess him to be my brother, and in so doing I will favor him with a share of my glory.” Have you confessed Christ before men? If you have trusted him as your Saviour, but have not publicly professed your faith in him, however sincere you may be, you are living in the neglect of a known duty, and you cannot expect to have this promise fulfilled to you if you do not keep the condition that is appended to it. Christ’s promise is to confess those who confess him. Be ye then, avowedly on the Lord’s side.

“Come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord.” Without the camp the Saviour suffered, and without the camp must his disciples follow him, bearing his reproach.

[Matthew 10:33](#). *But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.*

Not to confess Christ is practically to deny him, not to follow him is to go away from him; not to be with him is to be against him. Looking at this matter of confessing Christ in that light, there is cause for solemn self-examination by all who regard themselves as his disciples.

[Matthew 10:34](#). *Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.*

Do not misunderstand the Saviour’s words. Christ’s usually spoke in a very plain manner, and plainness is not always compatible with

guardedness. Christ did come to make peace, this is the ultimate end of his mission; text for the present, Christ did not come to make peace. Wherever Christianity comes, it causes a quarrel, because the light must always quarrel with the darkness, and sin can never be friendly with righteousness. It is not possible that honesty should live in peace with theft; it cannot be that there should be harmony between God's servants and the servants of the devil. In this sense, then, understand our Saviour's words.

[Matthew 10:35-36](#). *For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.*

This is always the case, and I suppose will be to the end of the chapter. Whenever true religion comes into a man's heart and life, those who are without the grace of God, however near and dear they may be to him, will be sure to oppose him.

[Matthew 10:37-39](#). *He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.*

In the days of the martyrs, one man was brought before the judges, and through fear of the flames he recanted, and denied the faith. He went home, and before the year was ended his own house caught fire, and he was miserably consumed in it, having had to suffer quite as much pain as he would have had to endure for Christ's sake but having no consolation in it. He found his life, yet he lost it. Now, in a higher degree, all who, to save themselves, shun the cross of Christ, only run into the fire to escape from the sparks. They shall suffer more than they would otherwise have done; but whosoever is willing to give up everything for Christ shall learn that no man is ever really a loser by Christ in the long run. Sooner or later, if not in this life, certainly in the next, the Lord will abundantly make up to every man all that he has ever suffered for his sake. Now comes a very delightful passage: —

[Matthew 10:40](#). *He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.*

When, therefore, you are kind to the poor, when you help the people of God in their difficulties and necessities, you are really helping Christ in the

person of his poor but faithful followers.

[Matthew 10:41](#). *He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet — That is, not as a gentleman, nor merely as a man, nor as a talented individual, but as a prophet of God, —*

[Matthew 10:41](#). *Shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward.*

Just the same reward which God gives to prophets and righteous men, he will give to those who receive them in the name of a prophet or of a righteous man. A prophet's reward must be something great, and such shall be the reward of those who generously receive the servants of God.

[Matthew 10:42](#). *And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.*

There have been times, even in our own country when to give “a cup of cold water” has been to run the risk of suffering death. In the dark days of persecution, some who were called heretics were driven out into the fields in the depth of winter to perish by the cold, the king's subjects being forbidden, upon pain of death, to give them anything either to eat or to drink. Now, in such a case as that, giving “a cup of cold water” would mean far more than if you or I simply gave a cup of water to someone who happened to be thirsty, but our Lord Jesus Christ here promises to reward any who, for his servants' sake, will dare to risk any consequences that may fall upon themselves.

Verses 37-40

[Matthew 10:37](#). *He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.*

What a wonderful sight, then, the church is as it passes through this world. The head of it is Christ, the cross bearer, and, following in the train, are all his faithful disciples, all carrying crosses still — the very picture of a church. You know how Simon carried the cross after Christ: he is the type of all his disciples.

“Did Simon bear the cross alone,
And all the rest go free?
No, there's a cross for everyone,
And there's a cross for me.”

[Matthew 10:38-39](#). *And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.*

You gain life by dying for Christ, but if you saved life by denying the faith, you would in the worst sense lose all that makes existence to be life. There is an existence which is nothing but eternal death, and this is the doom of those who depart from Christ. But blessed are they who can give up this temporary mortal life for the sake of an eternal one. I have heard of one who used often to boast of what he would do if it came to his being burnt; but just before the day on which he was to be burnt alive for the faith, he recanted. He was suffered to go home. In a few months it happened that he was burnt alive in his house. Unhappy man that could not burn for Christ, but had to burn after all. "He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."

[Matthew 10:40](#). *He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.*

Think of that, you that have received Christ. You have received God himself, and he has come to dwell and reign with your soul.

This exposition consisted of readings from [1 Peter 1:1-16](#) and [Matthew 10:37-40](#).

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CHAPTER 12

Verses 1-6

[Matthew 11:1-5](#). *And it came to pass, when Jesus had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence to teach and preach in their cities. Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples. And said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another? Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.*

These were Christ's seals and proofs: he needed not to seek others. These were the very works of which prophecy had said they would be the marks of the Messiah. If then, these marks were found in him, he left John

and his disciples to draw the inference that he was, indeed, the One that was to come. Christ is always best known by his works, and in his people especially; he is seen in their lives. There are two great precepts for the conquest of the world for Christ: the first is, preach the gospel; but the second is, live the gospel, and if we do not live the gospel we shall not succeed in preaching the gospel. In fact, those members of our churches who do not live the gospel undo through all the week what the preacher of the gospel endeavors to do on the Lord's Day. It is a fine thing to preach with your mouth; but the best thing in the world is to preach with your feet and with your hands — in your walk and in your work; and if you are enabled to do this, the people will be able to say very little against the preaching of the gospel when they see the result of it in those who accept it. God grant that we may be all preachers in some way or another.

[Matthew 11:6](#). *And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.*

This exposition consisted of readings from Ephesians 2. [Matthew 11:1-6](#).

Verses 1-30

[Matthew 11:1-3](#). *And it came to pass, when Jesus had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence to teach and to preach in their cities. Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, And said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?*

Had John's faith begun to waver? It is possible that it had. Elijah had his times of trembling and depression; then, why might not the second Elijah have the same sort of experience? Possibly, John wished to strengthen the faith of his followers, and therefore he sent two of his leading disciples to Jesus, that they might make the enquiry for themselves as to whether he was the Christ or not.

[Matthew 11:4](#). *Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see:*

For the works of Christ are the proofs of his Messiahship. His teaching and his action must ever be the seals of his mission.

[Matthew 11:5](#). *The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.*

This is the last, but not the least, of the signs of his Messiahship, that Jesus Christ preached so that the poor understood him, and delighted to

follow him wherever he went. Many despised his preaching for this reason; but the Saviour mentioned this among the signs of his being sent of God: "The poor have the gospel preached to them."

[Matthew 11:6-11](#). *And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me. And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind? But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? behold, they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet. For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.*

His position was a very high one; he was the evening star of the old dispensation, and the morning star of the new; but the light which shines after the sun has risen is brighter than any that the morning star can bring. He who has the gospel to preach has a greater thing to do than John the Baptist, who did but herald the coming of the Saviour.

[Matthew 11:12-15](#). *And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

Let him listen to what the heaven-sent messenger has to say; let him especially pay attention to his accents when he says, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

[Matthew 11:16-17](#). *But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows, And saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented.*

"You would not join in our game; whichever we chose to do, to imitate a festival or a funeral, you would not take part with us."

[Matthew 11:18-19](#). *For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children.*

There was no pleasing them anyhow; they were prepared to find fault with any sort of man, whether he lived an ascetic life, or mixed with others as a man among men. “But wisdom is justified of her children.” She sends the right sort of men to do her work, and God will take care that those who reject them shall not be without guilt: “wisdom is justified of her children.”

[Matthew 11:20](#). *Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not:*

That was the point that Christ aimed at,—their repentance. He did not seek to dazzle them with wonders and marvels, but to break their hearts away from their sins. This is what his mighty works ought to have done, for they proved him to be the Messiah; and those mighty works also warned those who witnessed them that God had come near to them; and that, therefore, it was time for them to turn from their evil ways.

[Matthew 11:21-24](#). *Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee*

There is a great depth of mystery here, which we cannot hope to fathom. The gospel was not preached to those who would have repented if they had heard it, and it was preached to those who did not repent when they listened to it even from the lips of Christ himself. Upon this latter class, the sole effect of the gospel preached to them was to plunge them into yet deeper depths of guilt because of their refusal of it. It is not for us to solve the mystery; it will be our wisdom to see that, being ourselves favored with the plain declaration of the gospel, we do not put it from us, lest we perish even more miserably than those who never heard it.

[Matthew 11:25](#). *At that time Jesus answered and said,—*

So he had been talking with his Father: “Jesus answered.” Very often, no doubt, the Saviour spoke with God when it is not recorded in the Gospels that he did so; but here a plain hint is given that Christ was in intimate communion and fellowship with God. At such times, great doctrines which, to the shallow minds of those who live at a distance from God, even seem

dreadful, become delightful, and are lit up with unusual splendor. At that time, the doctrine of election was specially upon the heart of Christ because he was dwelling near to God himself: “Jesus answered and said,” —

[Matthew 11:25-30](#). *I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him. Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*

Verses 20-30

[Matthew 11:20](#). *Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not:*

They listened; sometimes, they applauded; but they repented not; and there is nothing really accomplished until men have repented. In vain have we preached until men are brought to repent; so the Master said: —

[Matthew 11:21-22](#). *Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you.*

Listen to that, you gospel-hardened sinners, you who have heard, and heard, and heard, but have not repented. See how great is your sin, for you have rejected what others would have received if it had been presented to them. See how your guilt accumulates, and its punishment also.

[Matthew 11:23-24](#). *And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.*

Sodom! — that is the blackest place of all. Ah, me! will that verse ever fall, like a millstone, upon any one of my hearers, to grind him to powder, because you heard the gospel, and rejected it, intending always to receive it,

but never receiving it at all? From such a doom, may God in mercy deliver you!

[Matthew 11:25-30](#). *At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father.’ and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him. Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*

Just by way of contrast to what I am going to say in my sermon, let us read a few verses in Revelation 7.

This exposition consisted of readings from Matthew 3, and [Matthew 11:20-30](#); and [Revelation 7:9-17](#).

Verses 25-30

[Matthew 11:25-26](#). *At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight.*

“Jesus answered”: sovereign grace is the answer to abounding guilt. With rejoicing spirit Jesus sees how sovereign grace meets the unreasonable abounding of human sin, and chooses out its own, according to the good pleasure of the Father’s will. Here is the spirit in which to regard the electing grace of God: “I thank thee.” It is cause for deepest gratitude.

Here is the author of election: “O Father.” It is the Father who makes the choice, and reveals the blessings. Here is his right to act as he does: he is “Lord of heaven and earth.” Who shall question the good pleasure of his will? Here we see the objects of election, under both aspects; the chosen and the passed-over. Babes see because sacred truths are revealed to them, and not otherwise. They are weak and inexperienced. They are simple and unsophisticated. They can cling, and trust, and cry, and love; and to such the Lord opens up the treasures of wisdom. The objects of divine choice are such as these. Lord, let me be one among them! The truths of the heavenly kingdom are hid, by a judicial act of God, from men who, in their own

esteem, are “the wise and prudent.” They cannot see, because they trust their own dim light, and will not accept the light of God.

Here we see, also, the reason of election, the divine will: “So it seemed good in thy sight.” We can go no further than this. The choice seemed good to Him who never errs, and therefore it is good. This stands to the children of God as the reason, which is above all reason. Deus vult is enough for us. If God wills it, so must it be, and so ought it to be.

[Matthew 11:27](#). *All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.*

Here we have the channel through which electing love works towards men: “All things are delivered unto me of my Father.” All things are put into the Mediator’s hands; fit hands both towards God and towards man; for he alone knows both to perfection. Jesus reveals the Father to the babes whom he has chosen. Only the Father can fill the Son with benediction, and only through the Son can that benediction flow to any one of the race of men. Know Christ, and you know the Father, and know that the Father himself loveth you. There is no other way of knowing the Father but through the Son. In this our Lord rejoiced; for his office of Mediator is dear to him, and he loves to be the way of communication between the Father whom he loves, and the people whom he loves for the Father’s sake. Observe the intimate fellowship between the Father and the Son, and how they know each other as none else ever can. Oh, to see all things in Jesus by the Father’s appointment, and so to find the Father’s love and grace in finding Christ! My soul, there are great mysteries here! Enjoy what thou canst not explain.

[Matthew 11:28](#). *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

Here is the gracious invitation of the gospel in which the Saviour’s tears and smiles were blended, as in a covenant rainbow of promise. “Come:” he drives none away: he calls them to himself. His favourite word is, “Come.” Not-go to Moses; but, “Come unto me.” To Jesus himself we must come, by a personal trust. Not to doctrine, ordinance, or ministry are we to come first; but to the personal Saviour. All labouring and laden ones may come: he does not limit the call to the spiritually labouring, but every working and wearied one is called. It is well to give the largest sense to all that mercy speaks. Jesus calls me. Jesus promises “rest” as his gift: his immediate,

personal, effectual rest he freely gives to all who come to him by faith. To come to him is the first step, and he entreats us to take it. In himself, as the great sacrifice for sin, the conscience, the heart, the understanding obtain complete rest. When we have obtained the rest he gives, we shall be ready to hear of a further rest, which we find.

[Matthew 11:29-30](#). *Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*

“Take my yoke and learn:” this is the second instruction; it brings with it a further rest which we “find.” The first rest he gives through his death; the second we find in copying his life. This is no correction of the former statement, but an addition thereto. First, we rest by faith in Jesus, and next we rest through obedience to him. Rest from fear is followed by rest from the turbulence of inward passion, and the drudgery of self. We are not only to bear a yoke, but his yoke; and we are not only to submit to it when it is laid upon us, but we are to take it upon us. We are to be workers, and take his yoke; and at the same time we are to be scholars, and learn from him as our Teacher. We are to learn of Christ and also to learn Christ. He is both Teacher and lesson. His gentleness of heart fits him to teach, to be the illustration of his own teaching, and to work in us his great design. If we can become as he is, we shall rest as he does. We shall not only rest from the guilt of sin,-this he gives us; but we shall rest in the peace of holiness, which we find through obedience to him. It is the heart, which makes or mars the rest of the man. Lord, make us “lowly in heart,” and we shall be restful of heart. “Take my yoke.” The yoke in which we draw with Christ must needs be a happy one, and the burden which we carry for him is a blessed one. We rest in the fullest sense when we serve, if Jesus is the Master. We are unloaded by bearing his burden; we are rested by running on his errands. “Come unto me,” is thus a divine prescription, curing our ills by the pardon of sin through our Lord’s sacrifice, and causing us the greatest peace by sanctifying us to his service. Oh, for grace to be always coming to Jesus, and to be constantly inviting others to do the same! Always free, yet always bearing his yoke; always having the rest once given, yet always finding more: this is the experience of those who come to Jesus always, and for everything. Blessed heritage; and it is ours if we are really his!

MATTHEW CONTENTS

CHAPTER 12

Verses 38-42

Matthew 12:38-39. *Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, an evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas:*

The Pharisees change their manner, but they are in pursuit of the same object. How hopeless had the religionists of that age become! Nothing would convince them. They manifested their hate of the Lord Jesus, by ignoring all the wonders he had wrought. What further signs could they seek than those he had already given? Pretty enquirers these! They treat all the miracles of our Lord as if they had never occurred. Well might the Lord call them “evil and adulterous,” since they were so given to personal lasciviousness, and were spiritually so untrue to God. We have those among us now who are so uncandid as to treat all the achievements of evangelical doctrine as if they were nothing, and talk to us as if no result had followed the preaching of the gospel. There is need of great patience to deal wisely with such.

Matthew 12:40. *For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.*

The great sign of our Lord's mission is his resurrection, and his preparing a gospel of salvation for the heathen. His life-story is well symbolized by that of Jonah. They cast our Lord overboard, even as the sailors did the man of God. The sacrifice of Jonah calmed the sea for the mariners, our Lord's death made peace for us. Our Lord was a while in the heart of the earth as Jonah was in the depth of the sea, but, he rose again, and his ministry was full of the power of his resurrection. As Jonah's ministry was certified by his restoration from the sea, so is our Lord's ministry attested by his rising from the dead. The man who had come back from death and burial in the sea commanded the attention of all Nineveh, and so does the risen Saviour demand and deserve the obedient faith of all to whom his message comes.

[Matthew 12:41](#). *The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and behold a greater than Jonas is here.*

The heathen of Nineveh were convinced by the sign of a prophet restored from burial in the sea; and moved by that convincement, they repented at his preaching. Without cavil or delay they put the whole city in mourning, and pleaded with God to turn from his anger. Jesus came with a clearer command of repentance, and a brighter promise of deliverance; but he spoke to obdurate hearts. Our Lord reminds the Pharisees of this, and as they were the most Jewish of Jews, they were touched to the quick by the fact that heathens perceived what Israel did not understand, and that Ninevites repented while Jews were hardened. All men will rise at the judgment: "The men of Nineveh shall rise." The lives of penitents will condemn those who did not repent: the Ninevites will condemn the Jews, "because they repented at the preaching of Jonas," and the Jews did not. Those who heard Jonah and repented will be swift witnesses against those who heard Jesus, and refused his testimony. The standing witness to our Lord is his resurrection from the dead. God grant that every one of us, believing that unquestionable fact, may be so assured of his mission, that we may repent and believe the gospel. RESURRECTION is one proof, in fact, it is THE SIGN although, as we shall see, it is supplemented by another. The two will convince us or condemn us.

[Matthew 12:42](#). *The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.*

The second sign of our Lord's mission is HIS KINGLY WISDOM. As the fame of Solomon brought the queen of the south from the uttermost parts of the earth, so does the doctrine of our Lord command attention from the utmost isles of the sea. If Israel perceives not his glorious wisdom, Ethiopia and Seba shall hear of it, and come bowing before him. The queen of Sheba will rise again, and will "rise up" as a witness against unbelieving Jews, for she journeyed far to hear Solomon, while they would not hear the Son of God himself who came into their midst. The superlative excellence of his wisdom stands for our Lord as a sign, which can never be effectually disputed. What other teaching meets all the wants of men? Who else has revealed such grace and truth? He is infinitely greater than Solomon, who

from a moral point of view exhibited a sorrowful littleness. Who but the Son of God could have made known the Father as he has done?

Verses 38-45

[Matthew 12:38-39](#). *Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas:*

The queen of Sheba did not ask for a sign. She did not expect Solomon to work a miracle; but, sitting down in his presence, she proposed her hard questions, and meekly awaited his answers. So should these scribes and Pharisees have done with the Lord Jesus Christ. These were his signs: —

[Matthew 12:40-41](#). *For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.*

Jonas was a servant: Jesus was the Master. Jonas preached only one sermon: Jesus preached many. That sermon was a short one: Jesus Christ laboured long after souls. Jonas was a man full of infirmities, and with an unloving heart: Jesus was tender and compassionate. Jonas did but hurry through the streets, crying, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown,” — without a word of mercy: Jesus lived long among the people, giving them directions, and warnings, and invitations to seek and find salvation: “Behold, a greater than Jonas is here.”

[Matthew 12:42](#). *The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.*

As I have so recently preached upon this verse, I need not say anything about it just now.

[Matthew 12:43](#). *When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, —*

Mark, not when he is turned out of him by superior force, but when he has gone out of his own accord, —

[Matthew 12:43](#). *He walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none.*

The devil was in the Jews of old, but he went out of them at the time of the Babylonian captivity; that heavy punishment cured them of idolatry. But

the devil could never find a resting-place, in Gentile hearts, so pleasant to himself as among God's own people.

[Matthew 12:44](#). *Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished.*

"I will go back to those Jews," saith the devil; and, when he comes back, he finds them without any true love to God: "empty, swept, and garnished." See how correctly the Pharisee is dressed, and note with what sanctimonious unction he repeats his hypocritical prayers. He fasts twice in the week, and pays tithes of his mint, and anise, and cummin. The devil finds the house "empty, swept, garnished;" and as he does not care whether he lives in a foul heart or a clean one, so long as he can but live in it, he takes up his abode there again.

[Matthew 12:45](#). *Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first.*

If idolatry did not come back to the Jews, the devil of pride, and self-conceit, and many more came, and fought against the Son of God, so that they became worse than they were before, and the first devil of the Jewish people was nothing compared with the seven devils which afterwards possessed them. We have seen some men of this kind. Under temporary conviction, they have given up certain outward sins, but, afterwards, they have been ten times worse than they were before. We have known a man to be a drunkard, and we have rejoiced to see him leave his cups; but, yet, when he has made a self-righteousness out of his temperance, and set himself up against God and his truth, we have verily believed that he has had within him seven devils worse than the first. A man may reform himself to blacker stains, and wash himself with the waters of his self-righteousness till he becomes more hard to cleanse than he would have been at the first. Oh, for the mighty hand of One, who is stronger than the prince of hell, to throw the devil out, and then he will never come back again; but if he goes out by mere human persuasion, or by our own wills and wishes, he will most certainly come back to us. If the Holy Ghost turns him out, he will never gain an entrance any more.

[Matthew 12:45](#). *Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.*

This exposition consisted of readings from [1 Kings 10:1-13](#); and [Matthew 12:38-45](#).

MATTHEW CONTENTS

CHAPTER 13

Verses 1-23

Matthew 13:1-2. *The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side. And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore.*

I think I can see the little ship at a convenient distance from the shore so as to keep off the multitudes of people, in order that the Saviour might speak the more freely, there he sits with a boat for a pulpit. There were no conventionalities about the Lord Jesus when he was upon the earth, he was willing to speak to the people anywhere from any pulpit whatsoever

Matthew 13:3. *And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow;*

It was probably at that season of the year when the sowers were going forth to sow their seed, so Jesus pointed to them as to a living text. He was always wide-awake to make use of everything that occurred round about him. "A sower went forth to sow." For what else should he go forth? Yet some sowers that I know of do not go forth to sow, but to exhibit themselves, and to show how well they can do their work. This man aimed at sowing and nothing else. Oh, that all preachers did the same!

Matthew 13:4. *And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side,*

He could not help that; he was not sent to pick the soil, that would be too much responsibility for him. If we had to preach only to certain characters, we should be taking up all our time in picking out those characters, and probably we should make many mistakes while trying to do it. Our business is to scatter the good seed broadcast. We are not to dabble in the Word, we are to throw it as far as we can, and to let it fall wherever God pleases. "Some seeds fell by the way side," — on ground trodden hard by the passers-by.

Matthew 13:4. *And the fowls came and devoured them up:*

Those fowls are always ready to devour the good seed. Wherever there is a congregation met to hear the Word, there are always plenty of devils ready to do their evil work. "The fowls came," they had not far to fly. The birds know a sower by the very look of him, so they hurry up, and come wherever the seed may be cast that they may devour it. O Lord, keep the

fowls away; or, better still, break up the soil so that the seed may enter, and not lie upon the surface!

[Matthew 13:5](#). *Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth:*

There was a pan of unbroken limestone an inch or two below the soil, but there was no depth of earth where the seeds could grow.

[Matthew 13:5](#). *And forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth:*

They seemed to be converts, but they proved to be worthless. They were enthusiastic, carried away with excitement, but all was soon over with them “because they had no deepness of earth.” Everything was superficial, there was no depth of character, or feeling, or emotion.

[Matthew 13:6](#). *And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away*

They seemed to be alive at the top, but they were really dead below. How many there are of that sort still; they make a bold profession, but it is only for a while, and then they wither away.

[Matthew 13:7-8](#). *And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: but other fell into good ground, —*

Thank God, we do not lose all our efforts. If one in four succeeds, it is great deal for which we ought to praise the Lord. So, brother, sister, —

“Sow in the morn thy seed,
At eve hold not thine hand;
To doubt and fear give thou no heed,
Broadcast it o’er the land.”

[Matthew 13:8](#). *And brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.*

There are degrees even in fruitfulness; Christians are not all alike. Oh, that we had a hundredfold return for our sowing everywhere! We do not get it, and can scarcely expect it; let us thank God if we have “some a hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.”

[Matthew 13:9-12](#). *Who hath ears to hear, let him hear. And the disciple came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.*

It is so even in common things, the man of intelligence, who has a good groundwork of education, picks up something everywhere, but the ignorant man learns nothing anywhere. He only finds out more and more of his own ignorance till there is taken away from him even that which he had.

Oh, that the Lord would give us a good groundwork of saving knowledge, so that we might go on learning more and more under the Holy Spirit's teaching!

[Matthew 13:13-16](#). *Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.*

It is an awful thing when God gives men up to spiritual blindness, and dullness, and hardness, but it does happen. If you hear the Word, and refuse to receive it, you do to that extent harden your heart; and if you continue to do so, you will by degrees lose the capacity for understanding the Word. Take heed what you hear. O my dear hearers, I am afraid that many of you are not aware of the solemn responsibility of hearing the gospel, and of the terrible peril of having your ears made dull and your heart made hard! I am responsible for preaching to you faithfully, but you are equally responsible for hearing what is preached. Let us not waste any opportunity that we have of hearing the Word, but use it wisely and well that we may be able to give a good account of it before God in our fruitfulness. Now, if the Saviour's main design, in the use of parables, had been that men should not understand him, he could have answered that end better by not speaking at all. But see how mercy blends with justice, and gives them another opportunity of hearing the Word. They might have come to Jesus even as his disciples did, and asked him questions, and he would have explained the truth to them. If any of you today hear anything which you do not understand, go to the Lord about it in private prayer, and he will explain it to you. I tremble lest any of you should hear the Word and not receive it, and yet be contented. That is the worst state of all for anyone to be in may God save you from it! But as for you who know the lord, "blessed are your

eyes, for they see.” Those are blessed eyes that can really see, eyes that cannot see are a trial, but “blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.” It is nothing but the grace of God that can make our ears spiritually hear. He that made the ear can alone make an open passage from the ear to the heart. If you have received this blessing, be very grateful for it, and bless the God of grace for giving it to you.

[Matthew 13:17](#). *For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.*

To you Christian people, there is given a very full revelation of the truth of God. You live in the mid-day glory of the gospel, but the “prophets and righteous men” of old lived in the morning twilight. Be the more grateful, and bless the Lord with all your hearts

[Matthew 13:18-19](#). *Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower. When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side.*

There are many such hearers, they just hear the Word, and that is all. They are very like the countryman, who said that he liked Sunday for it was such an easy day, he had nothing to do but go to church, put up his legs, and think of nothing. There are far too many hearers of that sort who think of nothing, and therefore they get no good out of what they hear.

[Matthew 13:20-21](#). *But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it, yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.*

He soon ceases even to profess to be a Christian, he jumped into religion, and he jumps out again. Revival always produce a large quantity of such people, and yet, if there is one soul truly saved, the revival is a success so far as that one is concerned.

[Matthew 13:22-23](#). *He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word, and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful. But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it;*

Knows what it means, thinks it over, takes it in as the good ground takes in the seed, and keeps it; —

[Matthew 13:23](#). *Which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.*

I say again, — Oh, that we had a hundredfold return for our sowing! Yet let us not forget to give God thanks if we have sixtyfold or even thirtyfold.

Verses 3-23

[Matthew 13:3](#). *And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow;*

He had much instruction to give, and he chose to convey it in parables. What wonderful pictures they were! What a world of meaning they have for us, as well as for those who heard them! This parable of the sower is a mine of teaching concerning the kingdom; for the seed was “the word of the kingdom.” (See verse 19.) “Behold”: every word is worthy of attention. May be, the preacher pointed to a farmer on the shore, who was beginning to sow one of the terraces. “A sower”, read “The Sower.” Jesus, our Lord, has taken up this business of the Sower at his Father’s bidding. The sower “went forth.” See him leaving the Father’s house, with this one design upon his heart — “to sow.”

[Matthew 13:4](#). *And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up:*

When HE sowed, some seeds fell by the wayside: even when the Chief Sower is at work, some seed fails. We know he sows the best of seed, and in the best manner; but some of it falls on the trodden path, and so lies uncovered and unaccepted of the soil. That soil was hard, and beaten down with traffic. There, too, on the wayside, we meet with dust to blind, settlements of mud to foul, and birds to pilfer: it is not a good place for good seed. No wonder, as the seeds lay all exposed, that the fowls came and devoured them up. If truth does not enter the heart, evil influences soon remove it.

[Matthew 13:5-6](#). *Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.*

Among the rocks, or on the shallow soil, with the unbroken rock-pan underneath, the seed fell; for if the sower had altogether avoided such places he might have missed some of the good ground. In these stony places

the seed speedily sprang up, because the rock gave it all the heat that fell on it, and so hastened its germination. But, soon up, soon down. When the time came for the sun to put forth his force, the rootless plants instantly pined and died. They had no deepness of earth, and “no root”; what could they do but wither quite away? Everything was hurried with them; the seeds had no time to root themselves, and so in hot haste the speedy growth met with speedy death. No trace remained.

[Matthew 13:7](#). *And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them:*

The ground was originally a thorn-brake, and had been cleared by the thorns being cut down; but speedily the old roots sent out new shoots, and other weeds came up with them; and the tangled beds of thistles, thorns, nettles, and what not, strangled the feeble up-shootings of the wheat. The native plants choked the poor stranger. They would not permit the intrusive corn to share the field with them: evil claims a monopoly of our nature. Thus we have seen three sets of seed come to an untimely end.

[Matthew 13:8](#). *But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixty fold, some thirty fold.*

This would repay all losses, especially at the highest rate of increase here quoted. To the bird, the weather, and the weeds, three sets of seeds have gone; yet, happily, one remains to increase and fill the barn. The sowing of good seed can never be a total failure: “other fell into good ground.” The harvest was not equally great on every spot of fertile soil: it varied from an hundredfold to thirtyfold. All good ground is not alike good; and, besides, the situation may differ. Harvests are not all alike in the same farm, in the same season, and under the same farmer; and yet each field may yield a fairly good harvest. Lord, if I cannot reach to a hundredfold, let me at least prove to be good ground by bearing thirtyfold.

[Matthew 13:18](#). *Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower.*

Because you see behind the curtain, and have grace given to discern the inner meaning through the outer metaphor, come and hear the explanation of the parable of the sower.

[Matthew 13:19](#). *When anyone heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side.*

The gospel is “the word of the kingdom”: it has royal authority in it; it proclaims and reveals King Jesus, and it leads men to obedience to his way. To hear but not to understand, is to leave the good seed on the outside of your nature, and not to take it into yourself. Nothing can come of such hearing to anyone. Satan is always on the watch to hinder the Word: “Then cometh the wicked one”, even at the moment when the seed fell. He is always afraid to leave the truth even in hard and dry contact with a mind, and so he catcheth it away at once, and it is forgotten, or even disbelieved. It is gone, at any rate; and we have not in our hearer’s mind a corn-field, but a highway, hard, and much frequented. The man was not an opposer, he “received seed”; but he received the truth as he was, without the soil of his nature being changed; and the seed remained as it was, till the foul bird of hell took it off the place, and there was an end of it. So far as the truth was sown in his heart, it was in his natural, unrenewed heart, and therefore it took no living hold. How many such hearers we have! To these we preach in vain; for what they learn they unlearn, and what they receive they reject almost as soon as it comes to them. Lord, suffer none of us to be impervious to thy royal word; but whenever the smallest seed of truth falls on us, may we open our soul to it!

[Matthew 13:20-21](#). *But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for awhile: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.*

Here the seed was the same and the sower the same, but the result somewhat different. In this case there was earth enough to cover the seed, and heat enough to make it grow quickly. The convert was attentive, and easily persuaded; he seemed glad to accept the gospel at once, he was even eager and enthusiastic, joyful and demonstrative. He heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it. Surely this looked very promising! But the soil was essentially evil, hard, barren, superficial. The man had no living entrance into the mystery of the gospel, no root in himself, no principle, no hold of the truth with a renewed heart; and so he flourished hurriedly and showily for a season, and only for a season. It is tersely put, “He dureth for a while.” That “while” may be longer or shorter according to circumstances. When matters grow hot with Christians, either through affliction from the Lord, or persecution from the world, the temporary believer is so sapless, so rootless, so deficient in moisture of grace, that he dries up, and his

profession withers. Thus, again, the sower's hopes are disappointed, and his labour is lost. Till stony hearts are changed it must always be so. We meet with many who are soon hot and as soon cold. They receive the gospel "anon," and leave it "by-and-by" Everything is on the surface, and therefore is hasty and unreal. May we all have broken hearts and prepared minds, that when truth comes to us it may take root in us and abide.

[Matthew 13:22](#). *He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.*

This class of hearers we know by personal acquaintance in this busy age. They hear the word, they are affected by the gospel, they take it as seed into their minds, and it grows well for a season; but the heart cannot belong to two absorbing objects at the same time, and therefore these men cannot long yield themselves up to the world and Christ too. Care to get money, covetousness, trickery, and sins which come from hasting to be rich, or else pride, luxury, oppression, and other sins which come of having obtained wealth, prevent the man from being useful in religious matters, or even sincere to himself: "He becometh unfruitful." He keeps his profession; he occupies his place; but his religion does not grow; in fact, it shows sad signs of being choked and checked by worldliness. The leaf of outward religiousness is there, but there is no dew on it; the ear of promised fruit is there, but there are no kernels in it. The weeds have outgrown the wheat, and smothered it. We cannot grow thorn and corn at the same time: the attempt is fatal to a harvest for Jesus. See how wealth is here associated with care, deceitfulness, and unfruitfulness. It is a thing to be handled with care. Why are men so eager to make their thorn-brake more dense with briars? Would not a good husbandman root out the thorns and brambles? Should we not, as much as possible, keep free from the care to get, to preserve, to increase, and to hoard worldly riches? Our heavenly Father will see that we have enough; why do we fret about earthly things? We cannot give our minds to these things and to the kingdom also.

[Matthew 13:23](#). *But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.*

Here is the story of the Word's success. This fourth piece of land will repay all charges. Of course, no one parable teaches all truth, and therefore we have no mention here of the plowing which always precedes a fruitful

harvest. No heart of man is good by nature: the good Lord had made this plot into “good ground.” In this case, both thought and heart are engaged about the heavenly message, and the man “heareth the word, and understandeth it.” By being understood lovingly, the truth gets into the man, and then it roots, it grows, it fruits, it rewards the sower. We must aim at the inward apprehension and comprehension of the Word of God; for only in this way can we be made fruitful by it. Be it ours to aim to be amongst those who would bear fruit an hundredfold! Ah, we would give our Lord ten thousandfold if we could. For every sermon we hear we should endeavor to do a hundred gracious, charitable, or self-denying acts. Our divine Sower, with such heavenly seed, deserves to be rewarded with a glorious harvest.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Matthew 9:35-38](#); [Matthew 10:1](#); [Matthew 13:3-8](#); Matthew , 18-23.

Verses 10-17

[Matthew 13:10-12](#). *And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in, parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.*

You can understand this truth if you go into certain museums. I will suppose that you know nothing whatever of comparative anatomy, and you go into the museum of comparative anatomy at Paris. If you understand a little of the science, you will learn a great deal more: “for whosoever hath, to him shall be given.” If you do not know anything about the subject, you will say, “Well, this is the most uninteresting exhibition I ever saw,” and you will come out with the feeling that you do not know anything. What you did know will have vanished in the sight of all that mass of bones arranged in those extraordinary shapes. You will only feel your own lack of knowledge in that department; you will show your ignorance, and nothing else. So it is in the things of God. If you understand the fundamental principles of true godliness, you will soon understand more; but if you do not comprehend as much as that, even the reading of the Scriptures will be but slightly instructive to you.

[Matthew 13:13-15](#). *Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And*

in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; Lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

Now the Saviour turned to his disciples, and spoke specially to them.

[Matthew 13:16](#). *But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.*

It is no use having eyes that do not see, or ears that do not hear; and yet I fear that there are many eyes of that kind, and many ears of that sort, in this congregation tonight.

[Matthew 13:17](#). *For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.*

Now let us read one other passage, to show how the Lord heals the blind, and makes them see.

This exposition consisted of readings from Isaiah 6; [Matthew 13:10-17](#); and [Luke 18:35-43](#).

Verses 24-50

[Matthew 13:24](#). *Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field:*

He knew that it was good. It had been tested: it was unmixed: it was good throughout.

[Matthew 13:25](#). *But while men slept his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.*

It was a very malicious action. The thing has been done many times. Bastard wheat was sown in among the true wheat, so as to injure the crop.

[Matthew 13:26-27](#). *But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares?*

We often have to ask that question. How comes this about? It was a true gospel that was preached, from whence then come these hypocrites — these that are like the wheat, but are not wheat? For it is not the tare that we call a

tare in England that is meant here, but a false wheat — very like to wheat, but not wheat.

[Matthew 13:28](#). *He said unto them, An enemy hath done this.*

The enemy could not do a worse thing than to adulterate the Church of God. Pretenders outside do little hurt. Inside the fold they do much mischief.

[Matthew 13:28-30](#). *The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.*

The separation will be more in season, move easily and more accurately done when both shall have been fully developed — when the wheat shall have come to its fullness, and the counterfeit wheat shall have ripened.

[Matthew 13:31-32](#). *Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: Which indeed is the least of all seeds:*

Commonly known in that country.

[Matthew 13:32-35](#). *But when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof. Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened. All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.*

How thoroughly impregnated our Lord was with the very spirit of Scripture. And he ever acted as if the Scriptures were uppermost in his mind. They seemed to be ever in their fullness before his soul.

[Matthew 13:36](#). *Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him,*

Those house-talks, those explanations of the great public sermons and parables — were sweet privileges which he reserved for those who had given their utter confidence to him.

[Matthew 13:36-44](#). *Saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field. He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them unto a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found,*

Stumbling upon it, perhaps, when he was at the plough — turning up the old crop in which it was concealed.

[Matthew 13:44](#). *He hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.*

Some persons do stumble upon the gospel when they are not looking for it. “I am found of them that sought me not” is a grand free grace text. Some of those who have been most earnest in the kingdom of heaven were at one time most indifferent and careless, but God in infinite sovereignty put the treasure in their way — gave them the heart to value it, and they obtained it to their own joy.

[Matthew 13:45](#). *Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls:*

He does not stumble at it: he is seeking pearls.

[Matthew 13:46-47](#). *Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind:*

Bad fish and good fish, end creeping things and broken shells, and bite of seaweed, and pieces of old wreck. Did you ever see such an odd assortment as they get upon the deck of a fishing vessel when they empty out the contents of a drag net? Such is the effect of the ministry. It drags together all sorts of people. It is quite as well that we have not eyes enough to see one another’s hearts tonight, or else I dare say we should make about as queer a medley as I have already attempted to describe as being in the fisherman’s vessel.

[Matthew 13:48](#). *Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away.*

All a mixture. We cannot sort one from the other now, but when the net comes to shore then will be the picking over the heap. No mistakes will be made. The good will go into vessels, and the bad, and none but the bad, will be cast away.

[Matthew 13:49-50](#). *So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just. And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.*

Not fire, then, which annihilates, but fire which leaves in pain and causes weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Verses 24-58

[Matthew 13:24](#). *Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field:*

Jesus never sowed any other kind of seed. The truth which he taught is pure and unadulterated. It is good seed, — good and only good, the very best of seed.

[Matthew 13:25](#). *But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.*

Wherever Christ is active the enemy is sure to be active too. If you have a sleeping church, you may have a sleeping devil; but as soon as ever Christ is in the congregation sowing the good seed, the devil wakes up, and by night, when men are off their guard, the bad seed — the mock wheat — here translated “tares” — is sown among the true wheat.

[Matthew 13:26](#). *But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.*

The false wheat came up with the true. Perhaps the seed in the one case may have looked like the other even as there is “another gospel which is not another” with which come still trouble us. The only true test is, “By their fruits ye shall know them;” so, when the seeds had sprung up, there was the blade of true wheat, and “then appeared the tares also.”

[Matthew 13:27](#). *So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares?*

How often we have asked that question! We have seen children trained by the most godly parents, yet they have developed a sad propensity to sin,

and we have said, “From whence then have these tares come?” We have seen a ministry which has been sound and faithful, and yet in the congregation there have sprung up divers errors which have done a world of mischief, and we have had sorrowfully to ask, “From whence then have these tares come?”

[Matthew 13:28-29](#). *He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them.*

We are so fallible, we make so many mistakes, that we cannot be trusted to do this uprooting, for we might pull up wheat as well as tares. If there had been briars or thorns growing in that field, those servants might have pulled them up without damage to the corn, just as an open evil liver, who breaks the laws of God openly, may be cut off from the church without damage; but these tares must be left for the present.

[Matthew 13:30](#). *Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.*

There will be an end of this mixture in due time; the hypocrite shall not always stand in the congregation of the righteous; the wheat and the tares shall be separated “in the time of harvest.”

[Matthew 13:31-32](#). *Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.*

The kingdom of heaven is just like that in this world; wherever it comes, it comes to grow. And it is just like that in our hearts. Oh, how small is the first sign of grace in the soul! Perhaps it is only a single thought. The life divine may begin with but a wish, or with one painful conviction of error;

but if it be the true and living seed of God, it will grow. And there is no telling how great will be its growth till, in that soul where all was darkness, many graces, like sweet song-birds, shall come and sing, and make joy and gladness there. Oh, that you and I might experimentally know the meaning of the parable of the mustard seed !

[Matthew 13:33](#). *Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures*

of meal, till the whole was leavened.

And although leaven is usually the symbol of evil, yet it may be here a fair representation of the kingdom of heaven itself, for it operates mysteriously and secretly, yet powerfully, till it permeates the whole of man's nature; and the gospel will keep on winning its way till the whole world shall yet be leavened by it.

“More and more it spreads and grows,
Ever mighty to prevail.”

[Matthew 13:34-36](#). *All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world. Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field.*

I again remind you that, wherever there is anything that you do not understand, the best way is to consult the Master concerning it. If I read a book in which there is an obscure passage, and I can write to the author, and ask him what he means by it, I shall most probably get to understand it. So, the best Expositor of the Word of God is the Spirit of God; therefore appeal to him whenever you are puzzled with anything that is taught in the Scriptures, and say to him, “Blessed Spirit, wilt thou graciously expound to me this parable, this doctrine, this experience ?” and he will do it, and so you shall become wise unto salvation.

[Matthew 13:37-43](#). *He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

May God give us such ears as can hear his voice, and may we take to heart the solemn teachings of our Lord !

[Matthew 13:44-46](#). *Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.*

It would be a good bargain for anyone to part with all he has in exchange for the kingdom of heaven, yet that great “treasure” is to be had for nothing by everyone who trusts the Lord Jesus Christ.

[Matthew 13:47-50](#). *Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.*

We are to cast the great seine-net of the gospel into the sea of humanity, but we must not expect that all we catch will prove to be good. There is time of separation coming when “the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just.”

[Matthew 13:51](#). *Jesus saith unto them, Have ye understood all these things?*

This is a question which constantly needs to be put to all hearers and readers of the Word. “Have ye understood all these things?” To be hearers only, or readers only, will avail nothing; the Word must be understood, accepted, assimilated, and so shall it make us wise unto salvation.

[Matthew 13:51](#). *They say unto him, Yea, Lord.*

They answered very glibly, yet probably not one of them fully understood the seven parables in this chapter. If anyone did so, he would be like the instructed scribe described in the next verse: —

[Matthew 13:52](#). *Then said he unto them, Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.*

He who has learned anything concerning the kingdom of heaven should teach it to others, bringing forth the truth in pleasing variety, “new and old,” to edify all his hearers.

[Matthew 13:53-54](#). *And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these parables, he departed thence. And when he was come into his own*

country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works?

They were highly privileged in having Jesus back in their midst, yet they failed to appreciate his teaching; they were astonished at his wisdom, but were unable to perceive the divine source from which it sprang.

[Matthew 13:55-58](#). *Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? and his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things? And they were offended in him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house. And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.*

This was a notable illustration of John's words concerning Christ, "He came unto his own, but his own received him not." Let us beware of unbelief lest it should tie the hands of Christ as it did there in his own country.

[MATTHEW CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 14

Verses 13-36

[Matthew 14:13](#). *When Jesus heard of it, he departed thence by a ship into a desert place apart:*

It is well for us to get alone with God when he takes home the best and most faithful of his servants. Neither the Church nor the world could afford to lose such a man as John the Baptist; so it was well for Christ's disciples to retire with him to a desert place that he might teach them the lesson of that proto-martyr's death.

[Matthew 14:13-14](#). *And when the people had heard thereof, they followed him on foot out of the cities. And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick.*

He needed quiet, but he could not get it; yet he was not "moved" with indignation against the crowd that had sought him out, but he "was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick." Out of the fullness

of his heart of love, he condescended to do for the people what they most needed.

[Matthew 14:15](#). *And when it was evening, his disciples came to him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals.*

Human compassion might have moved the disciples to say something more kind than that heartless request, “Send the multitude away.” Perhaps they wished to spare themselves the sight of so much distress; but they evidently did not expect the answer that Christ gave them: —

[Matthew 14:16](#). *But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give ye them to eat.*

Christ seemed to say to his disciples, “If you only exercise the power that is within your reach, with Me in your midst, you are equal to this emergency:

‘Give ye them to eat.’ “

[Matthew 14:17-18](#). *And they say unto him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes. He said, Bring them hither to me.*

“They are little enough in your hands, but they will be ample when they get into mine.” When everything that we have is in the hands of Christ, it is wonderful how much he can make of it. Bring your talent to the Lord Jesus, be it never so little; sanctify to him every possibility that lies within your reach; you cannot tell how much he can and will do with it.

[Matthew 14:19](#). *And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, —*

It must have been a beautiful sight to see those thousands of men, women, and children at once obeying his command. There were five loaves and two fishes, — probably five small barley cakes and a couple of sardines; so the people might have said, “What is the use of such a multitude sitting down on the grass to partake of such scanty fare as that?” But they did not say so; there was a divine power about the very simplest command of Christ which compelled instant obedience: “He commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass,” —

[Matthew 14:19](#). *And took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, —*

This was that “blessing of the Lord” of which Solomon says that “it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it.” If you get this blessing on

your five loaves and two fishes, you may feed five thousand men with them, besides the women and the children.

[Matthew 14:19-20](#). *And brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full.*

Much more than they began with; for it is a law of the Heavenly Kingdom that he who gives to God shall be no loser; his five loaves and two fishes shall turn to twelve baskets full after thousands have eaten, and been satisfied. The more there is of complete consecration to Christ, and his blessed service, the more reward will there be in the world to come; and, possibly, even here.

[Matthew 14:21-22](#). *And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children. And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away.*

He always takes the heavier task upon himself. They may go off by themselves, but he will remain to send the multitudes away. Besides, no one but Christ could have done it, only he who had made them sit down to the feast could make them go to their homes.

[Matthew 14:23](#). *And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray:*

He had had a long day of preaching, and healing, and distributing the bread and fish, and now he closed the day with prayer to his Father.

[Matthew 14:23](#). *And when the evening was come, he was there alone.*

Dr. Watts was right in saying to his Lord, —

“Cold mountains, and the midnight air

Witnessed the fervor of thy prayer.”

He is not now on the bare mountain side, but he is engaged in the same holy exercise up yonder before his Father’s throne.

[Matthew 14:24](#). *But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary.*

This is the case with the good ship of the Church of Christ today; it is “tossed with waves,” and “the wind” is “contrary.” It is very contrary just now; but, then, Christ is still pleading for the ship and all on board; and while he pleads, it can never sink.

[Matthew 14:25-29](#). *And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the*

sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit: and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I be not afraid. And Peter answered him, and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.

You, who are wanting to get to Jesus, should make a desperate effort to get to him; even walk on the water to get to Jesus. Walking on the water might be an idle and evil exhibition; but to walk on the water to go to Jesus is another matter. Try it, and the Lord enable you to get to him!

[Matthew 14:30-32](#). *But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased.*

The Greek word implies that the wind was tired, weary, “done up,” as we say. It had had its boisterous time, and spent its force; and now it knew its Lord’s voice, and, like a tired child, fell asleep.

[Matthew 14:33](#). *Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.*

This seems to have been the first time that the disciples arrived at this conclusion so as to state it so positively; yet, do you not think that, after the miraculous multiplication of the loaves and fishes, they might have very fitly said, “Of a truth thou art the Son of God”? Sometimes, however, one wonder will strike us more than another; and, possibly, it was because they were in danger when this second miracle was wrought, and therefore they the more appreciated the coming of Christ to them at midnight. They were in no danger when the multitude were fed; perhaps they were not themselves hungry. That strikes us most which comes most home to us, as this miracle did.

[Matthew 14:34-36](#). *And when they were gone over, they came into the land of Gennesaret. And when the men of that place had knowledge of him, they sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto him all that were diseased; And besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole.*

Verses 14-33

[Matthew 14:14](#). *And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick.*

Different persons take different views of multitudes, according to the state of their minds. Many an officer when he sees a multitude considers how long it would take to march them from a certain place. Another man begins calculating how much food they will all need. Another begins to estimate their wealth, another to calculate how many per cent will die in the year. But the Lord Jesus Christ's heart was full of pity and mercy, that the thing for him to do as he looked upon them was to have compassion upon them. He healed their sick, and helped them in their sorrows.

[Matthew 14:15](#). *And when it was evening, his disciples came to him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals.*

This really meant "Get us out of the difficulty." There was no hope that so many of them could get victuals in the villages; but the disciples as good as said "We cannot bear to see them starving. Help us to forget it."

[Matthew 14:16](#). *But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give ye them to eat.*

"You do not know what you can do, seeing I am with you," the Lord answered. "You can feed them all." O Christian church, never give up the most difficult problem. It may be worked out. The city may be evangelized, crowded as it is; the nations may be brought to Christ superstitious though they be; for he is with us.

[Matthew 14:17-18](#). *And they say unto him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes. He said, Bring them hither to me.*

He will not work without us. Whatever little gift or ability we have must be consecrated. Christ could easily have made loaves and fishes without taking their little stock, but that is not his way of working. "Bring what you have hither to me." Whenever we have a church that brings all its store to Christ — (when shall we ever see such a church?) — then he will be pleased to make sufficient for the multitude.

[Matthew 14:19-21](#). *And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. And they did all eat and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full. And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children.*

A wonderful evening that must have been. Just as the sun's slanting rays would fall upon the mighty mass of people, Jesus Christ, the sun of righteousness, was scattering his beams of mercy over them at the same time. To him it is nothing to feed five thousand — nothing to do it with five loaves. Where he is present we may expect wonders, unless indeed our unbelief should hamper him, for sometimes it is too sadly true he could not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief. O my soul, chide thyself if thou hast ever thus hampered the hands of Christ.

[Matthew 14:22-23](#). *And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away. And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray.*

It was a very busy day that he had had. If you read the narrative for yourself you will be astonished at the number of miracles which he wrought that day, and all of them in addition to the preaching, so he must have been well worn with weariness, but he sought rather the rest and refreshment of prayer than that of sleep.

[Matthew 14:23-24](#). *And when the evening was come, he was there alone. But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary.*

It did not matter however. For if his disciples be in a storm, so long as Christ is praying for them all the storms in the world are unable to sink them. They had a good protector. From the outlook of that hill his eyes, which could see through the distance, observed and regulated every breath of wind, and every wave upon the lake.

[Matthew 14:25-26](#). *And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus' went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit;*

“A phantom!” Having all the superstition so natural to sailors, they thought that this was something quite supernatural and boded ill to them.

[Matthew 14:26-28](#). *And they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer it is I, be not afraid. And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.*

Strange impulse! It showed genuine faith mixed with that imperfection and presumption which was so common a feature in Peter's character.

However, his master admired the confidence.

[Matthew 14:29-30](#). *And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.*

When he began to be afraid he began to sink. As long as his confidence in his Master lasted he could walk the waves.

[Matthew 14:31-33](#). *And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased. Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, of a truth thou art the Son of God.*

Well might they worship, for they had seen abundant proof of his deity. They worshipped him, saying, “of a truth thou art the Son of God.” They could not have meant by this, “Thou art a superior person, an excellent character.” They would not, if they were Jews, have worshipped a mere man; for of all things you ever saw in this life, you never saw a Jew that would worship any form that was visible to the eye. The captivity of Babylon delivered the Hebrew race from idolatry altogether. They may fall into superstition of another sort, but never into idolatry. Mark that. There has not been since that time a man of Jewish race who would have worshipped Christ if he had not believed him to be God.

Verses 22-33

[Matthew 14:22](#). *And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away.*

Straightway is a business word: Jesus loses no time. No sooner is the banquet over than he sends off the guests to their homes. While they are well fed he bids them make the best of their way home. He who made the multitude sit down was able also to send the multitude away, but they needed sending, for they were loth to go. The sea must be crossed again, or Jesus cannot find seclusion. How he must run the gauntlet to get a little rest! Before he starts again across the sea, he performs another act of self-denial; for he cannot leave till he sees the crowd happily dispersed. He attends to that business himself giving the disciples the opportunity to depart in peace. As the captain is the last to leave the ship, so is the Lord the last to leave the scene of labour. The disciples would have chosen to stay in his company, and to enjoy the thanks of the people; but he constrained them to get into a

ship. He could not get anyone to go away from him at this time without sending and constraining. This loadstone has great attractions. He evidently promised his disciples that he would follow them; for the words are, “to go before him unto the other side.” How he was to follow he did not say, but he could always find a way of keeping his appointments. How considerate of him to wait amid the throng while the disciples sailed away in peace He always takes the heavy end of the load himself.

[Matthew 14:23](#). *And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.*

Now that the crowd is gone, he can take his rest, and he finds it in prayer. He went up into a mountain apart: in a place where he might speak aloud, and not be overheard or disturbed, he communed with the Father alone. This was his refreshment and his delight. He continued therein till the thickest shades of night had gathered, and the day was gone. “Alone,” yet not alone, he drank in new strength as he communed with his Father. He must have revealed this private matter to the recording evangelist, and surely it was with the intent that we should learn from his example. We cannot afford to be always in company, since even our blessed Lord felt that he must be alone.

[Matthew 14:24](#). *But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary.*

While Jesus was alone, they, in the ship, were in the same condition, but not occupied with the same spiritual exercise. When they first quitted the shore it was fair sailing in the cool of the evening; but a storm gathered hastily as night covered the sky. On the lake of Galilee the wind rushes down from the gullies between the mountains, and causes grievous peril to little boats; sometimes fairly lifting them out of the water, and anon submerging them beneath the waves. That deep lake was peculiarly dangerous for small craft. They were far from land, for they were “in the midst of the sea,” equally distant from either shore. The sea was furious and their ship was “tossed with waves.” The hurricane was terrible. “The wind was contrary,” and would not let them go to any place which they sought. It was a whirlwind, and they were whirled about by it, but could not use it for reaching either shore. How much did their case resemble ours when we are in sore distress! We are tossed about and can do nothing; the blast is too furious for us to bear up against it, or even to live while driven before it.

One happy fact remains: Jesus is pleading on the shore though we are struggling on the sea. It is also comfortable to know that we are where he constrained us to go (See verse 22), and he has promised to come to us in due time, and therefore all must be safe, though the tempest rages terribly.

[Matthew 14:25](#). *And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.*

Jesus is sure to come. The night wears on and the darkness thickens; the fourth watch of the night draws near, but where is he? Faith says, "He must come." Though he should stay away till almost break of day, he must come. Unbelief asks, "How can he come?" Ah, he will answer for himself: he can make his own way. "Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea." He comes in the teeth of the wind, and on the face of the wave. Never fear that he will fail to reach the storm-tossed barque: his love will find out the way. Whither it be to a single disciple, or to the church as a whole, Jesus will appear in his own chosen hour, and his time is sure to be the most timely.

[Matthew 14:26](#). *And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit, and they cried out for fear.*

Yes, the disciples saw him; saw Jesus their Lord, and derived no comfort from the sight. Poor human nature's sight is a blind thing compared with the vision of a spiritual faith. They saw, but knew not what they saw. What could it be but a phantom? How could a real man walk on those foaming billows? How could he stand in the teeth of such a hurricane? They were already at their wits' end, and the apparition put an end to their courage. We seem to hear their shriek of alarm: "they cried out for fear." We read not that "they were troubled" before: they were old sailors, and had no dread of natural forces; but a spirit — ah, that was too much of a terror. They were at their worst now, and yet, if they had known it, they were on the verge of their best. It is noteworthy that the nearer Jesus was to them, the greater was their fear. Want of discernment blinds the soul to its richest consolations. Lord, be near, and let me know thee! Let me not have to say with Jacob, "Surely God was in this place; and I knew it not!"

[Matthew 14:27](#). *But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I be not afraid.*

He did not keep them in suspense: "Straightway Jesus spake unto them." How sweetly sounded that loving and majestic voice! Above the roar of waves and howling of winds, they heard the voice of the Lord. This was his old word also, "Be of good cheer." The most conclusive reason for courage

was his own presence. “It is I be not afraid.” If Jesus be near, if the spirit of the storm be, after all, the Lord of love, all room for fear is gone. Can Jesus come to us through the storm? Then we shall weather it, and come to him. He who rules the tempest is not the devil, not chance, not a malicious enemy; but Jesus. This should end all fear.

[Matthew 14:28](#). *And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.*

Peter must be the first to speak, he is impulsive, and besides, he was a sort of foreman in the company. The first speaker is not always the wisest man. Peter’s fears have gone, all but one “if”; but that “if” was working him no good, for it seemed to challenge his Master: “Lord if it be thou.” What a test to suggest: “Bid me come unto thee on the water!” What did Peter want with walking the waters? His name might have suggested that like a stone he would go to the bottom. It was an imprudent request: it was the swing of the pendulum in Peter from despair to an injudicious venturing. Surely, he wist not what he said. Yet we, too, have put our Lord to tests almost as improper. Have we not said, “If thou hast ever blessed me, give me this and that”? We, too, have had our water-walking, and have ventured where nothing but special grace could uphold us. Lord, what is man?

[Matthew 14:29](#). *And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.*

When good men are unwise and presumptuous, it may be for their lasting good to learn their folly by experience. “He said, Come.” Peter’s Lord is about to teach him a practical lesson. He asked to be bidden to come. He may come. He does come. He leaves the boat, he treads the wave. He is on the way towards his Lord. We can do anything if we have divine authorization, and courage enough to take the Lord at his word. Now there were two on the sea, two wonders! Which was the greater? The reader may not find it easy to reply. Let him consider.

[Matthew 14:30](#). *But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid, and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.*

“But”: a sorrowful “but” for poor Peter. His eye was off his Lord and on the raging of the wind: “he saw the wind boisterous.” His heart failed him, and then his foot failed him. Down he began to go — an awful moment is this “beginning to sink”, yet it was only a “beginning,” he had time to cry to his Lord, who was not sinking. Peter cried, and was safe. His prayer was as full as it was short. He had brought his eye and his faith back to Jesus, for

he cried, “Lord!” He had come into this danger through obedience, and therefore he had an appeal in the word “Lord.” Whether in danger or not, Jesus was still his Lord. He is a lost man, and he feels it, unless his Lord will save him — save him altogether, save him now. Blessed prayer: “Lord, save me.” Reader, does it not suit you? Peter was nearer his Lord when he was sinking than when he was walking. In our low estate we are often nearer to Jesus than in our more glorious seasons.

[Matthew 14:31](#). *And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?*

Our Lord delays not when our peril is imminent and our cry is urgent: “Immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand.” He first “caught him” and then taught him. Jesus saves first, and upbraids afterwards, when he must needs do so. When we are saved is the fit time for us to chasten ourselves for our unbelief. Let us learn from our Lord, that we may not reprove others till we have first helped them out of their difficulties. Our doubts are unreasonable: “Wherefore didst thou doubt?” If there be reason for little faith, there is evidently reason for great confidence. If it be right to trust Jesus at all, why not trust him altogether? Trust was Peter’s strength, doubt was his danger. It looked like great faith when Peter walked the water; but a little wind soon proved it to be “little faith.” Till our faith is tried, we can form no reliable estimate of it. After his Lord had taken him by the hand, Peter sank no further, but resumed the walk of faith. How easy to have faith when we are close to Jesus! Lord, when our faith fails, come thou to us, and we shall walk on the wave.

[Matthew 14:32](#). *And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased.*

So that Peter’s walk and his rescue had happened in the face of the tempest. He could walk the water well enough when his Lord held his hand and so can we. What a sight! Jesus and Peter, hand in hand, walking upon the sea! The two made for the ship at once: miracles are never spun out to undue length. Was not Peter glad to leave the tumultuous element, and at the same time to perceive that the gale was over? “When they were come into the ship, the wind ceased,” it is well to be safe in a storm, but more pleasant to find the calm return and the hurricane end. How gladly did the disciples welcome their Lord, and their brother, Peter, who though wet to the skin, was a wiser man for his adventure!

[Matthew 14:33](#). *Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.*

No wonder that Peter “worshipped him,” nor that his comrades did the same. The whole of the disciples, who had been thus rescued by their Lord’s coming to them on the stormy sea, were overwhelmingly convinced of his Godhead. Now they were doubly sure of it by unquestionable evidence, and in lowly reverence they expressed to him their adoring faith, saying, “Of a truth thou art the Son of God.”

[MATTHEW CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 15

Verses 1-12

[Matthew 15:1-2](#). *Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.*

A very wonderful omission certainly, but it seems to have struck them as a very great crime. “They wash not their hands when they eat bread” — as if the commands of God were not enough, men must overload us with their own commands, and sometimes the very people who would see us break God’s commands without being at all distressed are dreadfully shocked if we do not keep theirs, showing clearly that they have a higher estimate of themselves than they have of God.

[Matthew 15:3-6](#). *But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say. Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.*

The cant said, “I cannot give you any help: I have vowed to give it as a subscription to the synagogue, or to the temple; therefore, I cannot give it to you,” and if he could plead that he had given it as a gift in the form of a religious offering, he was exempted from assisting his own parents. “Well,” said Christ, “ye do by this make the commandment of God of none effect.”

“Ye hypocrites “ — -our Saviour is the, most gentle of men, but how plainly does he talk, and how honestly does he denounce everything like hypocrisy.

[Matthew 15:7-9](#). *Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.*

Now, may God save us from these two faults. The first is that of being content with the outside worship of God. Unless our very hearts worship, there is nothing whatever in the outward performance of religious rites or religious worship; indeed, it is hypocrisy to draw near to God with the lip and knee when the heart is not there. The next evil to be dreaded is teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. Whatever is not plainly taught in Scripture is of no binding force upon any conscience, and it is evil to invent rites and ceremonies which are not taught in Holy Scripture. We must mind what we are at. If we have not the plain warrant of Christ’s command for our teachings and our doings, we shall rather vex the spirit of God than honour him. Whatever our intention may be, we have not any right to worship God, otherwise than according to his own mind. If we do, it will not be worship, and not acceptable with him.

[Matthew 15:10-11](#). *And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand: Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.*

“And he called the multitude and said unto them: Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man “ — not that which he eats and drinks, “but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man “ — what he says — there is the point.

[Matthew 15:12](#). *Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying?*

Some very kind friends are very jealous of the preacher, lest he should offend anybody, and they will come in all tenderness of spirit and say, “Knowest thou, that the Pharisees were offended after they heard this saying?”

Verses 1-13

[Matthew 15:1](#). *Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, —*

They had taken a journey to come and attack him; perhaps they had been sent as a deputation to try to thwart the Saviour. What a vexation of

spirit it must have been to his pure and holy mind to come into conflict with these triflers, these self-righteous, self-confident men? Why did they come to Christ? To plead with him for the poor people who were perishing for lack of knowledge, or to ask him how souls could be saved, and how God could be glorified? Oh, no! They came to ask the Saviour about a very different subject, —

[Matthew 15:2](#). *Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.*

Would you have thought that full-grown men could have made it a matter of business to come from Jerusalem down into the country to talk to Christ about the fact that his disciples did not always wash their hands before they ate their breakfasts? Yet we have men, nowadays, who make a great point of what is to be done with any of the so-called “consecrated” bread that is left, and who are much concerned about what kind of a dress a “priest” ought to wear when he is engaged in the performance of certain duties. How sad is it that such trifles as these should occupy the minds of immortal beings while men are dying, and God is dishonoured!

[Matthew 15:3](#). *But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?*

He answered their question by asking another, in which he drew the contrast between transgressing the tradition of the elders and transgressing the commandment of God.

[Matthew 15:4-6](#). *For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.*

Whatever might be said about regarding the tradition of men, God’s commandment must be regarded. That stands first, and therefore our Lord demanded of these scribes and Pharisee an answer to his charge that they had overridden and overlaid a commandment of God by a tradition of their own. If a father and mother, in great need, said to their son, “Help us, for we are wanting bread,” and he answered, “I cannot give you anything, for all I have is dedicated to God,” the Rabbis taught that he might be exempted from relieving his parents, although they also said that, the next day, he might undo the dedication of his property, and employ it exactly as he

pleased. He might use the fact that he had said, “That shekel is for God,” as a reason for not giving it to his father who was in need; and then, the very next day, he might take that shekel, and spend it exactly as he chose. So God’s commandment to honour, and love, and aid our parents, was set aside by their tradition.

[Matthew 15:7-9](#). *Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.*

Our Lord never flattered anybody; see how honestly, and in what plain terms, he addressed these scribes and Pharisees! Yet these were the great teachers of his day, and thought themselves the bright light of the age, the very leaders of the people in all that was good. But Christ addressed them as, “Ye hypocrites,” and gave them a text of Scripture which clearly applied to them. They had all manner of outward forms of worship, they talked very much about the Bible, they studied every word of it, and even counted the letters in every chapter, but they had no regard to the real meaning of God’s Word, and their heart was not right with the Lord. The Saviour patiently talked with them, but he also sternly rebuked them, and denounced them as hypocrites.

[Matthew 15:10](#). *And he called the multitude,*

As much as if he had said to the scribes and Pharisees, “I cannot waste my time arguing with you; I am going to talk to these poor people who are perishing, and I shall have more hope of doing good among the multitude than among you, though you do consider yourselves the aristocracy of the church.”

[Matthew 15:10-11](#). *And said unto them, Hear, and understand: Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.*

This was not very clear at first, it needed to be thought over and well considered. The Saviour dropped it into the popular mind, like a seed, and left it to grow, and develop in due season.

[Matthew 15:12](#). *Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying?*

The wonder was that they were not offended before. It certainly was not a matter of concern to Christ whether they were offended or not; he would not tone down the truth in order to please them.

[Matthew 15:13](#). *But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father not planted, shall be rooted up.*

Every teacher whom God has not sent will find his teaching contradicted by Christ. The truth is like a spade; it turns up the soil for that life to grow in it which should grow, and it is also the means of killing the weeds: “Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.” May we all be plants of his right-hand planting! Amen.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Psalms 119:129-144](#); and [Matthew 15:1-13](#).

Verses 1-39

[Matthew 15:1-14](#). *then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread. But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying, honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand: Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man. Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying? But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.*

Teacher and taught, Pharisee and disciple, “both shall fall into the ditch.” Great responsibility rests upon the blind leader, but not all of it; for great responsibility also attaches to the blind follower. He should not follow a blind leader, he above all others needs a leader who can see. It is a pity that the man who can see should follow a blind leader; but if a man cannot see at all, then is he doubly unwise if he has a blind leader.

[Matthew 15:15-16](#). *Then answered Peter and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable. And Jesus said, Are ye also yet without understanding?*

It was not a parable, it was a plain piece of simple language that the Saviour had uttered: “not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.”

[Matthew 15:17-18](#). *Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught . — But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man.*

It is not that which we eat that defileth us. If it is such food as we ought to take, it builds up the body. If it is improper food, it may injure the body, yet it is not in itself capable of being regarded as sin; but a spiritual thing, — a thought, a desire, an imagination, — - comes out of the heart, and if that is evil, it does defile the man.

[Matthew 15:19](#). *For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies:*

What a horrible den the heart itself must be, then! If all these evils come out of it, what a nest of unclean things it must be! A dreadful sight to the all-seeing God must be an uncleansed human heart. Let me read this verse again’ “for out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.” All these evils come out of the heart of man, out of such a heart as yours until it is renewed by grace. Though you sit very attentively in the house of God, unless his grace has changed your heart, all these evil things are there, and they only want an opportunity to come out. and reveal themselves.

[Matthew 15:20](#). *These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unclean hands defileth not a man.*

You should understand that the washing here meant was not such as you and I give our hands when we feel that we have soiled them with our labour; then, it is very proper to cleanse them. But this was a ceremonial washing which the scribes and Pharisees would have everybody give, whether his hands were clean or not, before he sat down to meat, and was a mere piece of absurdity, if not something worse. Yet they magnified it into a most important matter, and our Saviour here shows what an idle thing it was.

[Matthew 15:29-32](#). *And Jesus departed from thence, and came nigh unto the sea of Galilee; and went up into a mountain and sat down there. And great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet; and he healed them: Insomuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel. Then Jesus called his disciples unto him and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way.*

Was not that a most gracious utterance? "I will not send them away fasting" What confidence the disciples ought to have had that the people could be fed, and would be fed, when the Master gave that solemn promise, "I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way."

[Matthew 15:33-34](#). *And his disciples say unto him, Whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude? And Jesus saith unto them, How many loaves have ye?*

That is always a good form of enquiry: "How many loaves have ye?" How much grace have you? How much gift have you? How much ability have you? Are you using it all? Have you consecrated it all to the Master's service?

[Matthew 15:34-35](#). *And they said, Seven, and a few little fishes. And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground.*

It is very wonderful that they did as he told them; they could not see anything to eat, and yet, when he bade them sit down, they obeyed him, and did so. Thus the Lord prepares men's hearts for the reception of the Gospel. I do not doubt that, whenever we go forth faithfully to break the bread of life, the Lord makes the people sit down in readiness to receive it.

[Matthew 15:36](#). *And he took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks, and brake them, and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.*

Notice the order of our Lord's action, thanksgiving first, and then the breaking of the bread. We do not always thank God for what we have already received, but the Lord here sets us the example of giving thanks for what is yet to come. For the multiplied loaves and fishes, he first gives thanks, and then passes them to his disciples to hand to the multitude.

[Matthew 15:37-39](#). *And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets full. And they that did eat were four thousand men, beside women and children. And he send away the multitude, and took ship, and came into the coasts of Magdala.*

Verses 10-31

[Matthew 15:10](#). *And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand: Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man, but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.*

True religion does not consist in meats and drinks, in feasting or in fasting.

It is not that which goes into us, but that which comes out of us, which is the main matter.

[Matthew 15:12](#). *Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying?*

They thought a very great deal of the opinion of the Pharisees; and they were greatly concerned because their Master had offended them. These Pharisees set themselves up as the judges of everything that was correct and proper in religion; yet Christ offended them by his plain speaking.

[Matthew 15:13](#). *But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.*

The truth is often intended to be a rooter up. I have no doubt that our Lord said many things which had no other intention than the discovery of these deceitful men to themselves and others, that their baneful influence might be destroyed. Our Saviour was a true iconoclast, a great image-smasher; and these men, who were the chief icons or images of the day, had to be broken down. He therefore put the truth in the very form that would offend them.

[Matthew 15:14](#). *Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.*

Our Lord did not soften or tone down his previous language, but he revealed the true character of the false guides by whom so many were deluded.

[Matthew 15:15](#). *Then answered Peter and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable.*

“We do not understand it; what is its meaning?”

[Matthew 15:16-17](#). *And Jesus said, Are ye also yet without understanding? Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught?*

And so there is an end of it.

[Matthew 15:18](#). *But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man.*

The main matter to be considered is the heart, not the mouth, and other parts of the body. Note how our Lord, by this great truth, puts the axe to much that looks very fair stood good, and cuts it down as worthless. If we serve God with the heart, there is the core of true religion; but if not, we may have as many ceremonial washings as there are hours in the day and days in the year, and we may be careful to avoid this article, of diet and to feed on that, to wear this garment and not to wear that, and to observe this day and not that; but all this outward religion will be of no avail whatever, if our heart is not savingly affected by the grace of God.

[Matthew 15:19-21](#). *For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man. Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.*

He did not like the Pharisees well enough to stay among them. His own word concerning them was, "Let them alone;" and he did very severely let them alone: "Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon." He must not go into Tyre and Sidon, for his commission for the present was confined to Palestine, the chosen land. Do not regret this, dear friends. To have extended our Saviour's work over a greater area, would not have been really to increase it; and it was very important that, during the very short active lifetime of our Saviour, — a little more than three years, — he should confine his operations to a comparatively small district, so as to produce a permanent result there which would afterwards radiate over the whole world. So our Saviour, who knew what was best for men, confined himself within a very narrow sphere; and, my brethren and sisters, I am not sure that we are always wise when we want a great sphere. I have myself sometimes envied the man with about five hundred people to watch over, who could see them all, know them all, and enter into sympathy with them all, and so could do his work well. But, with so large a number as I have under my charge, what can one man do? And you, my brethren may

increase the quantity of your acreage, and yet grow no larger crops. You may think that you will succeed better on a wider scale; but if you do not do so well in the greater field, it might have been wiser to narrow your boundaries rather than to widen them. However, if our Lord might not go into Tyre and Sidon, he went as near to them as he could: “Jesus departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.” And if you, dear friends, think there is a limit to your sphere of usefulness, always go as near as ever you can to the limit; go up to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.

[Matthew 15:22](#). *And, behold, —*

For it is a great wonder that such a person should have come to Jesus: “And, behold,” —

[Matthew 15:22-23](#). *A woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word.*

This was another marvel, — a silent Saviour, — silent when it would have been so natural for him to speak a kind and gracious word: “He answered her not a word.”

[Matthew 15:23](#). *And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us.*

“She crieth after us,” and it is very important that we should not be troubled.” We disciples are apt to think so, especially if we get a little lifted up, and come to be apostles: “Send her away; for she crieth after us.” She knew better than to cry after the disciples, it was the Master whose help she wanted. Some sinners are a great nuisance, they make so much noise in seeking Christ; and what a mercy it is that they do so! Oh, to have such troublesome people about us all day long, and all night long, too! It would be worth while to be vexed in this style. But the disciples said to Jesus, “Send her away; for she crieth after us.”

[Matthew 15:24](#). *But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*

“Therefore, I cannot attend to her.”

[Matthew 15:25-26](#). *Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. But he answered and said, It is not meet-*

“It is not comely, it is not fit,” —

[Matthew 15:26](#). *To take the children’s bread, and to cast it to dogs.*

The original means, the little dogs that play with the children; they lie under the table, and pick up the crumbs that their masters (the children) let fall. The woman caught at that expression at once —

[Matthew 15:27](#). *And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.*

“I may be only a dog, and these Jews round about you are your children, but I have got in among them, and I am looking for a crumb or two as it falls from their table.” This was grand faith on her part, and it was speedily rewarded.

[Matthew 15:28-31](#). *Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour. And Jesus departed from thence, and came nigh unto the sea of Galilee; and went up into a mountain, and sat down there. And great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet; and he healed them: insomuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel.*

The Saviour appears to have gone this journey on purpose to bless this woman and her daughter; and, having wrought the miracle, he went where great multitudes came to him, bringing their sick folk to be healed, and the result was: “They glorified the God of Israel.” There may be some poor soul here in as great distress as this woman was; if so, may that one get a blessing; and then may the blessing spread through all the neighborhood till multitudes are saved!

Verses 13-28

[Matthew 15:13](#). *But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up.*

He had not any peculiar tenderness towards them, they were no plants of his Father's planting: they deserved to be rooted up, and their teaching was so utterly false that, if he had offended against it, he was glad to have done so.

[Matthew 15:14](#). *Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.*

The bad teacher and he that is badly taught, for they are both responsible, shall both fall into the ditch. No man can lay the sin of his being misdirected entirely upon his priest or his teacher. He had no business

to have submitted to him. At the same time, it is a very serious responsibility for a man who knows not God to attempt to teach the things of God. I know a man who, in a certain place of worship was deeply convinced of sin — the arrows of God stuck in him, and, being in great distress, he went to the minister and told him how he felt the burden of his guilt. The minister said to him, “My dear friend, I really had no intention of making you uneasy — what was it I said? — I will get the sermon — I am very sorry, but really I do not know anything about it.” The man said, “You told us we must be born again.” “Oh!”, said the minister, “that was done for you when a child — your parents did it.” “You know sir, we must be converted.” “Well, really I do not understand it. I am afraid I have disturbed you unnecessarily.” Our friend, however, was not to be put off so; he sought and found a Saviour. But how dreadful a thing it is when the blind lead the blind: they shall both fall into the ditch.

[Matthew 15:15](#). *Then answered Peter and said unto him Declare unto us this parable.*

And Jesus said Are ye also yet without understanding? Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly and is cast out into the draught? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man. There is no defilement about that. Cleanliness is to be observed, but not the mere act of washing just for the sake of it, every time you eat bread, which defiles not a man; but oh! what defilement there is in evil thought, In anger which breeds murder, in lust which leads to adultery and fornication, in covetousness which begets theft, and in a false heart which leads to false witness, and in a profane mind which leads to blasphemy. Oh! that God would cleanse our secret thoughts, the very center of our hearts, for until the fountain is made clean, the stream that comes from it cannot be pure.

[Matthew 15:21-22](#). *Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me O Lord, thou son of David: my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.*

“But he answered her not a word.” How painful that silence must have been! In what suspense she was.

[Matthew 15:23](#). *But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away: for she crieth after us.*

They were under a mistake. She did not cry after them: she knew better than that: she cried after the Lord, after the great Son of David, not after them, but, however, she disturbed them.

[Matthew 15:24](#). *But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*

Christ's personal ministry was confined to the Jews. He came as a Saviour to redeem all mankind, but as a preacher he was a minister to the circumcision, and he came to speak only to Israel.

[Matthew 15:25](#). *Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me.*

Her prayer got shorter, and she grew more intense, more energetic, more determined to win the blessing. "Lord help me."

[Matthew 15:26-28](#). *But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table. Then Jesus answered and said unto to her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.*

Oh! can you exercise a like faith in Christ? If so you shall get a like blessing. Only believe in him, only make up your mind, and, however great the mercy, it cannot be too great for him to give, and believe that he will give it, rest on him to bestow it, and you shall have it. God grant that many may receive it at this very hour.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Matthew 13:1-23](#); [Matthew 15:13-28](#). [1 Corinthians 3:17-23](#).

Verses 18-31

[Matthew 15:18-21](#). *But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: these are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man. Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.*

He went right away, not because he was afraid to speak the truth, but because, having done so, he did not care to remain in the company of those who were round about him. He would rather go even to the verge of

heathendom than live in the midst of Pharisaic hypocrisy: “Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.”

[Matthew 15:22](#). *And, behold, —*

There is something here that is worth beholding, so the Holy Ghost draws attention to it, just as we sometimes print N.B., Nota bene; mark well;

“behold,” —

[Matthew 15:22](#). *A woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts,*

Possibly she did not know that Christ had come; but, anyhow, when Christ comes, sinners come. He journeyed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, and this woman met him.

[Matthew 15:22-23](#). *And cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us.*

Perhaps they meant, “Give her the blessing, and let her go. Thou art seeking quiet here, and she will not let thee, nor us either, have any. ‘Send her away.’” They made a great mistake when they said, “She crieth after us.” It was Christ to whom she cried, not his disciples.

[Matthew 15:24](#). *But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*

“My ministerial commission is only to the Jews.” As a Saviour, he comes to save sinners, out of all nations; but as the Messiah, his special mission was to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

[Matthew 15:25](#). *Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me.*

“Then came she, and worshipped him.” If Jesus Christ was not really and truly God, he was a base imposter to allow this woman to worship him. She had called him “Lord,” once before, and he did not rebuke her, and now she not only calls him “Lord,” but she worships him. She was doing quite right, for he is none other than very God of very God: “Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me.”

[Matthew 15:26](#). *But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it to dogs.*

Or, “to little dogs,” for the word is, in that form in the Greek.

[Matthew 15:27](#). *And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.*

It was well for her that the Master had used that diminutive form of the word, for the bigger dogs in the East were not permitted in the house, but the little dogs were admitted to play with the children. She seemed to snatch at that idea as she cried, "Truth, Lord: yet the little dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table," as though the greatest possible boon to her was, but a crumb to him, and but a crumb compared with the bread which he was putting upon the table of Israel. The greater blessing which he was giving to the children might prompt him to give a crumb to her.

[Matthew 15:28](#). *Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.*

Oh, the triumph of faith! God grant it to us! Yet this woman may surely shame many of us; we have not half her discouragements, and we have not half her confidence in Christ.

[Matthew 15:29](#). *And Jesus departed from thence,*

He is always on the move, for he has always something else to do. As soon as his deed of grace is done in one part, he hastens to another: "And Jesus departed from thence," —

[Matthew 15:29-31](#). *And came nigh unto the sea of Galilee; and went up into a mountain, and sat down there. And great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet; and he healed them: insomuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel.*

This was Israel's table indeed; and when you see these many mighty cures that Christ wrought, you can easily justify the speech of the Syrophenician woman, and agree with her that what she sought was only a crumb compared with the bountiful feast of fat things that was prepared for the favored nation.

Verses 21-28

[Matthew 15:21](#). *Then Jesus went thence,*

He was glad to get away from the scribes and Pharisees, who had been disputing about such trifles as the washing of his disciples' hands; he was tired of the murmuring of these cantankerous, frivolous triflers.

[Matthew 15:21](#). *And departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.*

He felt that he would rather be with “sinners of the Gentiles” than with these Ritualistic and hypocritical Hebrews. He will get as far away from them as he well can he will go even to the heathen, for among them he will be able to do his real business, and not be trifled with.

[Matthew 15:22](#). *And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts,*

When sinners come to Christ, it is because Christ comes to them. Notice the two statements, how they coincide. Jesus “departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon,” and this “woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts,” and so they met. Oh, that there might be such a meeting here tonight, between someone who has come from a long distance to meet Christ, and Christ who has come on purpose to meet that person!

[Matthew 15:22](#). *And cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.*

The devil had extraordinary power at that time, so that he possessed the bodies and minds of men. I am not certain that there are not instances of Satan’s possession even now amongst us; there are cases that look very much like it, but in the Saviour’s day there were evidently singular and remarkable possessions of men and women by Satan. This poor mother says, “My daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.”

[Matthew 15:23](#). *But he answered her not a word.*

Has the Saviour become deaf and dumb? Will he not hear a suppliant cry? He heard her, but he said nothing.

[Matthew 15:23](#). *And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us.*

“She is a stranger, and, as far as we can judge, she means to hang on until she gets what she wants. If thou wilt not give it to her, bid her begone, for she crieth after us.” One thing I notice that they said, which was not true, “She crieth after us.” Not she! She never cried after them she was crying after Christ, she would have pleaded in vain if she had cried after them, for all they had to say was, “Send her away.” A very different result came from her crying unto the Lord.

[Matthew 15:24](#). *But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*

As a Preacher and a Teacher, Christ came to administer to the circumcision, the Jews, the seed of Israel. He did not go about among the nations, it was his work to be a witness to the Jews. As a Preacher, he must

begin somewhere, and he chose to begin with them. “I am not sent,” said he; therefore, how could he go if he was not sent? Our Saviour had a greater regard to the sending of the Father than some preachers have, for they run before they are sent, sometimes they run when they are never sent at all; but, as Paul asked, “How shall they preach, except they be sent?”

[Matthew 15:25](#). *Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me.*

She takes a humbler attitude than she had at first assumed. She comes closer, and she is more earnest and personal in her pleading than she had been: “Lord help me.” Her prayer is shorter than it was at first; and I think that, when prayers grow shorter, they grow stronger. There is often more proof of earnestness in a short prayer than there is in a long one; glibness of speech is not prevalence in intercession.

[Matthew 15:26-27](#). *But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord.*

You remember the sermon that we had upon this text not long ago. The woman did not contradict the Saviour, she did not enter into any controversy with him, but she said, “Truth, Lord.” Whatever he says however black the words may look to her, she accepts them as true, and says, “Truth, Lord.”

[Matthew 15:27](#). *Yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.*

When the children drop the crumbs then the little dogs which have been fondled by the children feed on the crumbs which fall, not from “the” master’s table, but from “their masters’ table” — that is, from the table of the children.

[Matthew 15:28](#). *Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith:*

He seems quite amazed at the woman’s faith, but he admires it, and exclaimed, “O woman, great is thy faith.”

[Matthew 15:28](#). *Be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter made whole from that very hour.*

It was as she wished, and she went home to glorify the Christ, and to tell everybody how her prayer to him had sped.

Verses 21-39

Jesus had been in conflict with the Scribes and Pharisees. He never liked such discussions, and though he was always victorious in every

controversy, it grieved his spirit.

[Matthew 15:21](#). *Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.*

He was glad to get away, and made a journey over the hills to get at as great a distance as possible from these cavillers.

[Matthew 15:22](#). *And behold, a woman of Canaan came.*

A Syrophenician woman, one of the old, condensed race living in Tyre and Sidon.

[Matthew 15:23](#). *But he answered her not a word.*

Answers to prayers may be delayed; but delays are not always denials.

Christ's silence must have been a great trial to the poor woman; but our Lord knew with whom he was dealing.

[Matthew 15:23](#). *And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us.*

Ah, these disciples made a grand mistake! She did not cry after them; she cried after him; but so they understood it: therefore they said, "Get rid of her; she disturbs us; when we are in the street, we can hear her cry. Send her away; for she crieth after us." Ah! Poor disciples, she was not so foolish as to cry after you; she was crying after your Master. If any here have come only to hear the preacher, they have made a great mistake; but if you have come for a word from the Master, I pray that you may be gratified.

[Matthew 15:24](#). *But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*

Christ did what he was sent to do; he was the Messiah, the sent One. He would not go beyond his mission, so he says, "I am sent." He was sent as a Preacher and a Teacher, not to the Gentiles, but to Israel. He had a larger commission in reserve, and was yet to be a Saviour to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews; but for the present he was to be a Shepherd to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

[Matthew 15:25](#). *Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord help me.*

A very short prayer; but how much there was in it!

[Matthew 15:26-27](#). *But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to the dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.*

It is the faculty of faith to see in the dark. This woman spied out light in what seemed to be a very dark saying. Did Christ call her a dog? Well, dogs

have their privileges when they lie under the table. Even if their master does not throw them a crumb, yet they may take that which falls from his hand. If Jesus would but allow any mercy to drop, as it were, accidentally, this woman would be content.

[Matthew 15:28-29](#). *Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour. And Jesus departed from thence.*

When he had done his business, he was off. Our Lord was a great itinerant; he was always on the move/ He had come all the way to the parts of Tyre and Sidon to help one woman; and when that one woman had been attended to, he goes back again immediately to his old post by the sea of Galilee.

[Matthew 15:29-30](#). *And Jesus departed from thence, and came nigh unto the sea of Galilee; and went up into a mountain, and sat down there. And great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet; and he healed them.*

In the prayer-meeting, held by the deacons and elders this morning, before I came in here, one of our friends observed in prayer that there might be many lame, blind, and maimed in the congregation, and he prayed that they might be brought to Jesus. Let us, by faith, bring them to him, and lay them at his feet. Oh, that this word, "He healed them," might be true again today!

[Matthew 15:31](#). *Insomuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be made whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel.*

Oh, for glory to God! There is no glory to god which equals that which comes from blind eyes which have been made to see; and from dumb lips which have been made to speak. The glories of nature and providence are eclipsed by the glories of grace. May we see such things today.

[Matthew 15:32](#). *Then Jesus called his disciples unto him, and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way.*

Ah, dear friends, they were willing to put up with inconvenience to hear the gospel in those days! Three days of sermon-hearing! People want sermons wonderfully short now, and the sermons must be marvelously

interesting, too, or else the people grow dreadfully tired. If dinner-time came around, the dinner-bell, at any time, in these days, would drown all the attraction of the pulpit. But here were people that attended Christ's ministry for three days, and they had nothing to eat. He had compassion upon them, and said to his disciples, "I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way."

[Matthew 15:33-34](#). *And his disciples say unto him, Whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude? And Jesus saith unto them, How many loaves have ye?*

That is the point. It is idle to enquire about how much you want. "How many loaves have ye?"

[Matthew 15:34-35](#). *And they said, Seven, and a few little fishes. And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground.*

It was a token of Christ's presence and power that they were willing to sit down on the ground. Think of thousands of people taking their places in an orderly way to feed upon seven cakes and a few little fishes! Without any demur, the crowd arranged itself into banquet order at the command of Jesus.

[Matthew 15:36-37](#). *And he took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks, and brake them, and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. And they did all eat, and were filled; and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets full.*

They were large baskets, too; not like the small food-baskets mentioned when the five thousand were fed. The word used here is the same word that is employed to describe the basket in which Saul was let down by the wall of Damascus.

[Matthew 15:38](#). *And they that did eat were four thousand men, beside women and children.*

Now, if the women and children bore the same proportion to the men as they generally do in our congregation, there must have been a very large crowd indeed. Why is the number of the women and children not mentioned? Was it because there were so many? Or was it because their appetites being smaller than the appetites of men, the men are put down as the great eaters, and the women and children, as it were, thrown into the count? What a mercy it is that the Lord adds to the church daily a vast number of men, women, and children! The Lord sends us many more, until we cannot count them!

[Matthew 15:39](#). *And he sent away the multitude, and took ship, and came into the coasts of Magdala.*

He had taught the people, and fed them; so now he goes elsewhere to carry similar blessings to others also.

[MATTHEW CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 16

Verses 21-23

[Matthew 16:21](#). *From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.*

He had previously spoken somewhat darkly concerning his death; but it was so sad and so strange a revelation to his disciples that they could not think he really meant quite what he said. But now he began definitely and plainly to tell them about the future, and even to enter into details concerning his death and resurrection. He knew all that the work of redemption would involve for him; he had counted the cost; but—

“When the Saviour knew The price of pardon was his blood,
His pity ne’er withdrew.”

It must have been very saddening, but, at the same time, very profitable to the minds of the apostles to be led by their Lord in this direction.

[Matthew 16:22](#). *Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.*

The margin reads, “Pity thyself, Lord,” as though Peter meant to say, “God grant, of his infinite mercy, that this may not be true! How can it be that such an one as thou art should die?” He probably thought that Christ’s death would be the end of his kingdom, the ruin of all his people’s hopes, the quenching of the light of Israel; so, in his zeal for his Master’s cause, he cried, “This shall not be unto thee.”

[Matthew 16:23](#). *But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.*

Notice the contrast between the 18th verse and the 23rd. In the 18th verse, Christ had said, “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my church;”

and here he is saying, “Get thee behind me, Satan.” I do not understand our Lord to have called Peter Satan, but to have looked right through Peter, and to have seen Satan standing behind him, and making use of the apostle to be his spokesman. The best of men may sometimes serve the devil’s turn better than a bad man would. He may speak, through those who love the Lord, words which are clean contrary to the mind of Christ. So Christ sees Satan lurking, as in an entrenchment, behind Peter, and he says, “Get thee behind me: thou art an offence unto me.” The idea of pitying himself—the thought of shirking the task upon which he had entered—was offensive to him. There was a savor about it of the things of men,—of self and of self-saving, instead of self-denial, and generous, disinterested, Godlike self-sacrifice. Oh, that we would always speak, as Christ did on this occasion, whenever anything is proposed to us by which we should avoid the cross that he intends us to carry! When anyone wants us to moderate our zeal, or to tone down our opinions, less we should have to suffer for our faithfulness, let us reply, “Get thee behind me, Satan.” What has a soldier of the cross to do with avoiding the battle with evil? He should be ever ready for the good fight of faith. What has an heir of heaven to do with the saving of himself? Let him say, with the apostle Paul, “I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.”

This exposition consisted of readings from Isaiah 40.; and [Matthew 16:21-23](#).

Verses 24-28

[Matthew 16:24-25](#). *Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.*

This is the law of self-sacrifice, based on the sacrifice of Christ, and leading up to the complete sacrifice of the redeemed. We are not our own; we are bought with a price. To try to keep ourselves to ourselves, would be acting contrary to the whole spirit of the redemption which Christ has wrought for us; and that is the last thing that any Christian should think of doing.

[Matthew 16:26-28](#). *For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.*

Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.

By which, I suppose he meant that they should see him in his majesty;—that, notwithstanding the cross, they should see something of his crown of glory, as they did when they beheld him after his resurrection, and as they did, even better, when he ascended on high; and as they did, some of them, in vision, when they saw him standing at the right hand of God, even the Father.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Matthew 16:24-28](#); and [Matthew 17:1-13](#).

MATTHEW CONTENTS

CHAPTER 17

Verses 1-5

[Matthew 17:1-2](#). *And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.*

Were these “six days” a week’s quiet interval, in which our Lord prepared himself for the singular transaction upon the “mountain apart”? Did the little company of three know from one Sabbath to another that such an amazing joy awaited them? The three were elect out of the elect, and favored to see what none else in all the world might behold. Doubt—less our Lord had reasons for his choice, as he has for every choice he makes; but he does not unveil them to us. The same three beheld the agony in the garden; perhaps the first sight was necessary to sustain their faith under the second. The name of the “high mountain” can never be known; for those who knew the locality have left no information. Tabor, if you please; Hermon, if you prefer it. No one can decide. It was a lone and lofty hill. While in prayer, the splendor of the Lord shone out. His face, lit up with its own inner glory, became a sun; and all his dress, like clouds irradiated by that sun, became white as the light itself. “He was transfigured before them;” he alone was the center of what they saw. It was a marvellous unveiling of the hidden nature of the Lord Jesus. Then was, in one way, fulfilled the word of John: “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us,

and we beheld his glory.” The transfiguration occurred but once: special views of the glory of Christ are not enjoyed every day. Our highest joy on earth is to see Jesus. There can be no greater bliss in heaven; but we shall be better able to endure the exceeding bliss when we have laid aside the burden of this flesh.

[Matthew 17:3](#). *And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him.*

Thus the Law and the Prophets, “Moses and Elias,” communed with our Lord, “talking with him,” and entering into familiar conversation with their Lord. Saints long departed still live; live in their personality; are known by their names; and enjoy near access to Christ. It is a great joy to holy ones to be with Jesus: they find it heaven to be where they can talk with him. The heads of former dispensations conversed with the Lord as to his decease, by which a new economy would be ushered in. After condescending so long to his ignorant followers, it must have been a great relief to the human soul of Jesus to talk with two master-minds like those of Moses and Elijah. What a sight for the apostles, this glorious trio! They “appeared unto them,” but they “talked with him;” the object of the two holy ones was not to converse with apostles, but with their Master.

Although saints are seen of men, their fellowship is with Jesus

[Matthew 17:4](#). *Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here; if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.*

The sight spoke to the three beholders, and they felt bound to answer to it. Peter must speak: “Then answered Peter.” That which is upper—most comes out: “Lord, it is good for us to be here.” Everybody was of his opinion. Who would not have, been? Because it was so good, he would fain stay in this beatific state, and get still more good from it. But he has not lost his reverence, and therefore he would have the great ones sheltered suitably. He submits the proposal to Jesus: “If thou wilt.” He offers that, with his brethren, he will plan and build shrines for the three holy ones: “Let us make here three tabernacles.” He does not propose to build for himself, and James, and John; but he says, “One for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.” His talk sounds rather like that of a bewildered child. He wanders a little; yet his expression is a most natural one. Who would not wish to abide in such society as this? Moses, and Elias, and Jesus: what company! But yet how unpractical is Peter! How selfish the one thought, “It is good for us”!

What was to be done for the rest of the twelve, and for the other disciples, and for the wide, wide world? A sip of such bliss might be good for the three, but to continue to drink thereof might not have been really good even for them. Peter knew not what he said. The like might be said of many another excited utterance of enthusiastic saints.

[Matthew 17:5](#). *While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.*

“While he yet spake.” Such wild talk might well be interrupted. What a blessed interruption! We may often thank the Lord for stopping our babbling. “A bright cloud overshadowed them.” It was bright, and cast a shadow. They felt that they were entering it, and feared as they did so. It was a singular experience; yet we have had it repeated in our own cases. Do we not know what it is to get shadow out of brightness, and “a voice out of the cloud”? This is after the frequent manner of the Lord in dealing with his favored ones. The voice was clear and distinct. First came the divine attestation of the Sonship of our Lord, “This is my beloved Son,” and the Father’s declaration of delight in him, “in whom I am well pleased.” What happiness for us that Jehovah is well pleased in Christ, and with all who are in him! Then followed the consequent divine requirement, “Hear ye him.” It is better to hear the Son of God than to see saints, or to build tabernacles. This will please the Father more than all else that love can suggest. The good pleasure of the Father in the Lord Jesus is a conspicuous part of his glory. The voice conveyed to the ear a greater glory than the luster of light could communicate through the eye. The audible part of the transfiguration was as wonderful as the visible.

Verses 1-13

[Matthew 17:1](#). *And after six days —*

Luke says, “about an eight days after these sayings;” but I suppose he counted the day before and the day after. “After six days,” — and the first day was, probably, the first day of the week, so he was now coming to another Lord’s day. One of the high Christian festivals of the life of Christ was about to be celebrated. Jesus was not yet dead, therefore it was not the resurrection that was celebrated on that day, but the transfiguration. “After six days,” — six days’ teaching concerning the cross before he revealed his glory. Dear brethren, there are many in these days who delight to speak almost exclusively about the glory of the second advent. Now, God forbid

that we should be silent concerning that great theme! But I think our teaching concerning it must be given after six days' consideration of the sufferings of Christ. Let those who will say, "We preach Christ glorified;" I mean still to say, with Paul, "But we preach Christ crucified." When I have had my six days for that topic, then am I right glad to have another day to speak concerning Christ's glory. We must never forget his death; all our immortal hopes are centered in the death of our great Substitute. "After six days" —

[Matthew 17:1-2](#). *Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up unto an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.*

"White and glistering," says Luke; "exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them," says Mark.

[Matthew 17:3](#). *And, behold, —*

As if this was a great wonder. The transfiguration of Christ could scarcely be called miraculous, for it is according to the nature of Christ that his face should shine, and his very raiment become glorious.

[Matthew 17:3](#). *There appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him.*

Moses, the great representative of the law, and Elias, the chief of the prophets, — one who had died, and one who had entered heaven without dying, — thus representing both the quick and the dead.

[Matthew 17:4](#). *Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.*

If Peter had known that hymn by Dr. Watts, —

"My willing soul would stay
In such a frame as this,
And sit and sing herself away
To everlasting bliss;" —

he would have thought it appropriate to sing at that moment; and whenever we get up on the mount, we have no desire to go down again. Our one thought is, "Oh, that this happy experience would last! Oh, that we might keep in this blessed company for ever!" Yet our highest religious excitements cannot continue, even as the sea is not always at flood tide. The talk between those three — Jesus, and Moses, and Elias, — must have been well worth hearing. I would like to have been one of the three untransfigured, unglorified apostles, to listen to the conversation of the three

glorified ones. We know what they talked about, for Luke tells us that they “spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem;” and it is very singular that the Greek word which he used to describe Christ’s decease is the word “exodus.” They “spake of his exodus which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.” Moses knew all about the exodus out of Egypt; and what a type that was of Christ’s departure out of this world; — the death of the lamb, — the sprinkling of the blood, — the slaying of the firstborn among the Egyptians, even as Christ smote sin, death, and hell; — the triumphant coming out of Israel, with silver and gold, setting forth Christ’s ascension to his Father with all his precious treasures captured from the hand of the enemy. How changed must the feelings of Elias have been since the day when he said, “I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away;” for now he was seeing the King in his glory, and talking with him about his approaching departure. How did Peter, and James, and John know that these two men were Moses and Elias? They had never seen them in the flesh, yet they evidently recognized them; so, as they knew people whom they had not known on earth, I am sure that I shall know in heaven those whom I did know here; I shall have the advantage of them in that respect. I suppose they said to one another, as soon as they saw these men, “That is Moses, and that is Elijah;” yet they had never seen them; and shall not we, when we meet our dear kindred and friends, say at once, “That is So-and-so, with whom I took sweet counsel on earth when we walked to the house of God in company”? Surely, the mutual recognition of the saints hardly needs a better support than this passage supplies.

[Matthew 17:5](#). *While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them:*

The Shekinah cloud, which was the type of the divine presence in the wilderness, — bright, yet a cloud, softening the excessive glory of the face of Jesus with its overshadowing, yet casting no dimness upon it: “a bright cloud overshadowed them:”

[Matthew 17:5-6](#). *And behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid.*

We cannot bear for God to come too near us; for we are such frail earthen vessels that, if he reveals his glory too much within us, we are ready to break.

[Matthew 17:7](#). *And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid.*

Ay, it was Jesus only who could give them comfort; and I have to say, —
“Till God in human flesh I see,
My thoughts no comfort find;
The holy, just, and sacred
Three Are terrors to my mind.
“But if Immanuel’s face appear,
My hope, my joy, begins;
His name forbids my slavish fear,
His grace removes my sins.”

The hand of a man touched the apostles, and the voice of a man said to them, “Arise, and be not afraid.”

[Matthew 17:8](#). *And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.*

And they did not want any other man “save Jesus only.” Let Moses, and Elijah, and all others go, so long as Christ remains. There will be the most blessed company for us so long as he abides with us.

[Matthew 17:9-10](#). *And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead. And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come?*

“May we not tell the story, of what has happened on this mountain? Elias has come. If we publish this news, it may convince even the scribes that thou art the Messiah.”

[Matthew 17:11-12](#). *And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things. But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them.*

How he comes back to that point! Evidently the chief thought in our Saviour’s mind was concerning his suffering. On another occasion, he said, “I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!” As the magnetic needle ever points to the pole, so did the heart of Jesus ever point to the cross.

[Matthew 17:13](#). *Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.*

John had indeed come “in the spirit and power of Elias,” yet Herod had put him to death, as other wicked men would deal with his Lord and Master whose way he so gloriously prepared.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Matthew 16:24-28](#); and [Matthew 17:1-13](#).

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CHAPTER 18

Verses 1-22

[Matthew 18:1](#). *At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?*

The question we have sometimes heard asked in other forms, “Which is the highest office; which form of service shall have the greatest honour?” As if we were courtiers and were to take our positions according to precedent.

[Matthew 18:2](#). *And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them.*

They all wondered what he was going to do. The little child was no doubt pleased to find itself in such happy company.

[Matthew 18:3](#). *And said, Verily I say unto you,* “And said Verily I say unto you” — to you, men or women, who think no small things of yourselves, and are wanting to know which is greatest, implying that you, each one, think yourself pretty good as it is.

[Matthew 18:3](#). *Except ye converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

Someone said to me this morning, “This is a growing day.” “Ah!” I said, “I hope we shall all grow spiritually.” “Which way?” said he; “smaller or larger?” Let it be smaller, brethren that will be the surest way of growth certainly. If we can become much less today, we shall be growing. We have grown up, as we call it, let us grow down today, and become as little children, or else we shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

[Matthew 18:4](#). *Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.*

The lower down, the higher up. In a certain sense the way to heaven is downward in our own esteem certainly. “He must increase; I must

decrease.” And when that straight-backed letter “I,” which often becomes so prominent, vanishes altogether, till there is not an iota of it left, then we shall become like our Lord.

[Matthew 18:5](#). *And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.*

The humblest and the least in the family of divine love, if received brings with that reception the same blessing as the reception of Christ.

[Matthew 18:6](#). *But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me,*

It does not mean put him out of temper by his taking his silly offence but shall cause him to sin, shall make him stumble, shall scandalize him — whosoever shall do that.

[Matthew 18:6](#). *It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.*

If you have the revised version, you will see in the margin that it is an ass millstone — not a common millstone, which women used to turn, but a bigger stone, which was turned by an ass, in a mill which thus was of a larger kind altogether. The very heaviest conceivable doom were better than to be a stumbling block in the way of the very least of God’s people. Yet I have known some say “Well, the thing is lawful, and if a weak brother does not like it, I cannot help it, he should not be weak.” No, my dear brother, but that is not the way Christ would have you talk. You must consider the weakness of your brother; all things may be lawful to you, but all things are not expedient, and if meat make your brother to offend, eat no meat while the world standeth. Remember, we must, after all, measure the pace which the flock can travel by the weakest in the flock, or else we shall have to leave behind us many of the sheep of Christ. The pace at which a company must go, must depend upon how fast the weak and the sick can travel — is it not so? — unless we are willing to part company with them, which I trust we are not willing to do. So let us take care that we cause not even the weakest to stumble by anything that we can do without harm to ourselves, but which would bring harm to them. Then I am not sure if it would harm the weakest, whether it would not harm us also, because we are not as strong as we think we are; and, perhaps, if we took a better measure, we might put ourselves among the weakest, too.

[Matthew 18:7-8](#). *Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence*

cometh! Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee:

Get rid of that which is most useful to you, most necessary to you, rather than be led astray by it, and made to sin — for

[Matthew 18:8](#). *It is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire.*

Remember that is the word of Jesus — “everlasting fire” — not the word of some of those coarse, cruel theologians that you hear a great deal about now-a-days, but the word of Jesus Christ, the Master himself. You cannot be more tender than he; to pretend to be so, with only prove us to be very foolish.

[Matthew 18:9](#). *And if thine eye offend thee,*

So needful to thy pleasure, and to thy knowledge, and to thy guidance yet if it make thee sin,

[Matthew 18:9](#). *Pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hellfire.*

Better to be but a maimed believer than to be an accomplished unbeliever; better to be an uncultured saint than a cultured modern thinker; better that thou lose an eye, or lose a hand, than lose thy faith in God and his word, and so lose thy soul and be cast into hell fire.

[Matthew 18:10](#). *Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones;*

So apt to do so, when a man appears to have no perfect knowledge, no large pretensions, we are so apt to think, “Oh! he is a nobody.”

[Matthew 18:10](#). *For I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.*

There is an angel to watch over each child of God; the heirs of heaven have those holy spirits to keep watch and ward over them. These sacred intelligences, who watch over the people of God, do at the same time behold God’s face. They do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word, and beholding his face all the while. And if these little ones are thus honourably attended by the angels of God, never despise them. They may be dressed in fustian, they may wear the very poorest of print, but they are attended like princes; therefore, treat them as such.

[Matthew 18:11](#). *For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.*

Another reason why you must not despise them. “How think ye?” Put on your considering cap, and think a minute.

[Matthew 18:12-14](#). *How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.*

Nor shall they. Christ has come on purpose that He may send them out, and find them out he will; and having an hundred, whom his Father gave him, he will not be satisfied with ninety-and-nine, but the whole hundred shall be there. Now, as if to show us that we are not to despise the very least in the family, nor even the most erring, he brings it personally home to us.

[Matthew 18:15](#). *Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.*

Do not say, "You must come to me." Go to him; he has trespassed against you, it is a personal affair; go and seek him out. It is useless to expect the person who does the injury to try and make peace. It is the injured one who always has to forgive, though he has nothing to be forgiven, it always comes to that, and it is the injured one who should, if he be of the mind of Christ, be the one to commence the reconciliation.

[Matthew 18:16-17](#). *But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.*

Quit his company he has despised the last tribunal. Now you must leave him. Be not angry with him. Freely forgive him, but quit him.

[Matthew 18:18](#). *Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*

Where the church acts rightly, it has the solemn sanction of God; this lesser tribunal on earth shall have its decrease sanctioned by the great tribunal above. Hence it becomes a very serious matter, this binding and loosing which Christ has given to his Church.

[Matthew 18:19-20](#). *Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them*

of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

It is not a large church, therefore, that is girded with the wonderful power of prayer, but even two or three. Christ will not have us despise one, he will not have us despise two or three. Who hath despised the day of small things? On the contrary, measure by quality, rather than by quantity, and even if the quality fail measure by love, rather than by some rule of justice that you have set up.

[Matthew 18:21](#). *Then came Peter to him and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?*

He thought he had opened his mouth very wide when he said that.

[Matthew 18:22](#). *Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Unto seventy times seven.*

I do not wonder that we read in another place that the disciples said, “Lord, increase our faith.” For it needs much faith to have so much patience, and to continue still to forgive.

[MATTHEW CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 19

Verses 13-30

All sorts of persons are invited to come to Christ, whatever their age may be. We begin here with the children.

[Matthew 19:13-15](#). *Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven. And he laid his hands on them, and departed thence.*

The principal difficulty of children in coming to Christ frequently lies in their friends. Their parents or their other relatives think they are too young, and discourage them. Oh, that we all had a right idea of the possibility of the conversion of little children; nay, not only of the possibility, but that we looked for it, watched for it, and encouraged young children to come to Christ! You know that, in the parable I am going to read presently, we are told that the householder “went out early in the morning to hire labourers

into his vineyard.” What a privilege it is to be Brought to Christ early in the morning,—that is, while we are yet children.

[Matthew 19:16](#). *And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?*

This was not a child, but a young man, who had come to riper years.

[Matthew 19:17-20](#). *And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?*

Externally, in the letter, very likely this young man had kept these commandments, and so far he was to be commended; yet internally, in their spirit, he had not kept one of them. Our Saviour did not tell him that he had failed, but he took him on his own ground. “You say that you love your neighbor as yourself; I will give you a test to prove whether you do.”

[Matthew 19:21-22](#). *Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.*

See, then, that often with men—with young men—the great hindrance in coming to Christ may be the world. They may have riches, or they may have a great craving for riches; and this may stand in the way of their coming to the Saviour. If any man loves riches better than he loves Christ, he cannot be saved.

[Matthew 19:23-24](#). *Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man go enter into the kingdom of God.*

Somehow or other,-

“Gold and the gospel seldom do agree,
Religion always sides with poverty;”

because a man’s possessions are so liable to get into his heart. He is apt to turn them into idols, and to make devotion to them the great object of his life; as long as he does so, he cannot be saved.

[Matthew 19:25-27](#). *When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved? But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible. Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?*

Always too fast is this impetuous Peter; ever ready to put in a good word for himself if he can.

[Matthew 19:28-29](#). *And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.*

He shall find himself a gainer by his losses for Christ's sake. If he has lost friends, he shall find better and truer friends in the Church of God. If he has lost possessions, he shall get a spiritual wealth that shall be better to him than houses and lands.

[Matthew 19:30](#). *But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first.*

This exposition consisted of readings from [Matthew 19:13-30](#); and [Matthew 20:1-16](#).

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CHAPTER 20

Verses 1-7

[Matthew 20:1-2](#). *For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard.*

The kingdom of heaven is all of grace, and so is the service connected with it. Let this be remembered in the exposition of this parable. The call to work, the ability, and the reward, are all on the principle of grace, and not upon that of merit. This was no common man that is an householder, and his going out to hire labourers into his vineyard was not after the usual

manner of men, for they will have a full day's work for a full day's wage. This householder considered the labourers rather than himself. He was up before the dew was gone from the grass, and found labourers, and sent them into the vineyard. It was a choice privilege to be allowed to begin holy service so early in the morning. They agreed with the householder, and went to work on his terms. They might well be content, since they were promised a full day's hire, and were sure to get it: a penny a day represented the usual and accepted wage. The householder and the labourers agreed upon the amount; and this is the point which has to be noted further on. Young believers have a blessed prospect: they may well be happy to do good work, in a good place, for a good Master, and on good terms.

[Matthew 20:3-4](#). *And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, And said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way.*

Hating indolence, and grieving that he saw others standing idle in the marketplace, he hired more workers about the third hour. They would make only three-quarters of a day; but it was for their good to cease from loafing at the street-corner. These are like persons whose childhood is past, but who are not yet old. They are favored to have a good part of their day of life available for hallowed service. To these the good householder said, "Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you." He pointed to those already in the field, and said, "Go ye also;" and he promised them not a definite sum, as he did those whom he first hired, but he said, "Whatsoever is right I will give you." They went their way to their labour, for they did not wish to remain idlers; and as right-minded men, they could not quarrel with the householder's agreement to give them whatsoever was right. Oh, that those around us, who are in their rising manhood, would at once take up their tools, and begin to serve the great Lord!

[Matthew 20:5](#). *Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise.*

Had it been altogether and alone a business transaction, the householder would have waited to begin a new day, and would not have given a whole day's wage for a fraction of a day's work. The entire matter was alone of grace; and, therefore, when half the day was gone, about the sixth hour, he called in labourers. Men of forty and fifty are bidden to enter the vineyard. Yes, and about the ninth hour, men were engaged. At sixty, the Lord calls a number by his grace! It is wrong to assert that men are not saved after forty;

we know to the contrary, and could mention instances. God in the greatness of his love calls into his service men from whom the exuberance of useful vigor has departed; he accepts the waning hours of their day. He has work for the weak as well as for the strong. He allows none to labour for him without the reward of grace, even though they have spent their best days in sin. This is no encouragement to procrastination; but it should induce old sinners to seek the Lord at once.

[Matthew 20:6-7](#). *And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive.*

The day was nearly over: only a single hour remained; yet about the eleventh hour he went out. The generous householder was willing to take on more workmen, and give them hire, though the sun was going down. He found a group lingering at the loafers' corner — standing idle. He wished to clear the whole town of sluggards, so he said to them, “Why stand ye here all the day idle?” His question to them may be read by making each word in its turn emphatic, and then it yields a fullness of meaning. Why are ye idle? What is the good of it? Why stand ye here idle where all are busy? Why all the day idle? Will not a shorter space suffice? Why are ye idle? You have need to work, you are able to do it, and you should set about it at once. Why is any one of us remaining idle towards God? Has nothing yet had power to engage us in sacred service? Can we dare to say, “No man hath hired us”? Nearly seventy years of age, and yet unsaved! Let us bestir ourselves. It is time that we went, without delay, to hill the weeds, and prune the vines, and do something for our Lord in his vineyard. What but rich grace could lead him to take on the eleven o'clock lingerers? Yet he invites them as earnestly as those who came in the morning, and he will as surely give them their reward.

Verses 1-16

[Matthew 20:1-2](#). *For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard.*

That was the usual wage of the time, the daily pay of a Roman soldier.

[Matthew 20:3-4](#). *And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, And said unto them; go ye also into the*

vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way.

You notice that the first labourers made a bargain with the householder, he agreed with them for a penny a day, and then sent them into his vineyard. So our Lord seemed to say to Peter, “If you are going to make a bargain concerning your service, you will not find it pay. You are saying, ‘We have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?’” That spirit will not do; Christ is not to be served by hirelings. The moment the idea comes in that we deserve to have anything at his hands, we spoil all our service; and those who might be first come to be last if they once get that notion into their heads. This parable shows that it is so.

[Matthew 20:5-9](#). *Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive. So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny.*

This was the gift of grace, through the generosity of the employer.

[Matthew 20:10-12](#). *But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. And when they had received it, they murmured against the goodman of the house, saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day.*

See. They put forth their claim on the ground of deserving, so they had what they had bargained for, but they had no more. They were engaged first, but because they had the hireling spirit they were put last.

[Matthew 20:13-15](#). *But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?*

God will have us know that, in dealing with us when we are his servants, he is under no obligation to us. If he chooses to give a reward, the reward is not of debt, but of his sovereign grace. We are bound to serve him by the fact that he is our Creator, altogether apart from any reward; and we

must not talk of dealing with him on terms of reward; it is too high a style for us, poor worms, to assume in the presence of Almighty God. If we do talk so, he will soon put us clown into our right place.

[Matthew 20:16](#). *So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.*

This exposition consisted of readings from [Matthew 19:13-30](#); and [Matthew 20:1-16](#).

Verses 1-28

[Matthew 20:1-2](#). *For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard.*

It was a fair wage. It was for fair and healthful work which they were to do in the vineyard. They were happy men to be hired so early in the morning. Never do those that serve Christ reject him; and though in this parable some are represented as finding fault with their wages, yet Christ's true servants do not so. Their only request is, "Dismiss me not thy service, Lord." They feel it to be reward enough to be permitted to go on working. Indeed, this is one way in which we get our wages during the day. If we keep one precept, God gives us grace to keep another. If we perform one duty, God gives us the privilege to perform another. So we are paid well. We work in the work. We say not "for the work," for we are unprofitable servants. Yet is there the penny a day.

[Matthew 20:3](#). *And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace,*

It was bad for them to be standing there. No good is learnt by idlers in idle company. Idle men together kindle a fire that burns like the flames of hell.

[Matthew 20:4-5](#). *And said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way. Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise.*

Much more out of charity than out of any good that he could get from them. Especially was this manifest, when it got towards the latter end of the day. So late, so very late, it was but little they could do. Yet for their good he bade them come in.

[Matthew 20:6](#). *And about the eleventh hour--*

Why, then, surely the day was over. They were ready to put away their tools and go home. But--

[Matthew 20:6](#). *He went out, and find others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle?*

“Why?” Can you give a reason for it? Why stand ye here in the marketplace, where men come together on purpose to be hired? Why stand ye here, ye able-bodied ones that still might work? Why stand ye here all the day? That ye should be idle a little while is bad enough. Why stand ye here all the day, and why stand ye here all the day idle, when there is so much work to be done, and such a wage to receive for it?

[Matthew 20:7](#). *They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the Vineyard; and, whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive.*

And so the great householder was glad when he had emptied the marketplace of the idlers, and brought in from early morning, even till set of sun, so many that should be at work — happily at work there. I wonder whether there are any here early in the morning of life who have not yet come into the vineyard. If so, the Master calls you. Are you in middle life? Have you reached the sixth hour, and are you not enlisted in his service? Again the Master calls you. And if you have reached the eleventh hour, where are you? Decrepit — leaning on your staff — leaning downward to your grave; yet if you are not called now, now he calleth you and bids you, even at this late hour, come into the vineyard.

[Matthew 20:8-9](#). *So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny.*

And when souls come to Christ, however late it is, they have the same joy, the same matchless, perfect peace, the same salvation even, as those who have come while yet they are young. True, they have lost many days, many hours of happy service. They have permitted the sun to decline, and have wasted much time; but yet the Master gives them the same life within them, the same adoption into the family of God, the same blessing.

[Matthew 20:10](#). *But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny.*

Why, there are some of us that have now been in Christ's vineyard ever since we were boys, but we must not think that we shall receive, or can

have, more than those who have just come in. I have heard people say, “Why, here are these people just lately converted, and they are singing and rejoicing; and there some of the old people that have been following the Lord for years, and do not seem to have half the joy. No, no; that is true. It is the old story of the elder brother and the prodigal, over again. But do not — do not let us repeat that for ever and ever. Do not let us get off of the lines of free, rich, sovereign grace, and begin to think that there is some desert in us, some merit in us. Oh! my brothers, I will be glad enough to sit at the feet of the meanest child of God, if I am but to be humored in the family — glad enough to have the same salvation which the dying thief obtained, though at the last moment only he looked to Christ. Yet there is this spirit that will grow up — that some who have been longer in the work ought certainly to have more joy, more of everything, than those that have just come in. See the answer to it.

[Matthew 20:11-16](#). *And when they had received it, they murmured against the good-man of the house, Saying, These last have wrought but one hour. and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day. But he answered one of them. and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil. because I am good? So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.*

The great principle of election in divine sovereignty will crop up, not in one place, but in many. God will have us know that he is Master, and that in the kingdom of grace he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and in the distribution of that grace he will give according to his own good pleasure; and the moment we begin to murmur or set up claims he answers us at once with, “Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own?” Yet that unevangelical spirit, that un-gospel spirit of fancying that we have some Sort of claim or right will crone in, and it must be sternly repressed. It is of grace — of grace alone — of grace to begin with, of grace to go on with, of grace to close with: and human merit must not be allowed to put a single finger anywhere. “Where is boasting, then?” says the Apostle. “It is excluded.” It is shut out — the door shut in its face. It must not come in. If you and I serve God throughout a long life, we shall certainly have much greater happiness in life than those can have who come to Christ only at the

last. But, as far as the gospel blessing is concerned, which Christ gives, it is the same salvation which the newly-born Christian enjoys as that which the most advanced believer is now enjoying. It is to every man the penny, hearing the King's own impress.

[Matthew 20:17-20](#). *And Jesus going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples apart in, the way, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death. And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again. Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him.*

Then, in the most inopportune time in all the world, when Jesus was talking of being mocked and crucified, and put to death, here comes Mistress Zebedee with an ambitious request about her sons

[Matthew 20:21](#). *And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom.*

He is thinking of a cross, and they are dreaming of a crown. He is speaking of being mocked and put to death, and they have ideas of royalty, that they want to have the chief place in the coming kingdom. Oh! how like ourselves. Our Master thinks of how he can condescend, and we are thinking of how people ought to respect us, and treat us better than they do. Oh! the selfishness that there is in us. May our Master's example help to stay it.

[Matthew 20:22-24](#). *But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able. And he said unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give. but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father. And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren*

Thus showing that they were exactly like them, "For," said they, "look at these two — these James and John — they want to have the preference over us. We will not have it." It was exactly the same spirit in each one — ambition in them all for priority of honour. Ah! dear friends, it often

happens that when we are so intense in our condemnation of others, it is only because we fall into the same sin. Some, I have no doubt whatever, hate the Pope because they have the essence of popery in themselves. Two of a trade will never agree; and one man is very angry with another because he is so angry; and one is quite indignant that another should be so proud. He is not proud. He is proud to say he is humble — he is; therein proving how proud he is. Oh! that those beams in our eyes could be got out. Then the motes in our brothers' eyes would probably no more be seen.

[Matthew 20:25-28](#). *But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.*

Verses 29-34

[Matthew 20:29-30](#). *And as they departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed him. And, behold, two blind men sitting by the way side when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou son of David*

On Jericho a curse had rested, but the presence of Jesus brought it a blessing. We suppose he must needs go through Jericho as once before he must needs go through Samaria. Our Lord departed from Jericho, and a vast crowd attended him; for his fame had spread far and wide. Nothing striking is noted concerning his doings till two beggars come upon the scene. Mercy needs misery to give it an occasion to work. Behold, two blind men sitting by the way side. They could not behold Jesus, but we are asked to behold them. They had taken up a hopeful position, by the way side, for there they would be likely to hear any good news, and there they would be seen by the compassionate. They had ears if they had not eyes and they used their hearing well. On enquiry, they learned that Jesus passed by, and believing that he could restore their sight, they grew earnest in prayer to him: they cried out. Their plea was pity: "Have mercy on us." Their appeal was to the royal heart of Jesus: "O Lord, thou son of David." Our Lord's sermon was interrupted by the repeated outcries of these two blind beggars of Jericho; but this never displeased him; neither would true preachers of the gospel be

disconcerted if some of their hearers were to cry out with similar eagerness for salvation.

[Matthew 20:31](#). *And the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace: but they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou son of David.*

The crowd desired to hear Jesus, but could not do so because of the shouts of the blind men: therefore the multitude rebuked them. Did they upbraid them for ill manners, or for noise, or for harshness of tone, or for selfishly wishing to monopolize Jesus? It is always easy to find a stick when you wish to beat a dog. The people wanted them to be quiet, and hold their peace, and found plenty of arguments why they should do so. This was all very well for those who were in possession of their faculties; but men who have lost their sight cannot be quieted if there is an opportunity of obtaining sight; and as that opportunity was rapidly passing away from these poor men, they became vehement in their earnestness. Unhindered by the threats of the crowd, they cried the more. Some men are urged onward by all attempts to pull them back. When we are seeking the Lord, we shall be wise to make every hindrance into a stimulus. We may well bear rebukes and rebuffs when our great aim is to obtain mercy from Jesus. Unvarying was the blind beggars' cry: "Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David!" Variety of words they had no time to study. Having asked for what they needed, in words which leaped from their hearts, they repeated their prayer and their plea, and it was no vain repetition.

[Matthew 20:32](#). *And Jesus stood still, and called them, and said, What will ye that I shall do unto you?*

Jesus stood still. At the voice of prayer, the Sun of righteousness paused in his progress. Believing cries can hold the Son of God by the feet. He called them: and this because they had called him. What comfort that call yielded them! We are not told that they came to him: there is no need to tell us that. They were at his feet as soon as the words were uttered. How sadly blind are those who, being called a thousand times by the voice of mercy, yet refuse to come! Our Lord enlightened minds as well as eyes, and so he would have the blind men intelligently feel and express their needs. He puts to them the personal enquiry: "What will ye that I shall do unto you?" It was not a hard question, yet it is one which many an attendant at our places of worship would find it difficult to answer. You say you "wish to be saved": what do you mean by those words?

[Matthew 20:33](#). *They say unto him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened.*

Just so. They needed no time for second thoughts. Oh, that our people were as quick to pray, “Lord, that our eyes may be opened”! They went straight to the point. There is not a word to spare in their explanatory prayer. No book was wanted, no form of words, the desire clothed itself in simple, natural, earnest speech.

[Matthew 20:34](#). *So Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him.*

So, that is, since they thus stated their desire, and had so great a need Jesus had compassion on them, pitying their loneliness in the dark, their deprivation of enjoyment, their loss of power to follow a handicraft, and their consequent, poverty. He touched their eyes. What hands were those which undertook such lowly fellowship with human flesh, and wrought such deeds of power! Immediately their eyes received sight. Only a touch and light entered. Time is not necessary to the cures of Jesus. Proof of their sight was at once forthcoming, for they followed him. We best use our spiritual sight when we look to Jesus, and keep close to his heel. Oh, that the reader, if he be spiritually blind, may ask for the touch of Jesus, and receive it at once, for immediately he will receive sight! An inward light will in an instant shine forth upon the soul, and the spiritual world will become apparent to the enlightened mind. The Son of David still lives, and still opens the eyes of the blind. He still hears the humble prayer of those who know their blindness and their poverty. If the reader fears that he, too, is spiritually blind, let him cry unto the Lord at this very instant, and he will see what he shall see, and he will for ever bless the hand which gave sight to the eyes of his soul.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Matthew 9:27-35](#); and [Matthew 20:29-34](#).

[MATTHEW CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 21

Verses 1-5

[Matthew 21:1-3](#). *And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come the Bethphage, unto the mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples, Saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and*

straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me. And if any man say aught unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them.

The time was for our Lord to finish his great work on earth, and his going up to Jerusalem was with this intent. He now determines to enter his capital city openly, and there to reveal himself as King. To this end, when he came near to the city, Jesus sent two disciples to bring him the foal of an ass whereon he would ride. His orders to the two disciples whom he commissioned, when they were come to Bethphage, are worthy of our serious attention. He directed them as to the place where they should find the animal: "Go into the village over against you." The Lord knows where that which he requires is to be found. Perhaps it is nearer to us than we dream: "over against you." He told them that they would not have to search: "straightway ye shall find." When the Lord sends us on an errand, he will speed us on our way. He described the condition of the creatures: "an ass tied, and a colt with her." Our Lord knows the position of every animal in the world, and he counts no circumstances to be beneath his notice. Nor did he leave the disciples without orders how they were to proceed: "loose them, and bring them." Demur and debate there would be none; they might act at once. To stand questioning is not for the messengers of our King: it is their duty to obey their Lord's orders, and to fear nothing. The two animals would be willingly yielded up by their owner when the disciples said, "The lord hath need of them;" nay, he would not only give them up, but "straightway he will send them." Either the owner was himself a secret disciple, or some awe of the Lord Jesus was on his mind, but he would right joyfully consent to lend the ass and its foal for the purpose for which they were required. What a singular conjunction of words is here, "the Lord" and "hath need"! Jesus, without laying aside his sovereignty, had taken a nature full of needs; yet, being in need, he was still the Lord, and could commend his subjects, and requisition their property. Whenever we have anything of which the Lord's cause has need, how cheerfully should we hand it over to him! The owner of the ass and her colt regarded it as an honour to furnish Jesus with a creature to ride upon. How great is the power of Jesus over human minds, as that by a word he quietly moves them to do his bidding! We have here the record of two disciples being sent to fetch an ass: those who do little things for Jesus are honoured thereby. Their errand appeared strange, for what they did might seem like robbery; but he who sent them

took care to protect them from the least shade of suspicion. The messengers raised no question, offered no objection and met with no difficulty. It is ours to do what Jesus bids us, just as he bids us, and because he bids us; for his command is our authority.

[Matthew 21:4-5](#). *All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.*

Matthew is always reminding us of the Old Testament, as well, indeed, he may, for our Lord is always fulfilling it. Every point of detail is according to the prophetic model: All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet. The Old and New Testaments dovetail into each other. Men have written “Harmonies of the Gospels”; but God has given us a Harmony of the Old and New Testament. The passage referred to is in [Zechariah 9:9](#). It represents Zion’s King as meek and lowly even in the hour of his triumphant entrance to his metropolis, riding, not upon a war-horse, but upon a young ass, whereon no man had sat. He had before said of himself, “I am meek and lowly in heart,” and now he gives one more proof of the truth of his own words; and, at the same time of the fulfillment of prophecy: “Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy king cometh unto thee, meek and sitting upon an ass.” He did not, like Solomon, fetch horses out of Egypt to minister to his pride; but he who was greater than Solomon was content with a colt the foal of an ass, and even that humble creature was borrowed, for he had none of his own. The tenderness of Jesus comes out in the fact of his having the ass brought with her foal that they might not be parted. He was, as a King, all gentleness and mercy: his grandeur involved no pain, even for the meanest living thing. How blessed is it for us to be ruled by such a King!

Verses 23-46

[Matthew 21:23](#). *And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto, him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?*

Jesus knew that these men came to him for no good purpose, mad that willing were only trying to trip him up in his speech. He was always willing to teach when men were willing to learn, but he did not care to cast his

pearls before swine. Therefore, mark the holy caution, the sacred ingenuity with which our Lord replied to these men.

[Matthew 21:24-27](#). *And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him? But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet. And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.*

He carried the war into the enemy's camp. He answered his accusers by asking them a question which they could not answer in either way without condemning themselves.

[Matthew 21:28-32](#). *But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work today in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not. Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.*

Those poor fallen women and degraded tax-gatherers practically said, by their conduct, "We will not serve the Lord." Their past evil life had been a deliberate rejection of the authority of God; and yet, when John the Baptist came, they repented, and they believed. Each of them had said, like the elder son, "I will not," yet they did it. But as for these chief priests and elders, who all their lives had been outwardly serving the Lord, and Saying, "We will go and work in God's vineyard." when John came, and pointed them to God's own Son, they would not accept him. They had, just now, by refusing to tell whether the Lord's messenger was from heaven or of men, again rejected him, and proved that they had not repented. They did not believe John, they had themselves confessed that it was so; and, therefore, out of their own mouths they were condemned. I wonder whether there is any lesson in this parable to some who are here; I should not be surprised if there is. I hope that there are some among you, who hitherto have said, "I

will not go,” who will repent, and go and serve your God; and, on the other hand, it is to be feared that there may be some here, who have always been saying, “I go, sir,” who nevertheless have not gone, and perhaps never will go; but will remain to the last disobedient to the command of God. The Lord grant that it may not be so!

[Matthew 21:33-41](#). *Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country: And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise. But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.*

You see at once how this parable related to the leaders of the Jewish people. From generation to generation, they scorned the prophets of God, persecuted them, and put them to death; and when our Lord himself appeared, though his glory might easily have been seen by them, yet they cast him out from among them, and put him to death. Yet, beloved friends, we must never regard the Scriptures as referring only to strangers and people of past ages; we must also look to see what bearing they have upon ourselves. The rejection of God’s prophets is the sin of our common humanity; and the murder of the Son of God was the crime, not of the Jews only, ‘but of the whole human race. We, too, have a share in it, for we have rejected the Son of the Highest. “But we were not there,” say you. No; and yet we may have repeated that terrible tragedy in our own lives. God has sent you many messengers; and if you remain, at this moment, unconverted, you have not treated them well, else you would have yielded your heart to God. Some of them you have rejected by your neglect, and others have been the subject of your ridicule and contempt. Against some, you have striven violently, for your own conscience has been touched, and you have had to

do violence to conscience in order to reject their message. Last of all, the Son of God himself has come to you in the preaching of the gospel. You have heard of his death, and of his atoning sacrifice, but you have rejected them; and, in acting thus, you have done, as far as you could, the same as they did who crucified the Saviour. You still refuse to have him for your Saviour; you disown him as your King; you strive against his righteous sway. You tell me that you do not. Well, then, you have yielded to him, and you are saved. But if that be not the case, you still remain such an adversary of God that you reject his Son. Take care lest of you also that prophecy should become true, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.”

[Matthew 21:42](#). *Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures,—*

What a question this was for our Lord to put to men who professed to have the whole of the Scriptures at their fingers ends, and to be the only qualified interpreters of them: “Did ye never read in the Scriptures,—

[Matthew 21:42-43](#). *The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head, of the corner: this is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.*

And, at this day, we Gentiles enjoy the privileges of the gospel, while poor Israel is scattered to the four winds of heaven. But he, that spared not the natural olive, will not spare the engrafted branches if we are found unfruitful. God takes the gospel away from one nation, and gives it to another; but it is not accepted by the other one, and if he has not all the glory of it ascribed to him, he will take it away from that nation, too. He may deal there with us; if England becomes and remains a drunken nation, a cruel nation, a proud nation, an unbelieving nation, a superstitious nation, and brings forth the evil fruits of the vine of Sodom, we may not expect that God will always continue his kingdom amongst us. He will say to us, as Christ said to these chief priests and elders, “The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.”

[Matthew 21:44](#). *And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken:*

If you stumble over Christ, the chief Corner-stone of God’s building, you will be broken in pieces. If you reject him, you shall suffer serious loss.

[Matthew 21:44](#). *But on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.*

If you arouse the wrath of Christ, and the Rock of ages falls on you,—a huge cliff comes toppling from its lofty height upon the traveler, and crushes him past all recognition,—you will be ground to powder.

[Matthew 21:45-46](#). *And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them. But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet.*

Unhappy people, to reject him who alone could bless them, and yet to stand in fear of him whom they tried to despise! Let it not be so with any of us, but may Jesus become our Teacher, and our Friend, and our Saviour for ever, by his abounding grace! Amen.

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CHAPTER 22

Verses 1-14

[Matthew 22:1-3](#). *And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come.*

Observe, that it was a king who made this wedding feast; therefore, to refuse to come to it when the command implied great honour to those who were bidden, was as distinct an insult as could very well be perpetrated against both the king and his son. “They would not come.” Had the one who invited them been only an ordinary person, it might not have been their duty to come, and they might even have been justified in their refusal. But this was a king, who sent his servants to summon the guests to the marriage of his son; and I bid you to take notice that the gospel marriage feast, to which you are invited, is the feast, not only of a king, but of the King of kings, your Creator, and your God; and in refusing to come, in obedience to his command, you commit an overt act of rebellion against his Divine Majesty. The king “sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come.” They were bidden, yet they would not come; from whence I gather that those who think the invitations of the

gospel are to be restricted to certain characters, because they say it is useless to invite others, “do err, not knowing the Scriptures.” What have we to do with the apparent uselessness of what we are commanded to do? It is our duty to give the invitation according as our King directs us; but it is not our business to decide whether that invitation will be accepted or rejected. In this case, we know what happened: “They would not come.”

[Matthew 22:4](#). *Again he sent forth other servants,-*

Perhaps, in the kindness of his heart, he thought that the first servants, whom he sent, were somewhat offensive in their manner; and that, therefore, the guests would not come; just as it may be that some of you will never receive the gospel from one minister, for you have a prejudice against his way of putting it; so the Lord may, in the greatness of his mercy, send you his Word by the mouth of another. I am quite sure that any of us, who are the King’s servants, would be very glad for somebody else to take our place if he could succeed better with you than we can. This king, in his wisdom and kindness, “sent forth other servants,”-

[Matthew 22:4-6](#). *Saying, Tell them, which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them.*

The great majority of those who heard the invitation, “made light of it;” and still is this the habit of the hulk of mankind, and even of many whom I am now addressing. Any day will do for you to think about Christ, so you seem to fancy. He may have your leavings; when it shall come to the last, you think that you can send for a minister to come and pray with you, and that then all will be well. You make light of it,-you make light of present mercy, of immediate reconciliation to God, you make light of the love and grace of God, and of the precious blood of Jesus. Take heed what ye are doing, for the great King in heaven regards this as high treason against himself, he looks upon it as a presumptuous attempt to lower his infinite majesty in the eyes of men. When a king has killed his oxen and fatlings for his son’s wedding feast, and there is nobody to eat the provision, then is it a dishonour to him; and if it were possible for the gospel provisions to be universally rejected, God would be dishonoured. There are some, however, who go further than merely making light of the invitation; “the remnant” who would, if they could, maltreat and slay the messengers of mercy; and,

as they cannot, nowadays, kill their bodies, they try to slay their reputations. Any slander which they have heard, or any lie which they have invented, will do to tell in order to make the minister of Christ of less repute than he deserves to be.

[Matthew 22:7-10](#). *But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests.*

This is the glorious rule of the gospel still. Those who were first bidden to the great wedding feast were the Jews; they would not come, and therefore, Jerusalem was destroyed. Now the gospel is preached to all nations, and all sorts of people in all nations; yet the same sinful rejection of the invitation is constantly being repeated. You, who hear the gospel from Sunday to Sunday, are bidden by it to come to the great supper; and, as some of you will not come, God, in his infinite mercy, is sending his gospel to the poorest and the vilest of mankind. Many of them do come, and thus the Lord provokes you to jealousy by a people who were not a people; and astonishes you as you find that many come from the East, and from the West, and from the North, and from the South, and sit down in the kingdom of God, while you, who reckoned yourselves to be the children of the kingdom, because you have long been privileged to hear the gospel, shall be cast out. The king's servants "gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good." The best gathering into the visible church is sure to be a mixture; there will be some coming into it who should not be there.

[Matthew 22:11](#). *And when the king came in to see the guests,*

For whom he had provided sumptuous garments suitable for the wedding,-for, as we provide what is supposed to be appropriate array for mourners at a funeral, so, in the East, they provide, on a much larger scale, suitable apparel for wedding guests.

[Matthew 22:11](#). *He saw there a man, which had not on a wedding garment:*

He might have had one, for it was provided. The fact that he had not one was as great an insult to the king as a refusal of his invitation would have been. He was not bound to provide himself with a wedding garment; he

could not have done it, for he was probably one of those swept up out of the highways. But there it hung, and he was requested to put it on; but he refused, and he had the impertinence to sit there without the indispensable wedding garment. If he could not show his contempt for the king in one way, he would do so in another; and he dared, in the midst of the wedding feasters, to defy the authority of the king, and to refuse to do honour to the newly-married prince.

[Matthew 22:12](#). *And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless.*

He could give no reply; the king's presence awed him into silence.

[Matthew 22:13](#). *Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

You may manage to get into the church even though you are not converted; but if you are not trusting in Christ, you are not saved, and your false profession will only make your destruction the more terrible. Woe unto us unless we are found wearing the righteousness of Christ, - unless our lives are made holy by the gracious influence of his blessed Spirit! These are the wedding garments which we are to wear. If we have them not, our presence at the festival will not avail us in the great testing time that is coming.

[Matthew 22:14](#). *For many are called, but few are chosen.*

All who hear the gospel are called, but the call does not come with equal power to every heart. And with some, the power with which it comes is not that which saves; it only convinces the intellect, so that an outward homage is paid to the Word, and the inward obedience of the soul is not rendered to the Lord. God grant that each of us may have on the wedding garment when the King comes in to see the guests!

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CHAPTER 23

Verses 29-39

[Matthew 23:29-31](#). *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would*

not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets.

They talk in the same conceited manner, and they claim self-righteousness, as their fathers did; and if their ancestors killed the prophets, these men garnish their sepulchers, and so are sharers in their forefathers' deeds. How often it happens that men say they would not have done such crimes as others have committed, whereas they do not know the vileness of their own hearts. If they were under the same conditions as others, they would act in the same way. It would have been a better sign if the scribes and Pharisees had lamented before God that they themselves were not treating his prophets as they ought to be treated. How very faithful was our Master! He was very tender in spirit; but still, he spoke very severely. The old proverb says that "a good surgeon often cuts deeply," and so it was with the Lord Jesus Christ. He did not film the evil matter over, he lanced the wound. He is not the most loving who speaks the smoothest words; true love often compels an honest man to say that which pains him far more than it affects his callous hearers.

[Matthew 23:32-33](#). *Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?*

This is Christ's utterance, let me remind you. Our modern preachers would not talk like this, even to scribes and Pharisees who were crucifying Christ afresh, and putting Him to an open flame. They would search the dictionary through to find very smooth and pretty words to say to Christ's enemies. We are not of their way of thinking and speaking, nor shall there be while we desire to follow in the footsteps of our Lord.

[Matthew 23:34](#). *Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city:*

Which they did; the servants of Christ were thus worried and harried all over the land.

[Matthew 23:35-36](#). *That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.*

So they did. The destruction of Jerusalem was more terrible than anything that the world has ever witnessed, either before or since. There must have been nearly a million and a quarter of people killed during that terrible siege, and even Titus, when he saw the awful carnage, said, "What must be the folly of this people that they drive me to such work as this? Surely, the hand of an avenging God must be in it." Truly, the blood of the martyrs slain in Jerusalem was amply avenged when the whole city became a veritable Aceldama, or field of blood.

[Matthew 23:37-38](#). *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.*

What a picture of pity and disappointed love the king's face must have presented when, with flowing tears, he spoke these words! It was the utterance of the righteous Judge, choked with emotion. Jerusalem was too far gone to be rescued from its self-sought doom, and its guilt was about to culminate in the death of the Son of God.

[Matthew 23:39](#). *For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.*

This exposition consisted of readings from [Matthew 23:29-39](#); and [Matthew 24:1-21](#).

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CHAPTER 24

Verses 1-21

[Matthew 24:1](#). *And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple.*

Ah, me! the rejected king took but slight interest in the temple of which his disciples thought so much. To them the appearance was glorious; but to their Lord it was a sad sight. His Father's house, which ought to have been a house of prayer for all nations, had become a den of thieves, and soon would be utterly destroyed.

[Matthew 24:2](#). *And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.*

And it was so. Josephus tells us that Titus at first tried to save the temple, even after it was set on fire, but his efforts were of no avail; and at last he gave orders that the whole city and temple should be leveled, except a small portion reserved for the garrison. Yet the stones of the temple were such as men very seldom see, so exceedingly great; they looked as if, once in their place, they would stand there throughout eternity, but all are gone, according to our Lord's prophecy.

[Matthew 24:3](#). *And as he sat upon the mount of Olives,*

The little procession continued ascending the Mount of Olives, until Jesus reached a resting-place from which he could see the temple.

[Matthew 24:3](#). *The disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?*

There are here two distinct questions, perhaps three. The disciples enquired first about the time of the destruction of the temple, and then about the sign of Christ's coming, and of "the consummation of the age", as it is in the margin of the Revised Version. The answers of Jesus contained much that was mysterious, and that could only be fully understood as that which he foretold actually occurred. He told his disciples some things which related to the siege of Jerusalem, some which concerned his Second Advent, and some which would immediately precede "the end of the world." When we have clearer light, we may possibly perceive that all our Saviour's predictions on this memorable occasion had some connection with all three of these great events.

[Matthew 24:4](#). *And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you.*

Jesus was always practical. The most important thing for his disciples was not that they might know when "these things" would be, but that they might be preserved from the peculiar evils of the time.

[Matthew 24:5](#). *For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.*

And they did. A large number of impostors came forward before the destruction of Jerusalem, giving out that they were Messiahs.

[Matthew 24:6](#). *And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars:*

And they did. The armies of Rome were soon after this on their way to the doomed city.

[Matthew 24:6-8](#). *See that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquake, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.*

One would think that there was sorrow enough in famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places; but our Lord said that all these were only “the beginning of sorrows” — the first birth-pangs of the travail that must precede his coming, either to Jerusalem or to the whole world.

[Matthew 24:9-14](#). *Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name’s sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.*

But as for this destruction of Jerusalem, the Saviour gave them clear warning.

[Matthew 24:15-16](#). *When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains:*

As soon as Christ’s disciples saw “the abomination of desolation”, that is, the Roman ensigns, with their idolatrous emblems, stand in the holy place, they knew that the time for them to escape had arrived, and they did “flee into the mountains.” You will say to me, perhaps, “but there were Romans there before.” Yes, the Romans were in possession, but the eagles and other idolatrous symbols were never exhibited in Jerusalem. The Romans were often very lenient to the different people whom they subdued, and these symbols were kept out of sight until the last war came. Then wherever the Jews and Christians looked, they could see those various images of Caesar and of the Roman state which were worshipped by the soldiery, and then were the faithful to flee to the mountains. It is a remarkable fact that no Christians perished in the siege of Jerusalem; the followers of Christ fled away to the mountain city of Pella, in Perea, where

they were preserved from the general destruction which overthrew the unbelieving Jews.

[Matthew 24:17-18](#). *Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.*

They were to flee in all haste the moment they saw the Roman standards,

[Matthew 24:19-21](#). *And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: for then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.*

You and I would have believed that all this came true without any confirmation from outside history, but it was very remarkable that God should raise up the Jew Josephus, and put it into his mind to write a record of the siege of Jerusalem, which curdles the blood of everyone who reads it, and exactly bears out the statement of the Master that there was to be “great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world, no, nor ever shall be.”

This exposition consisted of readings from [Matthew 23:29-39](#); and [Matthew 24:1-21](#).

Verses 1-28

[Matthew 24:1-2](#). *And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciple came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.*

The King, having finished his first discourse in the temple, left it, never to return: “Jesus went out, and departed from the temple.” His ministry there was ended. As his disciples moved away with him towards the mount of Olives, they called his attention to the great stones of which the temple was constructed, and the costly adornments of the beautiful building. To them the appearance was glorious; but to their Lord it was a sad sight. His Father’s house, which ought to have been a house of prayer for all nations, had become a den of thieves, and soon would be utterly destroyed: Jesus said unto them, “See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.” Josephus tells us that Titus at first tried to save the temple, even

after it was set on fire, but his efforts were of no avail; and at last he gave orders that the whole city and temple should be leveled, except a small portion reserved for the garrison. This was so thoroughly done that the historian says that there was but nothing to make those that came thither believe it had ever been inhabited. We sometimes delight in the temporal prosperity of the Church as if it were something that must certainly endure; but all that is external will pass away or be destroyed. Let us only reckon that to be substantial which comes from God, and is God's work. The things which are seen are temporal.

[Matthew 24:3](#). *And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?*

The little procession continued ascending the mount of Olives until Jesus reached a resting-place from which he could see the temple ([Mark 13:3](#)). There he sat down, and the disciples came unto him privately, saying, "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" These are the questions that have been asked in every age since our Saviour's day. There are here two distinct questions, perhaps three. The disciples enquired first about the time of the destruction of the temple, and then about the sign of Christ's coming, and of "the consummation of the age" (R.V. margin). The answers of Jesus contained much that was mysterious, and that could only be fully understood as that which he foretold actually occurred. He told his disciples some things which related to the siege of Jerusalem, some which concerned his Second Advent, and some which would immediately precede "the end of the world." When we have clearer light, we may possibly perceive that all our Saviour's predictions on this memorable occasion had some connection with all three of these great events.

[Matthew 24:4-6](#). *And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.*

Jesus was always practical. The most important thing for his disciples was not that they might know when "these things" would be, but that they might be preserved from the peculiar evils of the time. Therefore, Jesus answered and said unto them, "Take heed that no man deceive you. For

many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.” They were to beware lest any of the pretended Messiahs should lead them astray, as they would pervert many others. A large number of impostors, came forward before the destruction of Jerusalem, giving out that they were the anointed of God, almost every page of history is blotted with the names of such deceivers; and in our own day we have seen some come in Christ’s name, saying that they are Christ’s. Such men seduce many; but they who heed their Lord’s warning will not be deluded by them. Our Saviour’s words, “Ye shall hear of wars, and rumors of wars,” might be applied to almost any period of the world’s history. Earth has seldom had a long spell of quiet, there have almost always been both the realities of war, and the rumors of war. There were many such ere Jerusalem was overthrown; there have been many such ever since; and there will be many such until that glorious period when “nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.” “See that ye be not troubled” is a timely message for the disciples of Christ in every age. “For all these things must come to pass,” therefore let us not be surprised or alarmed at them, “but the end is not yet.” The destruction of Jerusalem was the beginning of the end, the great type and anticipation of all that will take place when Christ shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. It was an end; but not the end: “the end is not yet.”

[Matthew 24:7-8](#). *For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famine, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places, All these are the beginning of sorrows.*

One would think that there was sorrow enough in “famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places”, but our Lord said that “all these” were only “the beginning of sorrows”, the first birth-pangs of the travail that must precede his coming, either to Jerusalem, or to the whole world. If famines, pestilences, and earthquakes are only “the beginning of sorrows”, what may we not expect the end to be? This prophecy ought both to warn the disciples of Christ what they may expect, and wean them from the world where all these and greater sorrows are to be experienced.

[Matthew 24:9](#). *Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name’s sake.*

Our Lord not only foretold the general trial that would come upon the Jews, and upon the world; but also the special persecution which would be the portion of his chosen followers: “Then shall they deliver you up to be

afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake." The New Testament gives abundant proof of the fulfillment of these words. Even in Paul's day, "this sect" was "everywhere spoken against." Since then, has there been any land unstained by the blood of the martyrs? Wherever Christ's gospel has been preached, men have risen up in arms against the messengers of mercy, and afflicted and killed them wherever they could.

[Matthew 24:10](#). *And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.*

This would be a bitter trial for the followers of Christ, yet this they have always had to endure. Persecution would reveal the traitors within the Church as well as the enemies without. In the midst of the chosen ones there would be found successors of Judas, who would be willing to betray the disciples as he betrayed his Lord. Saddest of all is the betrayal of good men by their own relatives; but even this they have many of them had to bear for Christ's sake.

[Matthew 24:11-12](#). *And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.*

What could not be accomplished by persecutors outside the Church, and traitors inside, would be attempted by teachers of heresy: "Many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many." They have risen in all ages; in these modern times they have risen in clouds, till the air is thick with them, as with an army of devouring locusts. These are the men who invent new doctrines, and who seem to think that the religion of Jesus Christ is something that a man may twist into any form and shape that he pleased. Alas that such teachers should have any disciples! It is doubly sad that they should be able to lead astray "many." Yet, when it so happens, let us remember that the King said that it would be so. Is it any wonder that, where such "iniquity abounds" and such lawlessness is multiplied, "the love of many shall wax cold"? If the teachers deceive the people, and give them "another gospel which is not another", it is no marvel that there is a lack of love and zeal. The wonder is that there is any love and zeal left after they have been subjected to such a chilling and killing process as that adopted by the advocates of the modern "destructive criticism." Verily, it is rightly named "destructive", for it destroys almost everything that is worth preserving.

[Matthew 24:13](#). *But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall he saved.*

Again our Saviour reminded his disciples of the personal responsibility of each one of them in such a time of trial and testing as they were about to pass through. He would have them remember that it is not the man who starts in the race, but the one who runs to the goal, who wins the prize: “He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.” If this doctrine were not supplemented by another, there would be but little good tidings for poor, tempted, tried and struggling saints in such words as these. Who among us would persevere in running the heavenly race if God did not preserve us from falling, and give us persevering grace? But, blessed be his name, “the righteous shall hold on his way.” “He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”

[Matthew 24:14](#). *And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.*

The world is to the Church like a scaffold to a building. When the Church is built, the scaffold will be taken down; the world must remain until the last elect one is saved: “Then shall the end come.” Before Jerusalem was destroyed, “this gospel of the kingdom” was probably “preached in all the world” so far as it was then known, but there is to be a fuller proclamation of it “for a witness unto all nations” before the great consummation of all things: “then shall the end come,” and the King shall sit upon the throne of his glory, and decide the eternal destiny of the whole human race.

[Matthew 24:15-18](#). *When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet stand in the holy place, (whose readeth, let him understand;) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.*

This portion of our Saviour’s words appears to relate solely to the destruction of Jerusalem. As soon as Christ’s disciples saw “the abomination of desolation”, that is, the Roman ensigns, with their idolatrous emblems, “stand in the holy place”, they knew that the time for them to escape had arrived; and they did “flee into the mountains.” The Christians in Jerusalem and the surrounding towns and villages, “in Judaea”, availed themselves of the first opportunity for eluding the Roman armies, and fled

to the mountain city of Pella, in Perea, where they were preserved from the general destruction which overthrew the Jews. There was no time to spare before the final investment of the guilty city, the man “on the house-top” could “not come down to take anything out of his house”, and the man “in the field” could not “return back to take his clothes.” They must flee to the mountains in the greatest haste the moment that they saw “Jerusalem compassed with armies” ([Luke 21:20](#)).

[Matthew 24:19-21](#). *And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.*

It must have been a peculiarly trying time for the women who had to flee from their homes just when they needed quiet and rest. How thoughtful and tender was our pitiful Saviour in thus sympathizing with suffering mothers in their hour of need! “Flight . . . in the winter” or “on the sabbath day” would have been attended with special difficulties; so the disciples were exhorted to “pray” that come other time might be available. The Lord knew exactly when they would be able to escape, yet he bade them pray that their flight might not be in the winter, nor on the Sabbath-day. The wise men of the present day would have said that prayer was useless under such conditions, not so the great Teacher and Example of his praying people; he taught that such a season was the very time for special supplication. The reason for this injunction was thus stated by the Saviour: “For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.” Read the record written by Josephus of the destruction of Jerusalem, and see how truly our Lord’s words were fulfilled. The Jews impiously said, concerning the death of Christ, “His blood be on us, and on our children.” Never did any other people invoke such an awful curse upon themselves, and upon no other nation did such a judgment ever fall. We read of Jews crucified till there was no more wood for making crosses; of thousands of the people slaying one another in their fierce faction fights within the city; of so many of them being sold for slaves that they became a drug in the market, and all but valueless, and of the fearful carnage when the Romans at length entered the doomed capital and the blood-curdling story exactly bears out the Saviour’s statement uttered nearly forty years before the terrible events occurred.

[Matthew 24:22](#). *And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.*

These were the words of the King as well as of the Prophet, and as such, they were both authentic and authoritative. Jesus spoke of what “should be”, not only as the Seer who was able to gaze into the future, but as the Sovereign Disposer of all events. He knew what a fiery trial awaited the unbelieving nation, and that “except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved.” If the horrors of the siege were to continue Long, the whole race of the Jews would be destroyed. The King had the power to cut short the evil days, and he explained his reason for using that power: “For the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.” Those who had been hated and persecuted by their own countrymen became the means of preserving them from absolute annihilation. Thus has it often been since those days, and for the sake of his elect the Lord has withheld many judgments, and shortened others. The ungodly owe to the godly more than they know, or would care to own.

[Matthew 24:23-26](#). *Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold he is in the desert; go not forth behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not.*

It is a grand thing to have such faith in Christ that you have none to spare for imposters. It is important not to distribute your faith too widely. Those who believe in a little of everything will, in the end, believe nothing of anything. If you exercise full faith in that which is sure and steadfast, “false Christs and false prophets” will not be able to make you their dupes. In one respect, the modern teachers of heresy are more successful than their Judaeian prototypes, for they do actually “deceive the very elect”, even though they cannot “shew great signs and wonders.” One of the saddest signs of the times in which we live is the ease with which “the very elect” are deceived by the smooth-tongued “false Christs and false prophets” who abound in our midst. Yet our Saviour expressly forewarned his followers against them: “Behold, I have told you before.” Forewarned is forearmed. Let it be so in our case. Our Saviour's expressive command may be fitly applied to the whole system of “modern thought” which is contrary to the inspired Word of God: “Believe it not.”

[Matthew 24:27](#). *For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.*

When HE comes, we shall know who he is, and why he has come. There will be no longer any mystery or secret about “the coming of the Son of man.” There will be no need to ad: any questions then; no one will make a mistake about his appearing when it actually takes place. “Every eye shall see him.” Christ’s coming will be sudden, startling, universally visible, and terrifying to the ungodly:” as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west.” His first coming to judgment at the destruction of Jerusalem had terrors about it that till then had never been realized on the earth; his last coming will be more dreadful still.

[Matthew 24:28](#). *For whersoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together.*

Judaism had become a “carcass”, dead and corrupt; fit prey for the cultures or carrion-kites of Rome. By-and-by, there will arrive another day, when there will be a dead church in a dead world, and “the eagles” of divine judgment “will be gathered together” to tear in pieces those whom there shall be none to deliver. The birds of prey gather wherever dead bodies are to be found; and the judgments of Christ will be poured out when the body politic or religious becomes unbearably corrupt.

Verses 42-51

[Matthew 24:42](#). *Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.*

That he will come, is certain. That his coming may be at any moment, is equally sure; and, therefore, we ought to be always ready for his appearing.

The Lord mate us to be so!

[Matthew 24:43-44](#). *But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.*

Perhaps you can imagine how eagerly the householder watches when he expects thieves. Every little sound alarms him. He thinks he hears someone at the door; then he fancies it is someone at the window; but he is on the alert, with eye and ear and his whole being wide awake. So ought we to be, with regard to the coming of the Lord, as watchful as if we knew that Christ would come tonight; we do not know that he will come so soon, yet it may be so, “for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.”

[Matthew 24:45-46](#). *Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.*

Doing whatever the Master has appointed him to do; if he be a minister, preaching the truth with all his heart; if he be a teacher, endeavoring to feel the minds of the young with sound doctrine; whatever may be his calling, endeavoring to fulfill it to the great Taskmaster's satisfaction, as if he should suddenly break in upon the work, and loots at it there and then, and judge his servant by it. This is the way to live.

[Matthew 24:47](#). *Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods.*

There are rewards for faithful service; — not of debt, but of grace; — not according to the law, but according to the discipline of the house of God. Oh, that we may be such faithful servants that our Lord may make us rulers over all that he has!

[Matthew 24:48-51](#). *But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; And shall begin to smite his fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that, he is not aware of, And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

He was a servant, you see; so this is a warning, not to the outside world, but to you who are inside the nominal church, and who profess to be servants of God; and it is especially a warning to those of us who are ministers of the gospel. Oh, that we may never begin to smite our fellowservants! Of course, we shall not do it with the fist, but we may do it with the tongue; and may we never be numbered with those who are living for the delights of the flesh! If so, see what must come to us. Our Lord still continued to speak upon the same subject of watchfulness by delivering the very stirring parable of the wise and foolish virgins.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Matthew 24:42-51](#); and [Matthew 25:1-13](#).

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CHAPTER 25

Verses 1-13

[Matthew 25:1-2](#). *Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, And five were foolish.*

What a division this makes in the visible Church of God! Let us hope that we are not to gather from this that as many as half the professors of Christianity at any time are like these foolish virgins; yet our Lord would not have mentioned so high a proportion if there were not a very large admixture of foolish with the wise: “Five of them were wise, and five were foolish.”

[Matthew 25:3](#). *They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them:*

They thought that, if they had the external, it would be quite enough. The secret store of oil, they judged to be unnecessary, because it would be unseen. They would employ one hand in carrying the lamp, but to occupy the other hand by holding the oil-flask seemed to them to be doing too much,— giving themselves up too thoroughly to the work; so they “took their lamps, and took no oil with them.” They might just as well have had no lamps at all.

[Matthew 25:4](#). *But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.*

Oil in their lamps, and oil with their lamps. Lamps are of no use without oil; yet the oil needs the lamp, or else it cannot be rightly used. The light of profession cannot be truly sustained without the oil of grace. Grace, wherever it exists, ought to show itself, as the oil is made to burn by means of the lamp; but it is no use to attempt to make a show unless there is that secret store somewhere by which the external part of religion may be maintained.

[Matthew 25:5](#). *While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.*

Both the wise and the foolish fell into a state which seemed alike in them both. In the case of good men, Christ’s delaying his coming often causes disappointment, weariness, and then lethargy, and even the true Church falls into a deep slumber. In the foolish, the mere professors, this condition goes much further. There being in them no true life, the very name to live becomes abandoned, and before long, they give up even the profession of religion when there is no secret oil of grace to sustain it.

[Matthew 25:6](#). *And at midnight*

When things had come to the worst,—at midnight”— the coldest and darkest hour, when everybody was asleep.

[Matthew 25:6](#). *There was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.*

That was a cry which startled everybody; none of the virgins could sleep when once it was announced that the bridegroom was coming. I wish, dear friends, that we thought more of the great truth of the Second Advent. The oftener it is preached, in due proportion with other truths, the better. We need still to hear that midnight cry, “Go ye out to meet him.”

[Matthew 25:7](#). *Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.*

They could not sleep any longer; they were fairly startled and aroused.

[Matthew 25:8](#). *And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil;*

Ah, me! now they began to value what they had aforesaid despised. They were foolish enough to think that oil was unnecessary; but now they saw that it was the one essential thing, so they cried to the wise virgins, “Give us of your oil.” And hear the dreadful reason: —

[Matthew 25:8](#). *For our lamps are gone out.*

I do not know any more terrible words than those, “Our lamps are gone out.” It is worse to have a lamp that has gone out than never to have had a lamp at all. “‘Our lamps are gone out.’ We once rejoiced in them. We promised ourselves a bright future. We said, ‘All is well for the marriage supper.’ But ‘our lamps are gone out,’ and we have no oil with which to replenish them.” O sirs, may none of us ever have to lift up that mournful cry! On a dying bed, in the extremity of pain, in the depth of human weakness, it is an awful thing to find one’s profession burning low, one’s hope of heaven going out, like the snuff of a candle.

[Matthew 25:9](#). *But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.*

It is no easy matter to go and rouse up the seller of oil when the midnight hour has struck. O you who are putting off repentance to a dying bed, you are foolish virgins indeed! Your folly has reached the utmost height. You will have more than enough to do, when you lie there with the death-sweat cold upon your brow, without then having to seek the grace which you are neglecting to obtain today, but which you will value then.

[Matthew 25:10](#). *And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; —*

While they were going.

[Matthew 25:10-11](#). *And they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.*

Too late, so that they could not enter.

[Matthew 25:12](#). *But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.*

“I never knew you,” says Christ in another place; and this knowledge of his is always bound up with affection. He loves no heart that he knows not in this sense. Those whom he knows, he loves. Will he ever say to me or to you, dear friend, “I know you not”? God grant that he never may have cause to do so I

[Matthew 25:13](#). *Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.*

Verses 14-30

[Matthew 25:14](#). *For the kingdom of heaven is as a man traveling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.*

This parable has to do with you who are professors of Christianity. He “called his own servants,” those who, by their own consent, were numbered amongst his household servitors: “He called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.” Not theirs, but his; and therefore to be used for him. If you are Christ’s servant, your abilities are his, he has lent them to you to be employed for your Lord. “He called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.”

[Matthew 25:15](#). *And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.*

He is gone; our Lord has risen; and we, his servants, are left behind to trade with his goods for his glory.

[Matthew 25:16-18](#). *Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord’s money.*

We are grieved to know that there are persons with five talents, and others with two talents, who do as this man did; but the case is put in this way, so as to reach us all. Since most persons have but one talent, they are

the most often found each one saying, “I have so little ability, I will not do anything. If I had five talents, I might become distinguished; if I had two, I might be very useful; but with one, I need not attempt anything. I am a private person,— a mother, quite obscure, with my little family around me, what can I do?” It is very often a strong temptation from Satan, to those who have but one talent, to make them think that they may, with impunity, hide that one. And then, you see, the argument cuts the other way. If it be wrong to hide one talent, much more wrong is it to hide two, and far worse to dig in the earth, and bury five.

[Matthew 25:19](#). *After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.*

Always remember the reclining. We have heard of one, who went into a house of entertainment, and fed most luxuriously; but, when the landlord brought him the bill, he said, “Oh, I never thought of that!” And there are many who spend their whole lives without ever thinking of the reckoning; yet it must come, and for every hour, for every opportunity, for every ability, for every sin, and for every omission of duty, they must give account. “The lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.”

[Matthew 25:20-21](#). *And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou delivered unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.*

I do not doubt that this man had often reckoned with himself,— for he that never reckons with himself may well be afraid of being called to reckon with his God; — and I expect that he had often grieved to think that he had not turned the five talents into twenty. He must have thought that, to gain only five talents more, was very little; but he found his master was well content with what he had done. Do you think, brother, that all of you who have five talents have gained five talents more? You were richly endowed as a youth; have you increased the ability to serve your God? You see, the parable speaks not so much of what they had done for other people, as of what they had themselves gained, and still had in hand. Have you more grace? Have you more tact? Have you more adaptation to your Master’s service? Are you conscious that it is so? I should not wonder if you are mourning that you are not more useful, and more fit to be used. It is well

that you should mourn in that way; but when your Master comes, I trust that he will say, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.”

[Matthew 25:22-23](#). *He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.*

That is a beautiful reward,— not so much to have a joy of our own as to enter into the joy of our Lord. It is not a servant’s portion that is given to us; it is the Master’s portion shared by his servants. How it ennobles Christian work to feel that it is not simply our work, but work done by the Master through the servant; and the reward shall not so much be our joy as our entrance into our Master’s joy. That is indeed giving to us the best of the best in return for our poor service here.

[Matthew 25:24-25](#). *Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: and I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine.*

“I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth.” See, friends, how fear may often be the mother of presumption. Confidence in God begets holy fear; but unholy fear begets a doubt of God, and leads us to desperate rebellion of unbelief. God save us from such fear!

[Matthew 25:26-27](#). *His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury.*

His lord took him on his own ground, and condemned him out of his own mouth.

[Matthew 25:28-29](#). *Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance:*

He that has faith shall have more faith. He that has a secret taste for heavenly things shall have a greater love for them. He that has some understanding of the truth of God shall get more understanding of it. God gives to those that have; it is equally true that he gives to those who confess that they have not.

[Matthew 25:29](#). *But from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.*

If you want an instance of taking away from a man what he has not got, you may have seen it sometimes in the case of a person without any education or knowledge, who is quite content to remain in that condition. But, on a sudden, he is introduced into learned society; he hears what educated people have to say, and he exclaims, "What a fool I am!" What he thought he had, though he never had it, suddenly goes from him.

[Matthew 25:30](#). *And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

If we give any description of the world to come which is at all terrible, those who reject the Scriptures begin to cry out that we have borrowed it from Dante, or taken it from Milton; but I take leave to say that the most awful and harrowing descriptions of the woes of the lost that ever fell from human lip do not exceed or even equal the language of the loving Christ himself. Listen: "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." He is the true lover of men's souls who does not deceive them. He that paints the miseries of hell as though they were but little is seeking to murder men's souls under the pretense of being their friend. May God give all of you grace to trust in Jesus for yourselves, and then to point others to him, for Christ's sake! Amen.

[MATTHEW CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 26

Verses 6-30

6, 7. *Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, There came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat.*

This is not the woman who anointed Christ's feet with ointment, but another of the holy women who ministered to him. I believe this was Mary, the sister of Lazarus, who came to Jesus, "having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat."

8, 9. *But when his disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste? For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor.*

When you do the best you can do, from the purest motives, and your Lord accepts your service, do not expect that your brethren will approve all your actions. If you do, you will be greatly disappointed. There was never a more beautiful proof of love to Christ than this anointing at Bethany, yet the disciples found fault with it. As they could not object to the thing itself, they objected that there might have been another thing done that would have been better. There is a great deal of that kind of wisdom in the world which can always teach you how you might have done a thing better, but if you wait until you learn that wisdom, you will never do anything for your Lord. If this devoted and enthusiastic woman had waited for the advice of these prudent people, she would neither have sold the ointment, nor poured it out. She did well to take council with her own loving heart, and then to pour the precious oil upon that dear head which was so soon to be crowned with thorns. She thus showed that there was at least one heart in the world that thought nothing was too good for her Lord, and that the best of the best ought to be given to him. May she have many imitators in every age until Jesus comes again!

10. *When Jesus understood it, he said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman?*

She had been very happy in the act, probably it was the happiest hour in all her life when she gave this costly gift to the Lord she loved so well. But a cloud passed over her bright face as the whispered complaints reached her ear. She was evidently a tender-hearted soul, so the Saviour said to the disciples, "Why trouble ye the woman?"

10. *For she hath wrought a good work upon me.*

We cannot do what this woman did; but we can perform good works upon others for Christ's sake; and he will accept them as though they were done unto himself.

11-13. *For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always. For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.*

She probably did not know all that her action meant when she anointed her Lord for his burial. We often do much more than we think we do. The consequences of the simplest action done for Christ may be much greater than we suppose. This woman is preparing Christ's body for his

approaching burial. Little dreams she that it is so, but so it is. Go thou my sister, and do what God bids thee; and it shall be seen that thou hast done far more than thou knowest. Obey the holy impulse within thy spirit, my brother; and thou mayest do ten thousand times more than thou hast ever imagined to be possible. This woman's outburst of affection, this simple-hearted act of love to Christ himself, is one of those things which are to live as long as the gospel lives. The aroma of this loving deed is to abide as long as the world itself endures.

14, 15. *Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, And said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you?*

Out of twelve apostles, one was a Judas Iscariot. Marvel not, therefore, if, among thy friends and kinsfolk, thou hast one who turns against thee, and betrays thee to thine enemies.

15. *And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver.*

The price of a slave, thus they were fulfilling the ancient prophecy: "So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver."

16. *And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him.*

The traitor sold his Master for thirty pieces of dirty silver; yet many have sold Jesus for a less price than Judas received: a smile or a sneer has been sufficient to induce them to betray their Lord.

17, 18. *Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the passover? And he said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples.*

How truly royal was Jesus of Nazareth even in his humility! He had only to send two of his disciples "into the city to such a man," and the guest chamber, furnished and prepared, was at once placed at his disposal. He did not take the room by arbitrary force, as an earthly monarch might have done; but he obtained it by the diviner compulsion of almighty love. Jesus knew something about this man that you and I do not know, so he said to his disciples: Just go and say to him, "The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples." Was he not himself a disciple? I cannot say but this I do know, that the Lord Jesus has a certain number who are willing to help his cause, even though as yet they hardly call themselves his disciples. I should think, however, that after this

man had once had the Master and his disciples in his house, there must have been a blessing left behind, and he would want to become one of that goodly company. It is well, dear friend, that thou art willing to have the prayer-meeting in thy house, it is well that thou wilt stand up on the side of truth, even if thou hast no share in it as yet, for maybe, — and I hope the “maybe” will become a certainty, — thou wilt yet be one of Christ’s disciples.

19. *And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the passover.*

They went to this man, delivered Christ’s message, and he showed them a large upper room, furnished and prepared. If Christ’s disciples always loyally did as Jesus appointed them, they would always speed well on his errands. There are many more people in the world ready to yield to Christ than some of us think. The person sitting or standing by your side is quite unknown to you, but, if you will speak to him about the Saviour, he will probably respond to your word. At any rate, try him, and see if it be not so. Whether standing or sitting, there must be someone here not yet a disciple, who only needs for you to speak a kind word, and the deciding work will be done.

20, 21. *Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve. And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.*

“One of you” — and his eyes would glance round the table as he said it, — “one of you shall betray me.”

22. *And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him Lord, is it I?*

No one said, “Lord, is it Judas?” Perhaps no one of the eleven thought that Judas was base enough to betray the Lord who had given him an honourable place among his apostles. It is certainly a mark of grace that “every one” of the apostles put to their Lord the question, “Is it I?”

23, 24. *And he answered and said, He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me. The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born.*

We learn from our Lord’s words that divine decrees do not deprive a sinful action of its guilt: “The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! “The criminality

of Judas was just as great as though there had been no “determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God” even as it was with those to whom Peter spoke so boldly on the day of Pentecost, when he charged them with the murder of Jesus.

20. *Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said.*

What a chill that answer must have cast over the little band around the table, especially when Judas rose, and started off, to carry out his dreadful purpose of staining his soul with the blood of his Lord!

26-29. *And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat, this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.*

Thus Jesus took the great Nazarite vow never to drink of the fruit of the vine till he should drink it new with His disciples in His Father’s kingdom. O Lord, thou hast pledged us in this cup, and thou wilt return before long, and then what festivals we will hold with thee, what joy we shall have in thee for ever and ever!

30. *And when they had sung an hymn, they went out unto the mount of Olives.*

Was it not truly brave of our dear Lord to sing under such circumstances? He was going forth to his last dread conflict, to Gethsemane, and Gabbatha, and Golgotha; yet he went with a song on His lips. The door opens, they go downstairs, they are in the open-air, that night of the full moon, and they wend their way to the Mount of Olives. Then came that desperate struggle in which the great Captain of our salvation wrestled even to a bloody sweat, and prevailed.

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 147, And [Matthew 26:6-30](#).

Verses 14-35

[Matthew 26:14-16](#). *Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, And said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him.*

It was one of the twelve, who went unto the chief priests, to bargain for the price of his Lord's betrayal. He did not even mention Christ's name in his infamous question, "What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you?" The amount agreed upon, thirty pieces of silver, was the price of a slave; and showed how little value the chief priests set upon Jesus, and also revealed the greed of Judas in selling his Master for so small a sum. Yet many have sold Jesus for a less price than Judas received; a smile or a sneer has been sufficient to induce them to betray their Lord. Let us, who have been redeemed with Christ's precious blood, set high store by him, think much of him, and praise him much. As we remember with shame and sorrow, these thirty pieces of silver, let us never undervalue him, or forget the priceless preciousness of him who was reckoned as worth no more than a slave.

[Matthew 26:17-18](#). *Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the passover? And he said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover at thy house with my disciples.*

How truly royal was Jesus of Nazareth even in his humiliation! He had no home of his own therein he could "keep the Passover" with his disciples; he was soon to be put to a public and shameful death; yet he had only to send two of his disciples "into the city to such a man," and the guest-chamber, furnished and prepared, was at once placed at his disposal. He did not take the room by arbitrary force, as an earthly monarch might have done; but he obtained it by the diviner compulsion of almighty love. Even in his lowest estate, our Lord Jesus had the hearts of all men beneath his control. What power he has now that he reigns in glory!

[Matthew 26:19](#). *And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the Passover.*

If Christ's disciples always loyally did a Jesus appointed them, they would always speed well on his errands. There are many more people in the world ready to yield to Christ than some of us think. If we would only go to them as Peter and John went to this man in Jerusalem, and say to them what "the Master saith", we should find that their hearts would be opened to receive Christ even as this man's house was willingly yielded up at our Lord's request.

[Matthew 26:20-21](#). *Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve. And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.*

Our Lord remained in seclusion until the evening, and then went to the appointed place, and sat down, or rather, reclined at the paschal table, with the twelve. And as they did eat, he said, “Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.” This was a most unpleasant thought to bring to a feast, yet it was most appropriate to the Passover, for God’s commandment to Moses concerning the first paschal lamb was, “With bitter herbs they shalt eat it.” This was a painful reflection for our Lord, and also for his twelve chosen companions: “One of you”, and his eyes would glance round the table so he said it, “One of you shall betray me.”

[Matthew 26:22](#). *And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I?*

That short sentence fell like a bomb-shell among the Saviour’s bodyguard. It startled them; they had all made great professions of affection for him, and, for the most part, those professions were true. And they were exceeding sorrowful: and well they might be. Such a revelation was enough to produce the deepest emotions of sorrow and sadness. It is a beautiful trait in the character of the disciples that they did not suspect one another, but every one of them enquired, almost incredulously, as the form of the question implies “Lord, is it I?” “No one said, “Lord, is it Judas?” “Perhaps no one of the eleven thought that Judas was base enough to betray the Lord who had given him an honourable place among his apostles. We cannot do any good by suspecting our brethren; but we may do great services by suspecting ourselves. Self-suspicion is near akin to humility.

[Matthew 26:23-24](#). *And he answered and said, He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me. The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed ! it had been good for that man if he had not been born.*

A man may get very near to Christ, ay, may dippeth his hand in the same dish with the Saviour, and yet betray him. We may be high in office, and may apparently be very useful, as Judas was; yet we may betray Christ. We learn from our Lord’s words that divine decrees do not deprive a sinful action of its guilt: “The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed.” His criminality is just as great as though there had been no “determinate counsel and

foreknowledge of God.” “It had been good for that man if he had not been born.” The doom of Judas is worse than non-existence. To have consorted with Christ as he had done, and then to deliver him into the hands of his enemies, sealed the traitor’s eternal destiny.

[Matthew 26:25](#). *Then Judas which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said.*

Judas appears to have been the last of the twelve to ask the question, “Is it I?” Those who are the last to suspect themselves are usually those who ought to be the first to exercise self-suspicion. Judas did not address Christ as “Lord,” as the other disciples had done; but called him Rabbi, “Master.” Otherwise his question was like that of his eleven companions; but he received from Christ an answer that was given to no one else: He said unto him, “Thou hast said.” Probably the reply reached his ear alone, and if he had not been a hopeless reprobate, this unmasking of his traitorous design might have driven him to repentance, but there was nothing in his heart to respond to Christ’s voice. He had sold himself to Satan before he sold his Lord.

[Matthew 26:26-28](#). *And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples and said, Take, eat, this is my body. And he took the cup and gave thanks and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.*

The Jewish Passover was made to melt into the Lord’s supper, as the stars of the morning dissolve into the light of the sun. As they were eating, while the paschal supper was proceeding, Jesus instituted the new memorial which is to be observed until he comes again. How simple was the whole ceremony! Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.” Christ could not have meant that the bread was his body, for his body was reclining by the table; but he intended that broken bread to represent his body which was about to be broken on the cross. Then followed the second memorial, the cup, filled with “the fruit of the vine”, of which Christ said, “Drink ye all of it.” There is no trace here of any altar or priest; there is nothing about the elevation or adoration of the host; there is no resemblance between the Lord’s supper and the Romish mass. Let us keep strictly to the letter and spirit of God’s Word in everything; for, if one adds a little, another will add more, and if one alters one point, and another alters another point, there is no telling how

far we shall get from the truth. The disciples had been reminded of their own liability to sin; now their Saviour gives them a personal pledge of the pardon of sin, according to Luke's record of his words, "This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you."

[Matthew 26:29](#). *But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.*

Thus Jesus took the great Nazarite vow never to drink of the fruit of the vine till he should drink it new with his disciples in his Father's kingdom.

He will keep his tryst with all his followers, and they with him shall hold high festival for ever.

[Matthew 26:30](#). *And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.*

Was it not truly brave of our dear Lord to sing under such circumstances? He was going forth to his last dread conflict, to Gethsemane, and Gabbatha and Golgotha; yet he went with a song on his lips. He must have led the singing, for the disciples were too sad to start the hallel with which the paschal feast closed: And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives. Then came that desperate struggle in which the great Captain of our salvation wrestled even to a bloody sweat, and prevailed.

[Matthew 26:31-32](#). *Then said Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me, this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee.*

Observe our Lord's habit of quoting Scripture. He was able to speak words of infallible truth, yet he fell back upon the Inspired Record in the Old Testament. His quotation from Zechariah does not seem to have been really necessary, but it was most appropriate to his prophecy to his disciples: "All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad." Jesus was the Shepherd who was about to be smitten, but he foretold the scattering of the sheep. Even those leaders of the flock that had been first chosen by Christ, and had been most with him, would stumble and fall awe from him on that dread night, but the Shepherd would not loose them, there would be a re-union between him and his sheep: "After I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee." Once again he

would resume, for a little while, the character of their Shepherd-King, and with them he would revisit some of their old haunts in Galilee, ere he ascended to his heavenly home. “I will go before you,” suggests the idea of the good Shepherd leading his flock after the Eastern manner. Happy are his sheep in having such a Leader, and blessed are they in following him whithersoever he goeth.

[Matthew 26:33](#). *Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.*

This was a very presumptuous speech, not only because of the self-confidence it betrayed, but also because it was a flat contradiction of the Master’s declaration. Jesus said, “All ye shall be offended because of me this night,” but Peter thought he knew better than Christ, so he answered, “Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.” No doubt these words were spoken from his heart; but “the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.” Peter must have been amazed, the next morning, as he discovered the deceitfulness and wickedness of his own heart, as manifested in his triple denial of his Lord. He who thinks himself so much stronger than his brethren, is the very man who will prove to be weaker than many of them, as did Peter, not many hours after his boast was uttered.

[Matthew 26:34](#). *Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.*

Jesus now tells his boastful disciple that, before the next morning’s cock-crowing, he will thrice deny his Lord. Not only would he stumble and fall with his fellow-disciples, but he would go beyond them all in his repeated denials of that dear Master whom he professed to love with intense affection than even John possessed. Peter declared that he would remain true to Christ if he were the only; faithful friend left, Jesus foretold that, of all the twelve, only Judas would exceed the boaster in wickedness.

[Matthew 26:35](#). *Peter said unto him, Though I shall die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples.*

Here again Peter contradicts his Master straight to his face. It was a pity that he should have boasted once after his Lord’s plain prophecy that all the disciples would that night be offended; but it was shameful that Peter should repeat his self-confident declaration in the teeth of Christ’s express prediction concerning him. He was not alone in his utterance, for likewise also said all the disciples. They all felt that under no circumstances could

they deny their Lord. We have no record of the denial of Christ by the other ten apostles, although they all forsook him and fled, and thus practically disowned him. Remembering all that they had seen and heard of him, and especially bearing in mind his most recent discourse, the communion in the upper room, and his wondrous intercessory prayer on their behalf, we are not surprised that they felt themselves bound to him for ever. But, alas, notwithstanding their protests, the King's prophecy was completely fulfilled, for that night they were all "offended."

Verses 14-45

[Matthew 26:14-15](#). *Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, and said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver.*

At what a price did the traitor sell our blessed Master! O ye who have been redeemed with his precious blood, set a high value upon him, think much of him, say much in praise of him! Remember these thirty pieces of silver, and never be guilty of despising the Lord of glory, as these chief priests did when they paid for him the price of a slave.

[Matthew 26:16-19](#). *And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him. Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the passover? And he said, go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples. And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the passover.*

See the absolute control which Jesus has over the minds of men. He can have any man's house that we wants, and he knows who will be glad to welcome him. Yet this same Jesus was about to die, and this shows how perfectly voluntary was his sacrifice. He was not forced to stand in our stead, nor was he compelled to suffer except by the constraint of his own great love. All was free, as became the freedom of his grace. Then, shall not our heart's love flow out freely to him? Shall we need to be scourged to obedience? Oh, no, beloved! So let us think what we can voluntarily do in honour of our Divine Lord, who gave his all for us.

[Matthew 26:20-22](#). *Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve. And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. And they were exceeding sorrowful,*

And well might they be sad.

[Matthew 26:22](#). *And began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I?*

What anguish does that question always stir within the heart and mind of every true believer! “Shall I ever betray my Lord and Master? Shall I every deny or forsake him?” God grant that none of us may ever do as Judas did!

[Matthew 26:23](#). *And he answered and said, He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me.*

He who had been entrusted with the charge of the finances of the little band of Christ’s immediate disciples, he who carried the bag, was the one who was about to betray his Lord. Since then, Christ has often been betrayed by those who have been in positions of trust, those who have led the way among the disciples of Christ, those who have, as it were, been so familiar with Christ as to dip their hand with him in the dish.

[Matthew 26:24-25](#). *The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born. Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said.*

Judas seems to have been the last to ask the question, “Master, is it I?” yet he was the guilty one, —the one who had already covenanted with the chief priests to sell his Lord.

[Matthew 26:26-31](#). *And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and give it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom. And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives. Then said Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.*

Observe our blessed Lord’s habit of quoting Scripture. He was able to utter words of infallible truth which had never before been used, ye he constantly quoted from the inspired Scriptures. Those who nowadays cavil at the Word of God, and yet profess to be followers of Christ, find no excuse for their conduct in the example that he has left us, for he even

quoted Scripture sometimes when it might not have seemed to be necessary to do so. Brethren and sisters in Christ, have your Bible first in you hearts, then at your tongue's end, I was going to say at your fingers' end, so that you may always be able to give a good reason, a solid and divinely-authoritative reason, for any statement that you may make.

[Matthew 26:32-33](#). *But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee. Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.*

No doubt Peter said this from his heart, but “the heart is deceitful above all things.” Peter may have thought that he was stronger than his brethren, yet he was the very one who proved to be the weakest of the whole apostolic band. “Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.”

[Matthew 26:34](#). *Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, —*

That is to say, before that period of time which was called the cock-crowing, —

[Matthew 26:34](#). *Thou shalt deny me thrice.*

According to Mark's record, the cock was to crow once before Peter had denied his Lord thrice, and this it did; and when he had give his third denial, it crowed a second time, and then his slumbering conscience was awakened, and “he went out, and wept bitterly.” Some persons, who are well acquainted with the religious ceremonies of the Jews, say that the period called the cock-crowing was the time for the sacrifice of the morning lamb, and that it was about that time that Peter denied his lord.

[Matthew 26:35](#). *Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee.*

It is a great pity that peter said this after he had received so plain a warning from his Master, yet he was not alone in his boasting.

[Matthew 26:35](#). *Likewise also said all the disciples.*

They all felt quite sure that, under no circumstances, could they be so base as to forsake their Lord; and if you think of the washing of their feet by their Lord and Master, the wonderful words of Christ to which they had listened, and that solemn communion service in the large upper room, you may not be surprised that they felt themselves bound to Christ forever, — felt that they could never leave him, nor forsake him; yet they all did so.

[Matthew 26:36-39](#). *Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; tarry ye here, and watch with me. And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.*

Christ had to tread the winepress alone, yet he showed how complete was his humanity by wishing to have a few choice friends near at hand. Yet even the chosen three failed him in his hour of greatest need.

[Matthew 26:40](#). *And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour?*

Peter had constituted himself the spokesman of the apostolic company, so the Master addressed the question to him, though it also applied to his companions: “What, could ye not watch with me one hour?” They had all declared their devotion to him, yet they had fallen asleep while he had bidden them watch.

[Matthew 26:41-45](#). *Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done. And he came and found them asleep again; for their eyes were heavy. And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.*

Verses 17-30

[Matthew 26:17-26](#). *Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the Passover? And he said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover, at thy house with my disciples. And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the Passover. Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve. And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. And they were exceeding*

sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I? And he answered and said, He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me. The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born. Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said. And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it.

So the Jewish Passover melted away into the Lord's Supper. Indeed, so gently did the one dissolve into the other that we scarcely know whether this incident, relating to Judas Iscariot, occurred during the Passover or the Supper. According to one account, it would seem to be one; and according to another account, the other, but, indeed, the one ordinance was almost imperceptibly merged into the other. I want you carefully to notice, as we read this narrative through, whether you can see here any trace of an altar. Look with both your eyes, and see whether you can find any trace of a priest offering a sacrifice. Watch diligently to see whether you can perceive anything about kneeling down, or about the elevation or the adoration of "the host." Why, even the Romish church knows better than to believe in what it practices. Most of you have seen copies of the famous painting by Leonardo da Vinci, himself a Catholic of the old school. How does he picture those who were at the institution of the Lord's Supper? Why, they are all sitting around a table, with the Lord Jesus in their midst. I wonder that they exhibit, and still allow to be in their churches, a picture like that, which, painted by one of their own artists, most effectually condemns their base idolatry, in which a wafer-god is lifted up, to be adored by men, who must be besotted indeed before they can prostitute their intellects so grossly as to commit such an act of sin. What a rebuke to that idolatry is conveyed by this simple statement: "As they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it," —

[Matthew 26:26](#). *And brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said. Take, eat; this is my body.*

The Romanists do not even break the bread. They have a wafer so as to avoid anything like an imitation of the example set by our blessed Lord and Master. He took a piece of the bread which was provided for the paschal feast, — the ordinary unleavened bread, and he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, and said to them, "Take, eat, this is my body." Not, of course, the

literal body, which was there at the table; but this was the emblem of his body about to be broken on the cross on the behalf of all his people.

[Matthew 26:27](#). *And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it;*

“Every one of you, take your own personal share.” This also the Papists have perverted by denying the cup to the laity.

[Matthew 26:28-30](#). *For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom. And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives.*

It was a social feast, somewhat funereal, and tinctured with sadness, for Jesus was about to go from them, to die, still, it was a joyous celebration, closing with a hymn. At the paschal feast, the Jews always sang Psalms 113-118. Probably our Lord sang all these through. At any rate, Christ and his apostles sang a hymn; and I always like to think of him as leading the little company, — going to his death with a song upon his lips, his voice full of melody, and made more sweet than ever by the near approach of Gethsemane and Calvary. I would like always to sing, whenever we come to the communion table, after the fashion in which they sang that night: “When they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.” Now let us read what the apostle Paul writes concerning the Lord’s Supper.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Matthew 26:17-30](#); and [1 Corinthians 11:18-34](#).

Verses 20-30

[Matthew 26:20](#). *Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve.*

Why so many people celebrate the Lord’s supper in the morning, I cannot imagine, unless it be that they desire to do everything contrary to their Lord’s command and example: “When the even was come, he sat down with the twelve.” I do not think there is any binding ordinance making the evening the only time for the observance of this ordinance; but to make the morning the only time is certainly not according to the Word of God.

[Matthew 26:21-22](#). *And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. And they were exceeding sorrowful, —*

There was enough to make them sorrowful in the fact that their Lord had just told them that one of the twelve who were his body-guard, his closest companions, his nearest and dearest friends, would betray him. “They were exceeding sorrowful,” —

[Matthew 26:22](#). *And began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I?*

It shows a beautiful trait in their character that they did not suspect one another, and least of all, I suppose, did they suspect Judas; but each one asked, “Lord, is it I?” It is an admirable way of hearing a sermon to take it home to yourself, especially if there be a rebuke or a caution in it.

[Matthew 26:23-24](#). *And he answered and said, He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me. The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born.*

The doom of the wicked is something far worse than non-existence, or Christ would not have said, concerning Judas Iscariot, “It had been good for that man if he had never been born.” This is especially true of all those who, having for a while consorted with Christ, afterwards deny it and betray him. O brothers and sisters, may all of us be kept from this terrible sin! May none of us ever betray our Master after all the fellowship we have had with him! It would be better to die for him than to deny him; and it would be better never to have been born than to have been in intimate association with him, and then to have betrayed him.

[Matthew 26:23](#). *Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said.*

“It is even so,” With a sorrowful gesture, he made it plain to his sad little circle of friends and followers that he knew all that was going to happen, and that Judas was the man who was going to turn traitor.

[Matthew 26:26](#). *And as they were eating, —*

As they were eating the Passover. The one ordinance gradually melted into the other: “As they were eating,” —

[Matthew 26:26-27](#). *Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it;*

“Each one of you, my disciples, take a draught of this cup.”

[Matthew 26:28](#). *For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.*

They had had gross sin brought prominently to their minds; they had had a personal reminder of their own liability to sin; and now they were to have a personal pledge concerning the pardon of sin: “For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sin.”

[Matthew 26:29](#). *But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.*

Taking, as it were, the great Nazarite vow never to taste of the fruit of the vine “until that day.” He will keep his tryst with us, my brethren; and we shall drink the new vine of his Father’s kingdom with him by-and by; but, until then, he waits.

[Matthew 26:30](#). *And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.*

This exposition consisted of readings from [Matthew 26:20-30](#); And [1 Corinthians 11:20-26](#).

Verses 26-30

We will read, first, Matthew’s account of the institution of the Lord’s supper.

[Matthew 26:26](#). *And as they were eating,*

In the middle of the Paschal Feast our Lord instituted the sacred festival which was ever afterwards to be known as “the Lord’s supper.” The one ordinance was made to melt gradually into the other: “as they were eating.”

[Matthew 26:26](#). *Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take eat; this is my body.*

“This represents my body.” He could not possibly have meant that the bread was his body; for there was his body sitting at the table, whole and entire. They would have been astonished beyond measure if they had understood him literally; but they did not do so, any more than when Christ said, “I am the door,” or “I am the Good Shepherd.”

[Matthew 26:27](#). *And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it;*

“Every one of you.” Was this the Lord’s supper? Yes. What say the Romanists about it? Why, that the people may not drink the cup! Yet our Saviour says to his disciples, “Drink ye all of it.”

[Matthew 26:28](#). *For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.*

They had had sin brought to their minds; they had had a personal reminder of their own liability to sin; now they were to have a perpetual pledge of the pardon of sin, in the cup, which was the emblem of Christ's blood, "shed for many for the remission of sins."

[Matthew 26:29](#). *But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of the fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.*

Jesus took the Nazarite vow to drink no more, to partake no more of the fruit of the vine, till he should meet us again in his Father's kingdom. He has pledged us once for all in that cup, and now he abstains until he meets us again. Thus he looks forward to a glorious meeting; but he bids us take the cup, and thus remember him until he come.

[Matthew 26:30](#). *And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.*

To his last great battle the Champion goes singing, attended by feeble followers, who could not protect him; but who could sing with him. I think he must have led the tune; his disciples were too sorrowful to sing until his clear voice started the Hallelujah Psalms; but they joined him in the holy exercise, for "they" as well as their Lord sang the hymn. When you are about to face a trial, offer a prayer; but, if you can, also sing a hymn. It will show great faith if, before you enter into the burning fiery furnace, you can sing psalms unto the Lord who redeemeth his people. Now let us read Paul's version of this same matter.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Matthew 26:26-30](#); [1 Corinthians 11:20-34](#)

Verses 31-75

The story of Peter's denial of his Master is recorded in all four of the Gospels. There are some differences of expression in each version, so it will not be tautology if we read all four of them; and if we read them attentively, we shall get a clear view of the whole incident.

[Matthew 26:31-33](#). *Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee. Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.*

This was a very presumptuous speech, not only because of the self-confidence which it displayed, but also because it was a flat contradiction of

what the Master had just said “All ye shall be offended because of me this night.” Peter thought he knew better than Christ did, so he said, “Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.”

[Matthew 26:34](#). *Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow,-*

The cock-crowing was a recognized mark of time; it was just before the rising of the sun “This night, before the cock crow,”-

[Matthew 26:34-35](#). *Thou shalt deny me thrice. Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee.*

Here, again, he contradicts his Master straight to his face.

[Matthew 26:35](#). *Likewise also said all the disciples.*

[Matthew 26:57-58](#). *And they that had laid hold on Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled. But Peter followed him afar off unto the high priest’s palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end.*

[Matthew 26:69-75](#). *Now Peter sat without in the palace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee. But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest. And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth. And again he denied with an oath I do not know the man. And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech betrayeth thee. Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crew, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.*

Now let us read Mark’s account, which will specially interest you if you remember that, probably, Mark wrote under the direction of Peter, and, no doubt, received many of his facts from Peter. You will notice how severe is this description of the whole scene; it is just snob an one as the chief actor in it would be sure to give as he recalled his fall and restoration.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Matthew 26:31-35](#); [Matthew 26:57-58](#); [Matthew 26:69-75](#) [Mark 14:53-54](#); [Mark 14:66-72](#) [Luke 1:54-62](#); and [John 18:15-18](#); [John 18:25-27](#).

Verses 36-46

[Matthew 26:36-40](#). *Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray*

yonder. And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt. And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour?

He felt the need of human sympathy in that awful hour; yet he trod the winepress alone.

[Matthew 26:41](#). *Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.*

Admire the tenderness of Jesus in making this apology for his disciples. What he said about them was true: but it is not everybody who would have uttered that gentle truth at such a trying time. Dear friends, make excuses for one another whenever you can; never make them for yourselves, but often make them for others, and especially, when some treat you as you think very untenderly, be the more tender towards them.

[Matthew 26:42-44](#). *He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done. And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy. And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.*

You cannot use much variety of language when your heart is very heavy; you will usually dwell upon just a few words at such a time. Do not blame yourself for doing so; it is natural, and it is right. Even your Lord, the Master of language, “prayed the third time, saying the same words.”

[Matthew 26:45-46](#). *Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me.*

May the Master never have to say this concerning any one of us, for his dear name’s sake! Amen.

This exposition consisted of readings from [John 17:15-26](#); And [Matthew 26:36-46](#).

Verses 57-68

We shall read two or three short portions of God’s Word in order to bring before you the wonderful contrast to which I am about to direct your

thoughts.

[Matthew 26:57](#). *And they that had laid hold on Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled.*

It was night, but these wicked men could sit up for this gruel deed, to judge the Lord of glory, and to put the innocent One to shame. They “led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled.”

[Matthew 26:58](#). *But Peter followed him afar off unto the high priest’s palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end.*

I have heard Peter represented as if he did wrong to follow Christ “afar off.” I think he was the bravest of all the apostles, for scarcely one of them followed Christ at all at that time. Afterwards, John bethought himself, and came into the judgment hall. Peter kept at a distance from his Lord, but he did follow him, and he did go into the high priest’s palace. He “went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end.” Peter was right enough in following Christ; it was afterward, when the temptation came, that he fell so grievously.

[Matthew 26:59-60](#). *Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death; but found none:*

Because they did not agree, they would not hold together. This is the weakness of falsehood, that it contradicts itself. These men felt that they must have some show of truth-likeness even in condemning Christ, and this they could not get at first even from their false witnesses.

[Matthew 26:60-61](#). *Yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses, and said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.*

Brethren, observe, that this was a little twisting of Christ’s words, but that slight wresting made them as different as possible from what Christ had really said. I suppose that, if you want to know how this twisting or wresting is done, any one of our general elections will give you the most wonderful examples of how everything that any man may say can be twisted to mean the very reverse of what he said. If there is one thing in which English people are expert beyond all others, it is in the art of misquoting, misstating, and misrepresenting. As our Lord was wronged in this fashion, nobody need be surprised if the like should happen unto him.

“This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.”

[Matthew 26:62](#). *And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee?*

What was the good of answering? What is ever the good of answering when the only evidence brought against one is palpable and willful misrepresentation? So the Saviour was silent; and thus, he not only proved his wisdom, but he also fulfilled that marvellous prophecy of Isaiah, “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.”

[Matthew 26:63](#). *But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ the Son of God.*

Now came the answer, the good confession that our Lord witnessed before his cruel adversaries.

[Matthew 26:64](#). *Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.*

How that sentence must have come with the vividness of a lightning flash before their faces! What a declaration of power from One who stood there bound before his enemies, apparently helpless, and about to die!

[Matthew 26:65-68](#). *Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy. What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death. Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands, saying, Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee?*

Our Lord had told these mockers that they should one day see him coming in the clouds of heaven. Let us read in the Book of the Revelation concerning that great event.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Matthew 26:57-68](#). [Revelation 6:12-17](#); [Revelation 19:11-16](#); [Revelation 20:11-15](#); [Revelation 21:1](#).

Verses 59-68

[Matthew 26:59-60](#). *Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death; but found*

none:

Neither for love nor money.

[Matthew 26:60](#). *Yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none.*

That is, none that agree; the lie that one man spoke was refuted by the next.

[Matthew 26:61](#). *At last came two false witness, and said this —*

They did not say any other word, as if they did not know any word in any language vile enough for him. “This”; our translators have very properly put in the word fellow.

[Matthew 26:61](#). *Fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.*

He never said anything of the kind; it was a most wicked misrepresents of what he had said. If men wish to find an accusation against us, they can do it without any materials.

[Matthew 26:62-64](#). *And the high priest arose and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee? But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you. Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.*

He binds them over to make their appearance before him when he becomes the judge, and they shall take the place of the criminal.

[Matthew 26:65-66](#). *Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy, What think ye?*

He looks round upon the seventy elders of the people who were sitting there in the great council, and “They answered and said, He is guilty of death:.” Probably Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus were not there; they were the only two friends the Lord had in the Sanhedrim.

[Matthew 26:66-68](#). *They answered and said, He is guilty of death. Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands, Saying, prophesy unto us, thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee?*

This ended the regular ecclesiastical trial of Christ. A little time was spent, before Pilate, the judicial ruler, was ready to see Christ, but soon as

the dawn was come, they dragged him before another tribunal. We shall now turn to Luke 23.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Matthew 26:59-68](#); Luke 23.

[MATTHEW CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 27

Verses 15-54

We are now to read about our Lord before Pontius Pilate.

[Matthew 27:15-30](#). *Now at that feast the governor was wont to release unto the people a prisoner, whom they would. And they had then a notable prisoner, called Barabbas. Therefore when they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ? For he knew that for envy they had delivered him. When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him. But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus. The governor answered and said unto them, Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you? They said, Barabbas. Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified. And the governor said, Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified. When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it. Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children. Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified. Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers. And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head.*

Surely, mockery could have gone no further; we marvel at the boldness and ingenuity of their scorn. Oh, that we were half as earnest in seeking to honour him, — as careful to think of everything that might make our homage perfect. But we, alas! too often fail to give him due honour and glory, even when others are all aflame with zeal to insult him.

[Matthew 27:31](#). *And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him.*

Perhaps they were afraid that he would die from sheer exhaustion and so, with a cruel mercy, they would keep him alive for the infliction of further tortures.

[Matthew 27:32](#). *And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his cross.*

Any one of us might well have wished to have been Simon, yet we need not envy him.

There is a cross for every one who is a follower of the Crucified; may we have grace to carry it after him!

[Matthew 27:33-34](#). *And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull, they gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink.*

He wholly abstained from that which might have lessened his pain. He came to suffer, and he intended to go through with all that he had undertaken. He would do nothing that would blunt the edge of the sacrificial knife. He forbids not the soothing draught to other sufferers who are in pain; but, as for himself, he will not partake of it.

[Matthew 27:35-37](#). *And they crucified him, and parted his garment, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots. And sitting down they watched him there, and set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.*

And so he is, and so he shall be, — King of the Jews even on that cross, and never so royal as when he had surrendered everything for love of those whom he came to redeem.

[Matthew 27:38-43](#). *Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left. And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, and saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down*

from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others, himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God.

What pain this taunt must have caused to the Saviour! Because he is so pure, and never yields to temptation, we are very apt to forget that temptation was really temptation even to him, and that it grieved his pure and holy Soul thus to be tempted to turn aside from the path of perfect trust in his Father, and complete obedience to him. No doubt the pain of temptation is in inverse ratio to our willingness to yield to it. When we yield to temptation, we feel a pleasure in it; but when we are horrified at it, and start back from it, then we feel the pain of it. Oh, for a mind and heart, so perfectly subject to the will of God, that we should feel such a temptation as this to be the very agony of grief to us, as it was to our Lord!

[Matthew 27:44](#). *The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth.*

Nobody seemed to look upon him with any desire to help him, but even the lowest of the low would contribute their portion of mockery to increase his misery.

[Matthew 27:45-54](#). *Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calleth for Elias. And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink. The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him. Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost, and, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many. Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.*

John gives us some details of our Lord before Pilate which Matthew does not mention.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Matthew 27:15-54](#); and [John 18:28-38](#).

Verses 22-50

Our Lord was brought before the Roman governor Pilate. He was anxious to let Jesus go; but he was a weak-minded man, easily swayed by the noisy cry of the people, prompted by the chief priests and elders.

[Matthew 27:22-23](#). *Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified. And the governor said, Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified.*

A blind, unreasoning hate had taken possession of the people. They gave no answer to Pilate's wondering enquiry, "Why, what evil hath he done?" for he had done nothing amiss; they only repeated the brutal demand, "Let him be crucified! Let him be crucified!" The world's hatred of Christ is shown in similar fashion today. He has done no evil, no one has suffered harm at his hands, all unite to pronounce him innocent; and yet they practically say, "Away with him! Crucify him!"

[Matthew 27:24](#). *When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it.*

Ah, Pilate, you cannot rid yourself of responsibility by that farce! He who has power to prevent a wrong is guilty of the act if he permits others to do it, even though he does not actually commit it himself. If you are placed in positions of power and responsibility, do not dream that you can escape from guilt by merely allowing other people to do what you would not do yourself.

[Matthew 27:25](#). *Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children.*

All the people willingly took upon themselves the guilt of the murder of our dear Lord: "His blood be on us, and on our children." This fearful imprecation must have been remembered by many when the soldiers of Titus spared neither age nor sex, and the Jewish capital became the veritable Aceldama, the field of blood.

[Matthew 27:26](#). *Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.*

Why scourge him before delivering him up to be crucified? Surely this was a superfluity of cruelty. The Roman scourging was something which I

scarcely care to describe, one of the most terrible punishments to which anyone could be subjected; yet Pilate first scourged Jesus, and then gave him up to die by crucifixion.

[Matthew 27:27-28](#). *Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers. And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe.*

Some old soldier's coat, that they found lying about, they cast upon Christ in imitation of the royal robes of Caesar or Herod.

[Matthew 27:29-31](#). *And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head. And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him.*

By that fact, though they did not intend it, our Lord was recognized in the street as the same person who had been taken into the Praetorium by the soldiers. Had Jesus been brought forth in the scarlet robe, persons looking at him might not have known him to be the same man who wore the garment woven from the top throughout; but in his own seamless raiment, they readily recognized the Nazarene.

[Matthew 27:32](#). *And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his cross.*

I wonder if he was a black man. There was a Simon in the early Church; and it certainly was the lot of the Ethiopian to bear the cross for many and many an age. This Simon was a stranger, anyhow, and a foreigner; truly honoured was he to be compelled to bear the cross after Christ.

[Matthew 27:33](#). *And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull,*

From its shape. There appears to be to this day a hill still in the form of a human skull outside the gate of Jerusalem. When they came to that common place of execution, the Tyburn or Old Bailey of the city,

[Matthew 27:34](#). *They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink.*

A stupefying draught was given to the condemned that is the only mercy that there was about the whole thing. The Romans did give to the crucified a draught of myrrh to take away something of the agony of crucifixion; but our Lord came not to be stupefied, he came to suffer, therefore he would not

take anything that would at all impair his faculties. He drank even to the dregs the bitter cup of grief and woe.

[Matthew 27:35](#). *And they crucified him,*

Horrible scene, to see those blessed hands and feet pierced with nails, and fastened to the cross!

[Matthew 27:35](#). *And parted his garments, casting lots:*

Rattling the dice-box at the foot of the cross! Gambling is the most hardening of all vices. I believe that crimes have been committed by persons, under the influence of gambling, which never could have been committed by them in any other condition of mind: "They parted his garments, casting lots." See here, ye gamblers! With Christ's blood bespattering them, these soldiers dared still to raffle for his robe.

[Matthew 27:35-36](#). *That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots. And sitting down they watched him there;*

His enemies gloating their cruel eyes with the sight of his sufferings; his friends with many tears watching his amazing griefs. It is for us, tonight, with humble faith and grateful love, to mark the incidents connected with his painful death.

[Matthew 27:37-38](#). *And set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS. Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left.*

Giving him the place of honour, which means in this case the place of dishonour. He was the apex of that terrible triangle.

[Matthew 27:39-40](#). *And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, and saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.*

This is the cry of the Socinians today, "Come down from the cross. Give up the atoning sacrifice, and we will be Christians." But, by rejecting his vicarious atonement, they practically un-Christ the Christ, as those mockers at Golgotha did.

[Matthew 27:41-42](#). *Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him.*

Just so. Get rid of a crucified Saviour, then they will believe in Him. Atonement, substitution, vicarious sacrifice, this staggers them. They will

have Christ if they can have him without his cross.

[Matthew 27:43-46](#). *He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God. The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth. Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*

Every word in this terrible cry from the cross is emphatic; every syllable cuts and pierces to the heart.

[Matthew 27:47](#). *Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calleth for Elias.*

They knew better, yet they jested at the Saviour's prayer.

[Matthew 27:48](#). *And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge,*

It always seems to me very remarkable that the sponge, which is the very lowest form of animal life, should have been brought into contact with Christ, who is at the top of all life. In his death, the whole circle of creation was completed.

[Matthew 27:48-50](#). *And filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink. The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him. Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.*

Christ's strength was not exhausted; his last word was uttered "with a loud voice", like the shout of a conquering warrior. He need not have died on account of any infirmity in himself; but voluntarily, for your sake, for your sake and mine, he "yielded up the ghost." Blessed be his holy name!

Verses 27-54

[Matthew 27:27-30](#). *Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers. And they stripped him and put on him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head.*

Ridicule is very painful to bear at any time, and soldiers have been masters of that cruel art when they have been encouraged in it by their leaders. Remember, brethren and sisters, who it was that bore all this shameful treatment from these brutal men, — your Lord and the angels'

Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth, who had designed, for a while, to veil his Deity in human flesh. And there he stood, to be “set at nought,” — to be made nothing of, — by those rough Roman legionaries, the creatures of his own hand, whom he could have destroyed in a moment by a word or a wish. What matchless condescension our gracious redeemer displayed even in his own deepest degradation and agony!

[Matthew 27:31-32](#). *And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him. And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his cross.*

And methinks that he must have been a glad man to have such an honour thrust upon him, yet you need not envy him, for there is a cross for you also to carry. Bear it cheerfully. If anything happens to you, by way of ridicule, for Christ’s sake and the gospel’s, bow your shoulder willingly to the burden, and as knights are made by a stroke from a sword held in their sovereign’s hand, so shall you be made princes of the realm of Christ by bearing the cross after him.

[Matthew 27:33](#). *And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull, —*

We do not know why it was so called. There have been many conjectures concerning the name, but they are only conjectures. It was probably just a little knoll, outside the gate of the city, — the common place of execution for malefactors, and the special points to be noted are that Jesus suffered without the gate, in the regular place of doom, — the Tyburn or Old Bailey of Jerusalem, — and so was numbered with the transgressors.

[Matthew 27:34](#). *They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall:*

A stupefying draught was usually given to the criminals who were crucified, to mitigate their agony; but Christ did not wish for that to be done in his case.

[Matthew 27:34](#). *And when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink.*

He came to earth that he might suffer, and he would retain all his faculties while suffering, he would have every nerve made into a straight road for the hot feet of pain to travel over, for he would drink, even to the last dregs, every drop that was in the cup of suffering for his people’s sin.

[Matthew 27:35-36](#). *And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They*

parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots. And sitting down they watched him there;

Some of them gloating their cruel eyes with the sight of his suffering others watching him out of mere curiosity, but there were some, hard by the cross, who stood there to weep in sympathy with him, — a sword piercing through their own hearts while the Son of man was being put to death.

[Matthew 27:37](#). *And set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.*

And so he is. When will the Jews own him as their King? They will do so one day, perhaps they will do so when Christians begin to think and speak more kindly of them than they usually do. When the hardness of heart on our part towards them shall pass away, it may be that their hardness of heart towards Christ will also pass away. Long have they been despised, and oppressed, and persecuted in many lands, so that, by some means, they might be brought to look, in penitence, upon him whom they crucified, and to own him as their Lord and Saviour!

[Matthew 27:38-40](#). *Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left. And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, and saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thy self. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.*

That is the devil's old doctrine: "Save thyself; look out for yourselves; live for yourselves; be selfish." But Christ could never act like that; he came to live and die for others. "Save thyself," was not the doctrine that he either preached or practiced. And this is another old taunt of Satan and those who follow him: "If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross, and we will believe in thee." There are plenty who would be willing to believe in Christ, but not in Christ crucified. "He was a good man," say they, "a great prophet, no doubt, far in advance of his times," and so on. But, if you talk like that, you are not on safe ground, for if Christ was not the Son of God, at any rate he professed to be, and he made people think he was; and if he was not, he was an impostor, and not a good man at all. You must either repudiate Christ altogether, or take him with his cross; it must be Christ crucified, or no Christ at all.

[Matthew 27:41-44](#). *Likewise also the chief priest mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will*

believe him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God. The thieves also, —

Those subjects who were crucified with him, and were sharers of his misery, — ,

[Matthew 27:44-46](#). *Which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth. Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*

This was the climax of his grief, — not merely to suffer intense agony of body, not only to be mocked alike by priests and people, but to be forsaken of his God. Yet this was needful as a part of the penalty that was due to sin. God must turn away from anyone who has sin upon him, so, as sin was laid upon Christ, God had to turn away his face even from his well beloved Son because he was bearing his people's sins upon the accursed tree.

[Matthew 27:47-49](#). *Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calleth for Elias. And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink. The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him.*

Mocking him even in his prayers, for they well knew the difference between Eloi and Elias.

[Matthew 27:50](#). *Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.*

You know what he said when he cried with a loud voice: "It is finished."

[Matthew 27:51-54](#). *And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many. Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquakes, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly that was the Son of God.*

Verses 32-49

[Matthew 27:32](#). *And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his cross.*

Perhaps they were afraid that Christ would die from exhaustion; so they compelled Simon to bear his cross. Any one of Christ's followers might have wished to have been this man of Cyrene; but we need not envy him, for there is a cross for each of us to carry. Oh! that we were as willing to bear Christ's cross as Christ was to bear our sins on his cross! If anything happens to us by way of persecution or ridicule for our Lord's sake, and the gospel's, let us cheerfully endure it. As knights are made by a stroke from the sovereign's sword, so shall we become princes in Christ's realm as he lays his cross on our shoulders.

[Matthew 27:33-34](#). *And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull, They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink.*

Golgotha was the common place of execution for malefactors, the Tyburn or Old Bailey of Jerusalem, outside the gate of the city. There was a special symbolical reason for Christ's suffering without the gate, and his followers are bidden to "go forth unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach" ([Hebrews 13:11-13](#)). A stupefying draught was given to the condemned, to take away something of the agony of crucifixion; but our Lord came to suffer, and he would not take anything that would at all impair his faculties. He did not forbid his fellow-sufferers drinking the vinegar mingled with gall ("wine mingled with myrrh," [Mark 15:23](#)), but he would not drink thereof. Jesus did not refuse this draught because of its bitterness, for he was prepared to drink even to the last dreadful dregs the bitter cup of wrath which was his people's due.

[Matthew 27:35](#). *And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots.*

There is a world of meaning in that short sentence, "and they crucified him," driving their bolts of iron through his blessed hands and feet, fastening him to the cross, and lifting him up to hang there upon a gibbet reserved for felons. We can scarcely realize all that the crucifixion meant to our dear Lord; but we can join in Faber's prayer: —

"Lord Jesus! may we love and weep,
Since thou for us art crucified."

Then was fulfilled all that our Lord had foretold in chapter 20:17-19, except his resurrection, the time for which had not arrived. The criminals clothes were the executioners' perquisite. The Roman soldiers who

crucified Christ had no thought of fulfilling the Scriptures when they parted his garments, casting lots; yet their action was exactly that which had been foretold in [Psalms 22:18](#). The seamless robe would have been spoiled if it had been rent, so the soldiers raffled for the vesture, while they shared the other garments of our Lord. The dice would be almost stained with the blood of Christ, yet the gamblers played on beneath the shadow of his cross. Gambling is the most hardening of all vices. Beware of it in any form! No games of chance should be played by Christians, for the blood of Christ seems to have bespattered them all.

[Matthew 27:36](#). *And sitting down they watched him there;*

Some watched him from curiosity, some to make sure that he really did die, some even delighted their cruel eyes with his sufferings; and there were some, hard by the cross, who wept and bewailed, a sword passing through their own hearts while the Son of man was agonizing even unto death.

[Matthew 27:37](#). *And set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.*

What a marvelous providence it was that moved Pilate's pen! The representative of the Roman Emperor was little likely to concede kingship to any man; yet he deliberately wrote, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews," and nothing would induce him to alter what he had written. Even on his cross, Christ was proclaimed King, in the sacerdotal Hebrew, the classical Greek, and the common Latin, so that everybody in the crowd could read the inscription. When will the Jews own Jesus as their King? They will do so one day, looking on him whom they pierced. Perhaps they will think more of Christ when Christians think more of them; when our hardness of heart towards them has gone, possibly their hardness of heart towards Christ may also disappear.

[Matthew 27:38](#). *Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left.*

As if to show that they regarded Christ as the worst of the three criminals, they put him between the two thieves, giving him the place of dishonour. Thus was the prophecy fulfilled, "He was numbered with the transgressors." The two malefactors deserved to die, as one of them admitted ([Luke 23:40-41](#)); but a greater load of guilt vested upon Christ, for "he bare the sin of many," and, therefore, he was rightly distinguished as the King of sufferers, who could truly ask: — "Was ever grief like mine?"

[Matthew 27:39-40](#). *And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the son of God, come down from the cross.*

Nothing torments a man when in pain more than mockery. When Jesus Christ most wanted words of pity and looks of kindness, they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads. Perhaps the most painful part of ridicule is to have one's most solemn sayings turned to scorn, as were our Lord's words about the temple of his body: "Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself." He might have saved himself; he might have "come down from the cross"; but if he had done so, we could never have become the sons of God. It was because he was the Son of God that he did not come down from the cross, but hung there until he had completed the sacrifice for his people's sin. Christ's cross is the Jacob's ladder by which we mount up to heaven. This is the cry of the Socinians today, "Come down from the cross. Give up the atoning sacrifice, and we will be Christians." Many are willing to believe in Christ, but not in Christ crucified. They admit that he was a good man and a great teacher; but by rejecting his vicarious atonement, they practically un-Christ the Christ, as these mockers at Golgotha did.

[Matthew 27:41-43](#). *Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God.*

The chief priests, with the scribes and elders, forgetting their high station and rank, joined the ribald crew in mocking Jesus in his death pangs. Every word, was emphatic; every syllable cut and pierced our Lord to the heart. They mocked him as a Saviour; "He saved others; himself he cannot save." They mocked him as a King; "If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him." They mocked him as a believer; "He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him." They mocked him as the Son of God; "For he said, I am the Son of God." Those who say that Christ was a good man virtually admit his deity, for he claimed to be the Son of God. If he was not what he professed to be, he was an impostor. Notice the testimony that Christ's bitterest enemies bore even as they reviled him: "He saved others"; "He is the King of Israel" (R.V.); "He trusted in God."

[Matthew 27:44](#). *The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth.*

The sharers of his misery, the abjects who were crucified with him, joined in reviling Jesus. Nothing was wanting to fill up his cup of suffering and shame. The conversion of the penitent thief was all the more remarkable because he had but a little while before been amongst the mockers of his Saviour. What a trophy of divine grace he became!

[Matthew 27:45](#). *Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour.*

Some have thought that this darkness covered the whole world, and so caused even a heathen to exclaim, "Either the world is about to expire, or the God who made the world is in anguish." This darkness was supernatural; it was not an eclipse. The sun could no longer look upon his Maker surrounded by these who mocked him. He covered his face, and traveled on in tenfold night, in very shame that the great Sun of righteousness should himself be in such terrible darkness.

[Matthew 27:46](#). *And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*

In order that the sacrifice of Christ might be complete, it pleased the Father to forsake his well-beloved Son. Sin was laid on Christ, so God must turn away his face from the Sin-bearer. To be deserted of his God was the climax of Christ's grief, the quintessence of his sorrow. See here the distinction between the martyrs and their Lord; in their dying agonies they have been divinely sustained; but Jesus, suffering as the Substitute for sinners, was forsaken of God. The saints who have known what it is to have their Father's face hidden from them, even for a brief space, can scarcely imagine the suffering that wrung from our Saviour the agonizing cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

[Matthew 27:47](#). *Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calleth for Elias.*

They knew better, yet they jested at the Saviour's prayer. Wickedly, willfully, and scornfully, they turned his death-shriek into ridicule.

[Matthew 27:48-49](#). *And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink. The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him.*

A person in such agony as Jesus was suffering might have mentioned many pangs that he was enduring; but it was necessary for him to say, "I thirst," in order that another Scripture might be fulfilled. One of them, more compassionate than his companions, ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, from the vessel probably brought by the soldiers for their own use, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink. It always seems to me very remarkable that the sponge, which is the very lowest form of animal life, should have been brought into contact with Christ, who is at the top of all life. In his death the whole circle of creation was completed. As the sponge brought refreshment to the lips of our dying Lord, so may the least of God's living ones help to refresh him now that he has ascended from the cross to the throne.

Verses 33-44

[Matthew 27:33-34](#). *And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull, they gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink.*

This was a stupefying draught, which was usually given to prisoners about to die in order to mitigate their pain, and therefore Christ would not drink it, for he was determined to suffer even to the bitter end. He had no mitigation of his agony when he was offering his atonement for us; and so, "when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink."

[Matthew 27:35](#). *And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots.*

This is a point upon which we cannot say much, but, to the peculiarly sensitive soul of Jesus, it must have been a great part of his shame thus to be stripped of every garment, and hung up before the sun.

[Matthew 27:36-37](#). *And sitting down they watched him there; and set up over his head his accusation written: THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.*

By their own confession, he died for being a King, and he died for being too greatly good, too royal in his love. He, being King of kings, died that you and I might live for ever, and be kings and priests unto God,

[Matthew 27:38-39](#). *Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left. And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads.*

Not only they that sat there, such as the scribes, and Pharisee, and soldiers, and they that hung there, the thieves that were crucified with him, but the passers-by must needs revile him, indulging in a sneer.

[Matthew 27:40-43](#). *And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, Hhe saved others: himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him.*

That is the cry of the mockers today. If we will but give up the Atonement, men say that they will believe in Christ. His character is so excellent that they will accept him as an example, (no they say,) but they will not have his Godhead, nor his precious blood. This proves that they are enemies, for they use the same language as his bitterest foes did when he hung upon the cross. As for the scribes, they were learned in the Psalms, and therefore they quoted what we have already read.

[Matthew 27:43-44](#). *He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God. The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth.*

Thus the Master passed through bitter trial and ignominy for our sakes.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Psalms 22:1-9](#); and [Matthew 27:33-44](#).

Verses 50-54

[Matthew 27:50](#). *Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.*

Christ's strength was not exhausted; his last word was uttered with a loud voice, like the shout of a conquering warrior. And what a word it was, "It is finished"! Thousands of sermons have been preached upon that little sentence; but who can tell all the meaning that lies compacted within it? It is a kind of infinite expression for breadth, and depth, and length, and height altogether immeasurable. Christ's life being finished, perfected, completed, he yielded up the ghost, willingly dying, laying down his life as he said he would: "I lay down my life for the sheep. I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again."

[Matthew 27:51-53](#). *And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose,*

and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.

Christ's death was the end of Judaism: The veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. As if shocked at the sacrilegious murder of her Lord, the temple rent her garments, like one stricken with horror at some stupendous crime. The body of Christ being rent, the veil of the temple was torn in twain from the top to the bottom. Now was there an entrance made into the holiest of all, by the blood of Jesus; and a way of access to God was opened for every sinner who trusted in Christ's atoning sacrifice. See what marvels accompanied and followed the death of Christ: The earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened. Thus did the material world pay homage to him whom man had rejected; while nature's convulsions foretold what will happen when Christ's voice once more shakes not the earth only, but also heaven. These first miracles wrought in connection with the death of Christ were typical of spiritual wonders that will be continued till he comes again, —rocky hearts are rent, graves of sin are opened, those who have been dead in trespasses and sins, and buried in sepulchers of lust and evil, are quickened, and come out from among the dead, and go unto the holy city, the New Jerusalem.

[Matthew 27:54](#). *Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.*

These Roman soldiers had never witnessed such scenes in connection with an execution before, and they could only come to one conclusion about the illustrious prisoner whom they had put to death: "Truly this was the Son of God." It was strange that those men should confess what the chief priests and scribes and elders denied; yet since their day it has often happened that the most abandoned and profane have acknowledged Jesus as the Son of God while their religious rulers have denied his divinity.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Luke 23:27-49](#), and [Matthew 27:50-54](#).

Verses 50-66

[Matthew 27:50](#). *Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.*

Christ's strength was not exhausted; his last word was uttered with a loud voice, like the shout of a conquering warrior. And what a word it was, "It is finished"! Thousands of sermons have been preached upon that little

sentence, but who can tell all the meaning that lies compacted, length, and height altogether unmeasurable. Christ's life being finished, perfected, completed; he yielded up the ghost, willingly dying, laying down his life as he said he would: "I lay down my life for the sheep . . . I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again."

[Matthew 27:51-53](#). *And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; And the graves were opened; and many of the bodies of the saints which slept arose. And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.*

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[Matthew 27:55-56](#). *And many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him: Among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the Mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children.*

We have no record of any unkindness to our Lord from any woman, though we have many narratives of the loving ministry of women at various periods in his life. It was meet, therefore, that even at Calvary “many women were there beholding afar off.” The ribald crowd and the rough soldiers would not permit these timid yet brave souls to come near; but we learn from [John 19:25](#) that some of them edged their way through the throng till they “stood by the cross of Jesus.” Love will dare anything.

[Matthew 27:57-58](#). *When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathaea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple: He went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered.*

This rich man of Arimathaea, named Joseph, a member of the Jewish Sanhedrim, was Jesus' disciple, “but secretly for fear of the Jews” ([John 19:38](#)); yet when his Lord was actually dead, extraordinary courage nerved his spirit, and boldly he went to Pilate and begged the body of Jesus. Joseph and Nicodemus are types of many more who have been emboldened by the cross of Christ to do what, without that mighty magnet, they would never have attempted. When night comes, the stars appear; so in the night of Christ's death these two bright stars shone forth with blessed radiance. Some flowers bloom only at night; such a blossom was the courage of Joseph and Nicodemus.

[Matthew 27:59-60](#). *And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulcher, and departed.*

Our King, even in the grave, must have the best of the best; his body was “wrapped in a clean linen cloth, and laid in Joseph's own new tomb, thus completing the fulfillment of [Isaiah 53:9](#). Some see in this linen shroud an allusion to the garments in which priests were to be clothed. Joseph's was a virgin sepulcher, wherein up to that time no one had been buried, so that, when Jesus rose, none could say that another came forth from the tomb instead of him. That rock-hewn cell in the garden sanctified every part of God's acre where saints lie buried. Instead of longing to live till Christ

comes, as some do, we might rather pray to have fellowship with Jesus in his death and burial.

[Matthew 27:61](#). *And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulcher.*

Love and faith were both typified by these two Mary's sitting over against the sepulcher. They will be the last to leave their Lord's resting-place, and the first to return to it when the Sabbath is past.

Can we cling to Christ when his cause seems to be dead and buried? When truth is fallen in the streets, or is even buried in the sepulcher of skepticism or superstition, can we still believe in it, and look forward to its resurrection? That is what-some of us are doing at the present time. O Lord, keep us faithful!

[Matthew 27:62-64](#). *Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the Sepulcher be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen. from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first.*

Those punctilious priests and Pharisees, who were so scrupulous about keeping the Sabbath, did not mind profaning the day of rest by holding a consultation with the Roman governor. They knew that Christ was dead and buried, but they still stood in dread of his power. They called him a "deceiver," and they even pretended to "remember" what "he said, while he was yet alive." At his trial, their false witnesses gave another meaning to his words, but they knew all the while that he was speaking of his resurrection, not of the Temple on Mount Zion. Now they are afraid that, even in the sepulcher, he will bring to nought all their plans for his destruction. They must have known that the disciples of Jesus would not steal him away, and say unto the people, "He is risen from the dead"; so they probably feared that he really would come forth from the tomb. Whatever conscience they had made great cowards of them; so they begged Pilate to do what he could to prevent the rising of their victim.

[Matthew 27:65-66](#). *Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can. So they went, and made the sepulcher sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch.*

The chief priests and Pharisees wanted Pilate to make the sepulcher sure, but he left them to secure it. There seems to have been a grim sort of irony about the governor's reply, "Ye have a watch; go your way, make it as sure as ye can." Whether he mean it as a taunt, or as a command to secure the sepulcher, they became unconsciously witnesses that Christ's resurrection was a supernatural act. The tomb in the rock could not be entered except by rolling away the stone, and they guarded that by sealing the stone, and setting a watch. According to the absurd teaching of the Rabbis, rubbing ears of corn was a kind of threshing, and, therefore, was unlawful on the Sabbath; yet here were these men doing what, by similar reasoning, might be called furnace and foundry work, and calling out a guard of Roman legionaries to assist them in breaking the Sabbath. Unintentionally, they did honour to the sleeping King when they obtained the representatives of the Roman emperor to watch his resting-place till the third morning, when he came forth Victor over sin, and death, and the grave. Thus once more was the wrath of man made to praise the King of glory, and the remainder of that wrath was restrained.

[MATTHEW CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 28

Verses 1-15

[Matthew 28:1-2](#). *In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulcher. And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.*

See what concern angels have about our Lord. Are they here tonight? Do they make a habit of coming where the saints meet together? I think they do. We have intimations in Scripture that that is the case. Let us behave ourselves aright tonight "because of the angels"; and as they worship and count it their highest honour to serve the Son of man, let us also worship Jesus, and adore him. What a picture this scene would make!

[Matthew 28:3-4](#). *His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow; and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.*

He said nothing as he rolled back the stone; he did not shake a sword at them, or over them, to fill them with terror. The presence of perfect purity, the presence of heavenly things, is a terror to ungodly men. May you and I be such that our very presence in company will cast a hush over it! “It was e’en as though an angel shook his wings,” they said of one good man, when he spake in common conversation. May there be about us enough of the heavenly to make the powers of evil quail before us!

[Matthew 28:5](#). *And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye:*

But I notice that they did fear, although the angel said, “Fear not.” Neither men nor angels can so speak as to silence fears in trembling hearts; but Jesus can, as we shall see farther on. One word from his lips has infinitely more power than all the words of angels or of saints.

[Matthew 28:5](#). *For I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified.*

And if you and I tonight can truly say that we are on the side of Jesus, that we seek him who was crucified, then we can bear all the shame with which philosophy would fain cover the cross, and we have no cause for fear. Ridicule and all that it brings from this ungodly generation will not hurt you.

[Matthew 28:6](#). *He is not here: for he is risen, as he said.*

“As he said.” A few words, but what a world of meaning! “As he said.” He always does “as he said.” He always gives “as he said.” He always reveals himself “as he said” not otherwise. He never fails to fulfill a promise, or forgets even the mode of promising; not only does he do what he said, but as he said: “He is risen, as he said.”

[Matthew 28:6](#). *Come, see the place where the Lord lay.*

For even the place where he lay is hallowed to you. And, beloved, if there is a place where you have ever had communion with Christ, you will remember it. You might bless the spot of ground where Jesus met with you. Here, tonight, I hope that some of you can see the place where the Lord appeared to you.

[Matthew 28:7](#). *And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead;*

Such good news ought to be spread quickly. “Go and tell his disciples,” they are trembling, they have fled, — “that he is risen from the dead.”

[Matthew 28:7](#). *And, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you.*

Brethren, this is good news for us tonight, though all may not, perhaps, feel the power of it. "He is risen." We have no dead Christ; we serve a living Saviour. He is risen, and therefore he can come to us tonight in the power of his resurrection-life, and he can make us glad. "Behold, he goeth before you into Galilee." There is a great deal about Galilee in Matthew's Gospel; it is the Gospel of the Kingdom, and yet it often talks about Galilee, that border-land which touches Gentiles, as well as the chosen seed of Abraham. There is the place where Jesus will meet his people, in the border-land between Jew and Gentile, there the risen Christ will hold the first general assembly of his Church.

[Matthew 28:8](#). *And they departed quickly from the sepulcher with fear and great joy;*

What a mixture, fear and joy! But notice that the fear was not great, and the joy was: "Fear and great joy." Observe the proportions of the mixture; and if tonight you have some fear, yet I hope you will have great joy; and then the bitterness of the fear will pass away. A holy fear, mixed with great joy, is one of the sweetest compounds we can bring to God's altar. Some of us have brought those spices with us tonight. These holy women brought other spices to the sepulcher; but these were the spices that they took away from it, "Fear and great joy."

[Matthew 28:8-9](#). *And did run to bring his disciples word. And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him.*

He would not let Mary Magdalene do that when they were alone, but he said to her, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: it is more needful for you to go now and tell my disciples that I have risen from the dead. There will be time by-and-by for further fellowship with me." But now Jesus permits these godly women to hold him by the feet. It was an act of humility, worshipping and holding; and holding not his hands, but his feet. They must have seen the nail-prints before Thomas did, as they held him by the feet, and worshipped him. I do not find that these women ran to the angels, they rather shrank back from them; but they came to Jesus, for we are told that they came, and held him by the feet. I think that there must have been a new attraction about Christ after he had risen from the dead, something more sweet about the tones of his voice, something more charming about the countenance that had been so maimed at Gethsemane, and Gabbatha, and Golgotha.

[Matthew 28:10](#). *Then said Jesus unto them,*

As he saw their palpitating hearts, and perceived that they were still all in a flurry, for the angel had not dispelled their fears,

[Matthew 28:10](#). *Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.*

The angel talked of “disciples”; Christ talks of “brethren.” He always has the sweeter word.

[Matthew 28:11](#). *Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done.*

While good people were active, bad people were active, too. It is wonderful to think of how much good and evil is being done at the same time. While we are thankful that holy women are running with holy messages for Christ, here come the soldiers of the watch, and they are going in to those vile priests.

[Matthew 28:12](#). *And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel,*

They ought at once to have repented when the watch came, and told them that Jesus was risen. Ought they not to have gone, and fallen at his feet, and begged for mercy? But instead of that

[Matthew 28:12](#). *They gave large money unto the soldiers,*

Money, wherever it comes in, seems to do mischief. For money Christ was betrayed, and for money the truth about his resurrection was kept back as far as it could be. Money has had a hardening effect on some of the highest servants of God, and all who have to touch the filthy lucre have need to pray for grace to keep them from being harmed by being brought into contact with it.

[Matthew 28:13](#). *Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept.*

If they were asleep, how did they know what happened? How could they know it if they were asleep? Evidence which is borne by men who were asleep at the time is evidently not worth regarding; but when you have to tell a lie, I suppose that, as any stick is good enough to beat a dog with, any lie will do to slander one whom you hate.

[Matthew 28:14-15](#). *And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught:*

No doubt you have heard of the man who said that he did not believe all the articles of his church because his salary was so small that he could not be expected to believe them all for the money. Oh, the depraving and debasing power of the whole system of bribery and falsehood! May none of us ever be affected by considerations of profit and loss in matters of doctrine, matters of duty, and matters of right and wrong!

[Matthew 28:15](#). *And this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.*

You may start a lie, but you cannot stop it; there is no telling how long it will live. Let us never teach even the least error to a little child, for it may live on and become a great heresy long after we are dead. There is scarcely any limit to its life and to its power.

Verses 1-20

[Matthew 28:1](#). *In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulcher.*

While the Jewish Sabbath lasted, they paid to it due respect. They did not even go the sepulcher to perform the kindly offices of embalmment; but when the old Sabbath was dying away, and the new and better Sabbath began to dawn, these holy women found their way back to their Lord's tomb. Woman must be first at the sepulcher as she was last at the cross. We may well forget that she was first in the transgression; the honour which Christ put upon her took away that shame. Who but Mary Magdalene should be the first at the tomb? Out of her Christ had cast seven devils, and now she acts as if into her he had sent seven angels. She had received so much grace that she was full of love to her Lord. "In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulcher." You can just see them in the gray light of the dawn; it is not clear enough to make out their form and shape; but in the twilight they are coming into the garden, and finding their way to the new sepulcher.

[Matthew 28:2](#). *And, behold, there was a great earthquake:—*

The women must have wondered as they felt that tremor beneath their feet. If you have ever felt an earthquake, you will never forget it; and this was a great one, not one of an ordinary kind: "a great earthquake." Death was being upheaved, and all the bars of the sepulcher were beginning to burst. When the King awoke from the sleep of death, he shook the world;

the bed-chamber in which he rested for a little while trembled as the heavenly Hero arose from his couch: “Behold, there was a great earthquake.” Nor was the King unattended in his rising,—

[Matthew 28:2](#). *For the angel of the Lord—*

It was not merely one of the angelic host, but some mighty presence-angel:

“the angel of the Lord”—

[Matthew 28:2](#). *Descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.*

Jesus was put in the prison of the tomb as a hostage for his people; therefore he must not break out by himself, but the angelic sheriff’s officer must bring the warrant for his deliverance, and set the captive at liberty. He was immured because of human debt; but the debt is paid, so he must go free. Like a flash of fire, the angel descends from the right hand of God. He stands at the mouth of the tomb, he touches the great stone, sealed as it was, and guarded by the soldiery, and it rolls back; and when he has rolled back the stone from the door. he sits upon it, as if to defy earth and hell ever to roll it back again. That great stone seems to represent the sin of all Christ’s people, which shut them up in prison; it can never be laid again over the mouth of the sepulcher of any child of God. Christ has risen, and all his saints must rise, too. The angel “rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.” I think I see there one of the grandest sights that ever man beheld, for one greater than an earthly king is sitting on something better than a throne.

[Matthew 28:3](#). *His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow:*

Dazzling in its purity, like the raiment worn by Christ upon the Mount of Transfiguration, whiter than any fuller can make it.

[Matthew 28:4](#). *And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.*

First a palsy of fear, and then a stiffening of fright, fell upon them, for they had never seen such a sight as this before. They were Roman soldiers, who knew nothing of the meaning of cowardice; yet at the sight of this messenger of God, “the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.”

[Matthew 28:5](#). *And the angel answered and said unto the women,—*

We had almost forgotten them; we had been thinking of the earthquake, and the angel, and the flaming lightning, and the frightened soldiers; but

this angel's thought is all about the women. He whose countenance was like lightning, and whose garments were white as snow, said to the women,—

[Matthew 28:5-7](#). *Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead;*

Notice the angel's words; first "See," and then "Go." You cannot tell the message till you know it. You who would serve God, must first be instructed yourselves. "Come, see the place where the Lord lay;" and then, "Go quickly." If you have seen, then go. Do not sit down, and admire the sight, and forget the thousands who have never seen it; but come, see the place where the Lord lay, and then go, and "go quickly."

[Matthew 28:7](#). *And Behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you.*

That is a very beautiful touch of condescension on the Saviour's part,—that he would go before his disciples into Galilee. Why, Galilee was the very opposite of a classic region; it was a district that was much despised. The clod-hoppers, the boors, the illiterate people of no account, lived in "Galilee of the Gentiles." "Yet," says Christ, "I will meet you there." It was the King's own rendezvous,—not in the courts of earthly monarchs, nor in the palaces of the priests, but away down in Galilee. What cares he for the grandeur of men, and their empty pomp and boasted wisdom? He goes to places that are despised, that he may lift them up by the glory of his light: "Behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you."

[Matthew 28:8](#). *And they departed quickly from the sepulcher with fear and great joy;*

That seems a strange mixture: "fear and great joy." Yet there was plenty of reason for both emotions. Who would not fear that had felt an earthquake, and seen an angel, and marked the tomb broken open? Yet who would not rejoice that had had such a cheering message, and such an assurance that the crucified Christ had risen from the dead? Experience is the best explanation of experience; you must feel for yourself these two emotions working together before you can understand how they can live in anyone at the same time: "They departed quickly from the sepulcher with fear and great joy."

[Matthew 28:8](#). *And did run to bring his disciples word.*

Good women! “They did run.” These staid matrons did run, and who would not run to tell of a risen Lord?

[Matthew 28:9](#). *And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them,—*

Happy are the ministers who meet their Lord when they are going up the pulpit stairs; blessed are the teachers who meet Jesus when they are going to the class. They will be sure to preach and teach well when that is the case: “As they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them.”

[Matthew 28:9](#). *Saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him.*

These holy women were not Unitarians; knowing that Jesus was the Son of God, they had no hesitation in worshipping him. Perhaps these timid souls clung to their Lord through fear that he might be again taken from them, so “they held him by the feet, and worshipped him,” fear and faith striving within them for the mastery.

[Matthew 28:10](#). *Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.*

Note how Jesus dwells upon this despised district of Galilee; I should like to dwell upon it, too. He said nothing about classic Corinth, or imperial Rome, or proud Jerusalem; but his message is, “Tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.” If we will be humble, if we will cast aside the pride of life, there shall we meet him who is meek and lowly of heart.

[Matthew 28:11-13](#). *Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done. And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept.*

You must often have noticed what a mixture of falsehood this was. “You were asleep; you are sure that you were asleep?” “Yes.” “Yet you say that the disciples came; you knew they were the disciples though you were asleep. And they stole him away? You know how they did it, you can describe the stealthy way in which they took away the body of Jesus; you were the witnesses of it, although you were sound asleep all the while.” Go, sirs, it is worse than trifling to listen to the lying of a witness who begins by swearing that he was fast asleep all the time; yet this was the tale that the soldiers were bribed to tell; and many a worse lie than this has been told to

try to put the truth of God out of countenance. The modern philosophy which is thrust forward to cast a slur upon the great truths of revelation, is no more worthy of credence than this lie put into the mouths of the soldiers; yet common report gives it currency, and amongst a certain clique it pays. But the soldiers naturally said, “We shall be put to death for sleeping while on duty;” so the chief priests said,—

[Matthew 28:14](#). *And if this come to the governor’s ears, we will persuade him, and secure you.*

“We can give some more of those arguments that have been so telling in your hands, and they will prevail with the governor as they have prevailed with you.”

[Matthew 28:15](#). *So they took the money, and did as they were taught:—*

Plenty do this still, and I have no doubt they will continue to do so as long as the world is what it is: “They took the money, and did as they were taught:”—

[Matthew 28:15-17](#). *And this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day. Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted.*

Where will not Mr. Doubting, and other members of his troublesome family be found? We can never expect to be quite free from doubters in the Church, since even in the presence of the newly-risen Christ some doubted. Yet the Lord revealed himself to the assembled company, although he knew that some among them would doubt that it was really their Lord who was risen from the dead.

[Matthew 28:18-20](#). *And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in, earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*

We say, “Amen,” too. May he be most manifestly with us here even now, for his sweet love’s sake! Amen.

Verses 16-20

[Matthew 28:16](#). *Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them.*

Away from the haunts of men, where he had been wont to be, in a country familiar to them, and with which he was familiar, in a despised country, “Galilee of the Gentiles.”

[Matthew 28:17](#). *And when they saw him, they worshipped him:*

Probably this was the occasion referred to by Paul, when the risen Saviour “was seen of above five hundred brethren at once.”

[Matthew 28:17](#). *But some doubted.*

There were some honest doubters then. The breed has been kept up ever since, only there are more dishonest doubters by a great deal than there are of honest ones now. We can never expect to be quite free from doubters in the church, since even in the presence of the newly-risen Christ “some doubted.”

[Matthew 28:18](#). *And Jesus came and spake unto them,*

These words seem to imply that he came nearer to them than he was at first; unveiling himself still more, and revealing himself more clearly.

[Matthew 28:18-19](#). *Saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations,*

“Teach”, that is, disciple, make disciples of “all nations.”

[Matthew 28:19-20](#). *Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you:*

There is teaching again. It is as much the duty of the Christian to teach after baptism as to teach before baptism; he must be ever teaching. Hence believers are always to be learners, since Christ would have his servants always to be teachers: “Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” We are not to invent a gospel; we are not to change, and shift, and cut, and shape it to meet the advancement of the age; Christ’s command is plain: “Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.”

[Matthew 28:20](#). *And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*

They have their commission, here is the seal to it; here is the source of their power; here is the society in which they are to work: “Lo, I am with you always.” God grant that you and I, going forth to teach for Christ. may always have the sound of our Master’s feet with us, even to the end of the world! Amen.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Luke 4:16-30](#); [Luke 9:57-62](#); and [Matthew 28:16-20](#).

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CHAPTER 1

Verses 14-35

[Mark 1:14](#). *Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, —*

When one servant of God is laid aside, it is a call to the rest to be the more earnest. So after John the Baptist was put into prison, “Jesus came into Galilee.” Sometimes a loss may be a gain, and if the loss of John was the means of bringing out Jesus, certainly both the Church and the world were the gainers: “Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God,” —

[Mark 1:15](#). *And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.*

It is clear, from this passage, that our Lord exhorted men to repent, and to believe the gospel. There are some, who profess to be his followers, who will not suffer us to do this. We may teach men, and warn them, they say, but we must not exhort them to repent and believe. Well, as the contention of these people is not in accordance with the Scriptures, we are content to follow the Scriptures, and to do as Jesus did, so we shall say to sinners, “Repent ye, and believe the gospel.”

[Mark 1:16-18](#). *Now as he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And Jesus said unto them; Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men. And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him.*

The gospel minister is like the fisherman with a net. I have sometimes heard the comparison drawn as though the gospel fisherman had a hook and a line, which he has not. His business is not to entice a fish to swallow his bait but to cast the net all round him, and lift him, by his grace, out of the element in which he lies in sin, into the boat where Christ still sits, as he sat, in the olden days, in the boat on the sea of Galilee. To shut the sinner up to faith in Jesus Christ, — that is the main work of the true gospel fisherman.

[Mark 1:19-20](#). *And when he had gone a little further thence, he saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets. And straightway he called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after him.*

They never had cause to regret that they did so. Whatever they left, they were abundantly rewarded. They had a rich reward here on earth; and they have a far richer reward in heaven. Whatever a man gives up for Christ is a blessed investment, which will, sooner or later, bring him good interest.

[Mark 1:21-22](#). *And they went into Capernaum; and straightway on the sabbath day he entered into the synagogue, and taught. And they were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes.*

He did not do as the scribes did, who made a great parade of learning by quoting this Rabbi and the other, but Jesus said, “Verily, verily, I say unto you.” He spoke as one who felt that he had authority to speak in his own name, and in the name of God his Father. This method of teaching quite astonished the Jews. I wish that those who now hear the gospel, might be astonished at it, and be astonished into the belief of it by the power with which it comes home to their consciences and hearts.

[Mark 1:23-24](#). *And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, saying, Let us alone;*

How often that is still the cry of sinners, “Let us alone. Why do not you hold your own views, and let us alone? “Yes the devils, and those whom they control, still say, “Let us alone.” But it is a part of the gospel to attack that which is not the gospel, and it is as much the duty of the minister of the gospel to denounce error as to proclaim truth. If we do so, the old cry will still be heard, “Let us alone. Let us alone.”

[Mark 1:24-25](#). *What have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God. And Jesus rebuked him, —*

He did not want any testimony from the devil. When a man of ill character once praised Plato, the philosopher said, “What can I have done wrong that such a fellow as that speaks well of me?” So when the devil bore testimony to the divinity of Christ, “Jesus rebuked him,” —

[Mark 1:25-26](#). *Saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him.*

For, if Satan must come out of a man, he will do him as much mischief as ever he can before he departs. His wrath is all the greater because his time is so short.

“He worries whom he can’t devour,

With a malicious joy.”

[Mark 1:27](#). *And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him.*

It was the authority of his preaching which first astonished them; and then the authority with which he wrought his miracle, and subdued the world of demons. Blessed be God. Christ has not abdicated his authority. He is still the great Messenger of God, full of divine authority to save men, and to deliver them from the power of Satan.

[Mark 1:28-30](#). *And immediately his fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee. And forthwith, when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. But Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever, and anon they tell him of her.*

Christ was a house-to-house missionary, as well as an open-air preacher. There is much good to be done by those who know how to visit, and to look after individual cases; there is great good to be done in that way, as well as by dealing with mankind in the bulk.

[Mark 1:31-35](#). *And he came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them. And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils. And all the city was gathered together at the door. And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils: and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him. And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.*

His hard day's work probably ran on far into the night. Yet, "a great while before day," he was up at the sacred work of supplication. The more work we have to do with men for God, the longer we ought to be at work with God for men. If you plead with men, you cannot hope to prevail unless you first plead with God. And, inasmuch as our Lord had great success the day before, it teaches us that the greatest success does not release us from the necessity of still waiting upon God. If God has given you much, my brother, go with thy basket, and ask for more. Never stay thy prayer. Increase thy spiritual hunger, and God will increase the richness of the gift he will bestow upon thee.

Verses 28-45

[Mark 1:28](#). *And immediately his fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee.*

“Immediately.” That is, as soon as Jesus had healed the man with an unclean spirit, his fame spread like wildfire. The miracle was reported from mouth to mouth till everybody in that region knew of it. It was said that the words and writings of Martin Luther were carried as by the wings of angels, so speedily was everything that he said and wrote made known far and wide. On this occasion, it was so with our Lord’s wondrous deed of mercy and power: “Immediately his fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee.”

[Mark 1:29](#). *And forthwith, when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John.*

“Forthwith,” or, again, “immediately.” Simon and Andrew and James and John were intimately connected, we are told that they were “partners” in their fishing business. James and John, the sons of Zebedee, seem to have been in a good position in life; we read that their father had “hired servants” employed in the boats. So James and John went with Simon and Andrew into their partners’ house when Christ went there after performing that notable miracle in the synagogue.

[Mark 1:30](#). *But Simon’s wife’s mother lay sick of a fever, and anon they tell him of her.*

There were at least four of Christ’s followers in the house, yet the mother of the wife of one of them lay sick of a fever. Grace does not prevent suffering in the body; there will still be physical diseases even though in the soul there is spiritual health.

[Mark 1:31](#). *And he came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them.*

Jesus was very calm; he was not afraid of catching the fever. See how deliberately, and with what solemn, kindly dignity he deals with this sick woman: “He came and took her by the hand.” I think I see him doing it “and lifted her up.” He gently raises her, and she yields to his tender uplifting hand, and suddenly finds herself cooled of the burning fever, and perfectly restored to health and strength; so she rises from her bed, and the first thing she does is to minister unto them. I am sure that, whenever the Lord helps any of his people out of their temporal or spiritual distresses, they feel at once that they must say, “What shall we render unto the Lord

for all his benefits toward us?" Her ministering unto them proved that the fever was quite gone, and gone in a way in which it does not ordinarily go; for, as you all know, fever usually leaves behind it extreme weakness. It seems to burn up the strength that is in one; and after it is gone, one is not fit even to wait at table for a long while. But Peter's wife's mother immediately when the fever was gone, rose and "ministered unto them." Christ's cures are always complete. If he saves us from the burning fever, he saves us from the weakness that follows it, and when he deals with soul maladies, his cures are equally complete, there are no after-effects to the soul as there are in many diseases that afflict the body. When the great Physician restores the soul, he restores it completely.

[Mark 1:32](#). *And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils.*

It was the Sabbath, and they would not even bring out their sick folk until the day of rest was over. The Jewish Sabbath ended at the setting of the sun, so these people were all watching and waiting until the sun dipped below the horizon, and then, straightaway, they brought their suffering ones to Jesus. What a mass of misery filled the streets of Capernaum that memorable night! The whole city was turned into a hospital.

[Mark 1:33](#). *And all the city was gathered together at the door.*

It seemed as if everybody had come either to be healed or to witness the healing of others: "All the city was gathered together at the door." Oh, when shall we see our places of worship thronged in this fashion with the spiritually sick? When will this great city of London begin to turn towards the Lord Jesus Christ? Will any of us live to see all our fellow-citizens gathered together around the Saviour to be healed by him of all the wounds that sin hath made?

[Mark 1:34](#). *And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him.*

They would persist in acknowledging him; perhaps with the design of injuring his cause, for nothing hurts the cause of Christ more than to have it praised by bad men or evil spirits. I do not know that an outrageous sinner, if he will not repent, can do Christ a better turn than to abuse him for then he is speaking after his own natural manner but when the devil or his servants go into the pulpit, and begin to speak in praise of Christ, then is Christ's cause in an evil case indeed; so he "suffered not the devils to speak,

because they knew him;” or, as the margin puts it, even to say that they knew him.”

[Mark 1:35](#). *And in the morning, rising up a great while before day,*

While it was yet dark, he stole away even from his favored disciples that he might be alone with his Father.

[Mark 1:35-37](#). *He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed. And Simon and they that were with him followed after him. And when they had found him,--*

For he had endeavored to conceal himself in the loneliest spot that he could find. Possibly, the disciples overheard his groans, his cries, his supplications, as he poured out his very soul in prayer to his Father: “when they had found him,” —

[Mark 1:37-38](#). *They said unto him, All men seek for thee. And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth.*

Jesus Christ came forth from God the Father that he might proclaim throughout the land the message of redeeming grace and dying love.

[Mark 1:39-40](#). *And he preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils. And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.*

It is a pity that he could not go further than to say to Christ. “If thou wilt,” but it is a great mercy that he could go as far as that, so, if you, dear friend, cannot pray a prayer that is full of faith, pray one that has at least some faith in it. If you cannot go as far as some do, go as far as you can. I have often told you to bless God for moonlight, and then he will give you sunlight; but for anyone to say, “I will not pray at all because I cannot pray as I would like to pray,” is a very foolish thing. Say what you can, even as this poor leper said to Jesus, “If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.”

[Mark 1:41](#). *And Jesus, moved with compassion,--*

This is a wonderful expression: “moved with compassion.” The face of Jesus and his whole person showed that his very soul was stirred by an intense fellow-feeling for this poor leper: Jesus, moved with compassion,--

[Mark 1:41](#). *Put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean.*

If you or I were to touch a leper, his uncleanness would at once be communicated to us, but when Christ touches a leper, his cleanliness is

communicated to the leper. Oh, how high our blessed Lord stands above us! When we have to deal with certain peculiarly sad cases, we ought to go to the work with much earnest prayer that we ourselves may not be contaminated by contact with gross sinners, but Christ has such virtue in himself that he can even touch the fevered and the leprous, and yet sustain no injury.

[Mark 1:42](#). *And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed.*

This was another very wonderful miracle. All that dryness of the skin, that scurf, that peeling, that inward foulness that eats into the bones, and pollutes the very current of the blood — all this was quite gone, the Lord Jesus Christ made this foul, unclean leper perfectly clean and whole in a single moment.

[Mark 1:43-44](#). *And he straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away; and saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.*

That was all he was to do, — to go and show himself to the priest, so that it might be officially known and certified that he was clean, and he was not to tell anyone else of his cure. He was disobedient to Christ; perhaps you will think that he was very naturally and excusably so, but we must never make excuses for doing what Christ tells us not to do. Our duty is not to judge whether such-and-such a course will be profitable or beneficial, but to consider whether such-and-such a course is in accordance with the Word of the Lord. This man ought to have held his tongue, for Christ had told him to do so. I have no doubt that he said within himself, “The more I talk about this miracle, the more good I shall do, and the more famous Christ’s name will become.” But he had no business to think that, his business was to obey Christ’s command.

[Mark 1:45](#). *But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter the city,-*

There were such crowds that he could not work his miracles of healing. The disobedient man was no doubt moved by gratitude, which seems a very proper motive; yet his disobedience caused Christ serious inconvenience, and hindered his work; and I have no doubt that there are many things done in the Church of God today of which many say, “They are very proper, and very nice;” yes, but are they Scriptural? Did the Master command them? If

not, they will cause him and his kingdom serious inconvenience and loss at some time or other. We cannot too fully realize that, as Christ's disciples, we are to obey him implicitly; and the best proof of our gratitude is to do exactly as Christ bids us. This man blazed abroad the news of his cure, so that "Jesus could no more openly enter into the city," —

[Mark 1:45](#). *But was without in desert places: and they came to him from every quarter.*

This exposition consisted of readings from [Mark 1:28-45](#); [Mark 2:1-12](#),

MARK CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2

Verses 1-12

[Mark 2:1-2](#). *And again he entered into Capernaum, after some days; and it was noised that he was in the house. And straightway many were gathered together, inasmuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door: and he preached the word unto them.*

He could not be hid; the healed leper had made his name so famous that men crowded to see him, and he took advantage of their curiosity, and "preached the word unto them."

[Mark 2:3-5](#). *And they came unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four. And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay. When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.*

Those who brought this man to Jesus believed that he could and would heal him, and Christ delighted to honour their faith, and perhaps also the faith of the man himself.

[Mark 2:6-9](#). *But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only? And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts? Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk?*

It was just as easy to say either the one or the other.

[Mark 2:10-12](#). *But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house. And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion.*

This exposition consisted of readings from [Mark 1:28-45](#); [Mark 2:1-12](#),
Verses 1-14

[Mark 2:1-2](#). *And again he entered into Capernaum, after some days; and it was noised that he was in the house. And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door: and he preached the word unto them.*

We expect to see the crowd round the door, but there was not room, even for the doorway hearers, when Jesus Christ was preaching. There is an attracting power about the voice of Jesus. We may expect that if we will let Jesus speak in the ministry, and not speak too much our own thought and our own words, there will still be the same attraction about the gospel. "He preached the Word unto them."

[Mark 2:3](#). *And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy,*

A paralyzed person: that is the exact word — one, who could not come himself, but had a very anxious desire to come. They came to him, bringing a paralytic.

[Mark 2:3](#). *Which was borne of four.*

Your neighbors agreed to lift him

[Mark 2:4](#). *And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press,*
They had tried the door very many times, but could not possibly enter.

[Mark 2:4](#). *They uncovered the roof where he was:*

They, perhaps, went up the stairway of the next house, and then from one flat roof to another till they came to the top of the verandah which sheltered Christ while he preached to the people in the court. They uncovered this roof where he was.

[Mark 2:4](#). *And when they had broken it up,*

For it does not seem to have been a very light structure, but to have required some labour; yet they broke it up.

[Mark 2:4](#). *They let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay.*

Where there is a will there is a way, and when there is no way a resolute will, will make one. Better to come to Christ through the ceiling than not to come at all. Better to be let down to him by a rope than not to be in his presence.

[Mark 2:5](#). *When Jesus saw their faith,*

For he has a very quick eye to faith: and though we do not read that they had said anything, and, therefore, they had not expressed their faith, yet this bold and venturous action in breaking up the roof and letting all the dust fall about the Saviour's head, not fearing that they should provoke him, but trusting in his gentleness and patience, showed their confidence that they had only to get the man where Christ could see him, and good would come of it. "When he saw their faith."

[Mark 2:5-6](#). *He said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee. But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts.*

They had come with a bad motive. They wanted to find fault, and they took their seats that they might hear everything very carefully, take notes of it, and put it down, and make as much mischief of it as ever they could.

They had all their ears open. They did not know, however, that he could read their hearts, or they might not have been so forward in coming into his presence. They were "sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts."

[Mark 2:7](#). *Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only.*

Which was quite true, but then he was God, and therefore it was not blasphemy. Blasphemy it would have been had he not been divine.

[Mark 2:8-9](#). *And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts? Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk?*

Do they not each require a divine power? If I be divine, I shall prove I am by healing this man. Then I have a right to say, "Thy sins be forgiven thee."

[Mark 2:10-12](#). *But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house. And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all;*

insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion.

Admire and imitate the faith and the obedience of this paralytic, He did better than some, for there have been some who, out of very gratitude, have disobeyed Christ. I mean, when he said to one that he should not tell what Christ had done. He did tell it, but this man, though no doubt his gratitude would have prompted him to stay and throw himself at his benefactor's feet, or to stop at least and sing a hymn of thankfulness to God, yet he knows that to obey is the best form of gratitude, and as Christ had told him, "Go thy way into thy house," he did just that. The best thing to do for Christ is to do what Christ bids you. There are many glittering forms of gratitude, but all is not gold that glitters. The most golden gratitude is that which scrupulously renders obedience to every command of Jesus Christ. Take this to heart, and do ye so.

[Mark 2:13](#). *And he went forth again by the sea side; and all the multitude resorted unto him, and he taught them.*

Better air than there was in the house, and more room, but he kept to the same gospel. He taught them.

[Mark 2:14](#). *And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the receipt of custom, and said unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him.*

Swept up his shekels — gathered up his account books — stopped no longer. He rose from taking toll to follow the Master. Oh! for just such a word tonight to some here present. "Follow me." And would to God there would be such a heart in them as there was in this man named Levi, alias Matthew, that they may come and follow Jesus too.

Verses 1-28

[Mark 2:1-2](#). *And again he entered into Capernaum, after some days; and it was noised that he was in the house. And straightaway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door: and he preached the word unto them.*

It is a very singular feat that, although man, in his natural state of heart, is opposed to the gospel, yet he is drawn to hear it. Even though he abhors it, yet oftentimes he cannot help listening to it. Wherever Jesus Christ is, whether he is present in person, or in the preaching of the Word, it will be certain to be noised abroad, and multitudes will come to hear. The grandest

attraction either in or out of heaven, is still the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

[Mark 2:3-5](#). *And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four. And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay. When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.*

In Luke's account of this gathering, we read that "the power of the Lord was present to heal them," and when we ask, "Why was that power so remarkably present?" We think that one reason was, because there were persons present who were anxious about the good of others; and, today, wherever four persons come together praying for some poor soul, you may rest assured that the power of the Lord will there be present to heal. I do not think that so much of the success of sermons depends upon the preacher, as upon those model hearers who are all the while praying for a blessing, and who are making other members of the congregation — those who are converted, — the constant subject of their supplication. Christ blessed this man because of the faith of the four who carried him, and possibly because of his own faith. Notice that our Lord did not at first say to the sick man, "Thou art healed of thy palsy;" but he said, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." This was laying the axe at the root, because sin is at the bottom of sorrow; and where sin is pardoned, even the effects of sin will be removed.

[Mark 2:6-9](#). *But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only? And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts? Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk?*

Whichever is spoken, Omnipotence is implied. The presence and power of God alone could give efficacy to either sentence; but, to him, the one is as easy as the other.

[Mark 2:10-14](#). *But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house. And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all;*

insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, we never saw it on this fashion. And he went forth again by the sea side; and all the multitude resorted unto him, and he taught them. And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the receipt of custom, and said unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him.

There is a change in the method of displaying Christ's power, but his power is always the same. To the palsied man, he said "Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk;" but to the man engaged in a galling which degraded him, Christ said, "Follow me;" and "he arose and followed him." Blessed be God, still we have in our midst the living Lord, who is as able to work miracles of mercy today as when he was upon the earth; and we have not merely to exhort, to persuade, and to entreat, though we have to do all that, but we have also to speak with authority in the name of this glorious Son of God, and to command men to repent and believe in him. He is with us, by his Spirit, to make his Word mighty, so that, to this day, palsied men do arise, and walk, and sinful men are led to turn from evil, and to follow Christ.

[Mark 2:15-17](#). *And it came to pass, that, as Jesus sat at meat in his house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and his disciples: for there were many, and they followed him. And when the scribes and Pharisees saw him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto his disciples, How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners? When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.*

For ordinary Christians to associate with those who are like the publicans and sinners of Christ's day, might be dangerous, for "evil communications corrupt good manners;" and Christians should be careful as to the company in which they are found; but for Christians to go amongst such people to try to do them good, is Christlike. The Church of Christ always fails in her duty when she looks upon any class of persons as being beneath her observation, or too far gone for her to reach. Our Lord's mission was to find out, and to supply the needs of mankind, and he seems to have paid particular attention to the very worst of men because they needed him most; and his Church should always be guided in her choice of work by the necessity of the objects that need her care. And brethren, you and I, who are in the ministry, will do well to choose, not that sphere in

which we may be most happy and comfortable, but that one in which we are most needed. If I were a lamp, and had my choice of where I would be hung, I should prefer to be hung up in the darkest place in London, where I could be of most service, and I think that every one of us would make just such a choice if we judged rightly, and desired to be where we were wanted, and to do as the Saviour did when he was on the earth.

[Mark 2:18-20](#). *And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast: and they come and say unto him, Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not? And Jesus said unto them, If the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.*

While Christ was with his people in person, they could not help having joy and gladness; but when he was gone from them, they must lament his absence.

[Mark 2:21-22](#). *The man also seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment: else the new piece that filled it up taketh away from the old, and the rent is made worse. And no man putteth new wine into old bottles: else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles.*

The bottles were made of skin, and the wine put into them must be of a suitable port. To prescribe fasting to his disciples, while he was making them glad with his personal presence, would have been incongruous and absurd; and there are some things that we ought not to expect from young Christians, and other things that we ought not to expect from old and mature Christians. We should not expect to find new wine in old bottles, nor old wine in new bottles. "A place for everything, and everything in its place," is not only a rule for the home and the merchant's counting-house, but it is also a rule which should be observed in the Church of Christ; for God, as a God of order, always puts things in their proper places, and in due order.

[Mark 2:23](#). *And it came to pass, that he went through the corn fields on the sabbath day; and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn.*

They had offended the Pharisees by not fasting, and now they were offending them again in a similar way, though with reference to a different

matter.

[Mark 2:24](#). *And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful?*

According to some Rabbis, you might pick an ear of wheat on the Sabbath-day, but if you rubbed it between your hands, they said that was a sort of thieving which was a kind of labour that must not be performed on the Sabbath. They made all sorts of ingenious restrictions, too ridiculous for us to quote. These disciples were therefore, according to them, chargeable with sin, because they had plucked ears of corn, and had performed the operation of threshing them on the Sabbath-day, and we have some of that sort of folk living now who take the smallest matter, which is altogether insignificant, and in which there is neither good nor harm, and magnify and distort it, and then make a man a grave offender all for next to nothing. We have learned not to be very much troubled by anything that they choose to say.

[Mark 2:25-28](#). *And he said unto them, have ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was an hungred, he, and they that were with him? How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the High priest, and did eat the shewbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him? And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.*

He has made it to be no longer a day of bondage, but a day of blessed rest and holy service for God. Works of necessity, works of piety, and works of mercy, are not only allowed to be done, but are commanded to be done upon the Sabbath-day.

[MARK CONTENTS](#)

Mark Chapter 3

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER 4

Verses 1-25

[Mark 4:1](#). *And he began again to teach by the sea side: and there was gathered unto him a great multitude, so that he entered into a ship, and sat in the sea; and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land.*

You can easily picture that scene, — the Master sitting down in the vessel, with a little breathing space of water between himself and the crowd, and then the multitude on the rising bank, standing one above another, and all gazing upon the Teacher who sat down and taught them. It ought to reconcile any of you who have to stand in the crowd here when you remember that the hearers all stood in those days, and only the preacher sat down.

[Mark 4:2-3](#). *And he taught them many things by parables, and said unto them in his doctrine, Hearken; Behold, there went out a sower to sow:*

He did not go out to show himself, to let people see how dexterous he was at the art of sowing seed; but he “went out to sow.” And every true preacher should go out with this one design, — to scatter broadcast the good seed of the kingdom, and to try to obtain for it an entrance into the hearts of their hearers.

[Mark 4:4](#). *And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the way side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up.*

He could not help that; it was not his fault, but the fault of the way side and of the fowls. So, when the Word of God is denied entrance into men’s hearts, if it be faithfully preached, the preacher shall not be blamed by his Master; the fault shall lie between the hard heart that will not let the seed enter in and the devil who came and took it away.

[Mark 4:5](#). *And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth:*

Persons with shallow characters are often very quick in receiving religious impressions, but they also lose them just as quickly. Those who are hasty and impulsive are as easily turned the wrong way as the right way.

[Mark 4:6-8](#). *But when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit. And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased; and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred.*

Thank God for that! There were three failures, but there was one success; or, perhaps we might more correctly say, three successes. There were three sorts of ground that yielded nothing, but at last the sower came

to a piece of soil that had been well prepared, and therefore was good ground, which yielded fruit, though the quantity varied even there: “some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred.”

[Mark 4:9](#). *Had he said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

Some people have ears, but they have not “ears to hear.” They have ears, but they close them to that which they ought to hear. When a man is really willing to listen to the truth, then may God help him to listen with all his heart, and spiritually!

[Mark 4:10-12](#). *And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parable. And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.*

This judicial blindness had happened to the Jews; they had so long closed their eyes to the light that, at last, God closed them, and they were blinded. They had refused to heed so many messages sent to them from the great God that, at last, this sentence was pronounced as the punishment of their sin, — that they should die in their sins, and that even the preaching of the Word by the mouth of the Lord Jesus himself, should be of no use to them. That is one of the most awful judgments that can ever happen to anyone, when God puts a curse even on a man’s blessings; and when the gospel, which should be a savor of life unto life, becomes a savor of death unto death.

[Mark 4:13](#). *And he said unto them, Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables?*

“For this is one of the simplest of them all; if you do not understand this parable, what will you understand?”

[Mark 4:14-15](#). *The sower soweth the word. And these are they by the wayside, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts,*

There is always a bird where there is a seed lying on the road, and there is always a devil where there is a sermon heard, but not received into the heart. “Satan cometh immediately.” He is very prompt; we may delay, but the devil never does: “When they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts.”

[Mark 4:16-17](#). *And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness; And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended.*

These are the people that trouble and grieve the hearts of earnest ministers; and there are some revivalists who never go to a place without getting quite a lot of persons to come forward and say that they are converted. Why, I know a town where, according to the accounts that were put forth by certain preachers, there were so many professed converts every night that all the people in the town must have been converted, and a good many more from the surrounding villages; but nobody can find them now. Were they converted, then? I trow not; but that is the style in which much has been done by some whom I might name. Yet there is some good even in their work. The sower in the parable is not blamed because his work was so evanescent; how could he prevent it? As the soil was so shallow, the apparent result was very quick, and the disappointment was equally quick. I do trust, dear friends, that you will never be satisfied with temporary godliness, with slight impressions, soon received and soon lost. Beware of that is not the work of the Holy Ghost. There must be a breaking up of the iron pan of the heart, there must be a tearing out of the rocks that underlie the soil; or else there will be no harvest unto God.

[Mark 4:18-19](#). *And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word, And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.*

The seed cannot grow in such soil as that. The man is too busy, or he is wholly taken up with pleasure; the women are too proud of themselves, or even of the clothes that cover them. How can there be room for Christ in the inn when it is crowded with other guests?

[Mark 4:20](#). *And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirty fold, some sixty, and some an hundred.*

All converts are not equally good. I am afraid that, in our churches, there is a large number of the thirty-fold people. We are glad to have them, but they are not very brilliant Christians. Oh, for some sixty-fold converts, —some who are fit to be very leaders in the Church of God! And when we

get up to a hundred-fold, — when it is not merely one hundred percent, but one hundred gathered for every one sown, — then are we indeed rejoiced. When everything that is good is multiplied over, and over, and over, and over, and over again, a hundred for one, and when each one of that hundred bears another hundred, that is the blessing we long to see. This hundred-fold seed has in it the capacity for almost boundless multiplication; at the first sowing, we get a hundred-fold return; but what comes of the next sowing, and the next, and the next? God send us this style of wheat. May we have a great quantity of it!

[Mark 4:21](#). *And he said unto them, Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick?*

So this wheat, then, is meant to be sown; the Word of God is intended to be spread. “Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed?” If it were put under a bed, it would set the bed on fire; and so, if you have true grace in your heart, there is nothing that can smother its light; the fire and the light together will force their way out.

[Mark 4:22-23](#), *For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither any thing kept secret, but that it should come abroad. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.*

Tell out, then, what God has told to you; and let everybody hear from you the truth as you yourself have heard it. See the compound interest that there is to be in this blessed trading for Christ.

[Mark 4:24-25](#). *And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given. For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath.*

When the gospel is not received, when a man refuses it, it becomes a positive loss to him. There is a way by which it so works that, what a man thought he had, disappears. Some have been made worse by the preaching of that Word which ought to have made them better. May it not be so with any one of us!

Verses 35-41

[Mark 4:35-36](#) *And the same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side. And when they had sent away the multitude,--*

Telling them that Christ would give them no more instruction that day, and that they had better go back to their homes. There are some preachers

who have great gifts of dispersion, it does not take them long to scatter a congregation; but I expect that Christ's disciples found it to be no easy task to send away the crowds that had been listening to their Master's wondrous words. But, "when they had sent away the multitude,"-

[Mark 4:36](#). *They took him even as he was in the ship. And there were also with him other little ships.*

Christ was Lord High Admiral of the Galilean lake that night, and he had quite a little fleet of vessels around his flagship.

[Mark 4:37](#). *And there arose a great storm of wind,--*

Our friend, John Macgregor, "Rob Roy," tells us that the lake is subject to very sudden and severe storms; it lies in a deep hollow, and down from the surrounding ravines and valleys the air comes with a tremendous rush seldom experienced even upon a real sea; for this was, of course, only a lake though sometimes called a sea. I have been told that, on some Scotch lochs, the wind will occasionally come from three or four quarters at once, lifting the boat bodily out of the water, and sometimes seeming to lift the water up towards heaven, with the boat and all in it; so was it, that night, when "there arose a great storm of wind,"-

[Mark 4:37](#). *And the wave beat into the ship, so that it was now full.*

No doubt they baled out the boat with all their might, and did their best to prevent it from sinking, yet "it was now full of water." But where was their Lord and Master, and what was he doing while the storm was raging?

[Mark 4:38](#). *And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow:*

He was quite at home upon the wild waves,—"Rocked in the cradle of the deep,"-for winds and waves were but his Father's servants, obeying his commands. "He was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow;" doubtless weary and worn with the labours of the day. We do not always think enough of the weariness of Christ's human body. There was not only the effort of preaching, but his preaching was so full of high thought, and the expressions he used were so pregnant with meaning, that it must have taken much out of him to preach thus from the heart, with intense agony of spirit, and with his brain actively at work all the while. Remember that he was truly man as well as the Son of God, and that what he did was of so high an order, not to be reached by any of us, that it must have exhausted him and therefore he needed sleep to refresh him; and there he was wisely

taking it, and serving God by sleeping soundly, and thus preparing himself for the toil of the following day.

[Mark 4:38-39](#). *And they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish? And he arose, and rebuked the wind,--*

It was boisterous and noisy, and he bade it obey its Master's will;

[Mark 4:39](#). *And said unto the sea, Peace, be still.*

Can you not almost fancy that you can hear that commanding voice addressing the raging, roaring, tumultuous winds and waves?

[Mark 4:39](#). *And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.*

Not only was the wind quieted, and the sea hushed to slumber, but a deep, dead, mysterious calm transformed the lake into a molten looking glass. When Christ stills winds and waves, it is "a great calm." Did you ever feel "a great calm"? It is much more than ordinary peace of mind; it is to your heart as if there were no further possibilities of fear. Your troubles have so completely gone that you can scarcely recollect them. There is no one but the Lord himself who can speak so to produce "a great calm." Master, we entreat thee to speak such a calm so that for those of us who need it.

[Mark 4:40](#). *And he said unto them,-*

When he had calmed the winds and the waves, he had to speak to another fickle set, more fickle than either winds or waves: "and he said unto them,"-

[Mark 4:40-41](#). *Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith? And they feared exceedingly,--*

They went from one fear to another, but this time it was the fear of awe-a hallowed dread of what might happen to a ship which had "oh a mysterious Person on board. Though there was probably in their minds no fear of death, it seemed to them a fearsome thing to live in the presence of One who had such power over the raging elements." They feared exceedingly,-

[Mark 4:41](#). *And said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?*

Blessed God-man, we worship and adore thee!

[MARK CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 5

Verses 1-20

[Mark 5:1](#). *And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes. And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit.*

Our Lord crossed the Sea of Galilee on purpose to rescue this poor man from the power of the unclean spirit that possessed him. He knew that there were many who needed him on the Galilean side of the lake, and he could foresee the storm that would threaten to sink the little ship; yet he calmly said to his disciples (see chapter 4:Verse 35), “Let us pass over unto the other side.” As soon as the great Physician landed, a dreadful apparition appeared. “Out of the tombs”, an uncanny place, rushed a man, howling and yelling like some wild beast; or worse still, under the influence of Satan, who had taken possession of him.

[Mark 5:3](#). *Who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains; because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him.*

See how the world deals with furiously guilty men. It tries to fetter them, or else to tame them; to keep them in check by fear of punishment, or else to subdue them to a gentleness of morality: poor work this! Christ neither binds nor tames; he changes and renews. Oh, that everywhere his aid were sought, and not so much reliance placed on the fetters of law, or the power of morals!

[Mark 5:5](#). *And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones.*

It must have been dreadful for travelers to pass that way at night, or to meet with this terrible madman at any hour of the day. But how terrible must have been the poor creature’s own condition! We get just a glimpse of it from the words, “always in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying and cutting himself with stones.” See what Satan does with those who are in his power.

[Mark 5:6](#). *But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him,*

The devil does not like doing it; but if it will serve his purpose, he will pretend to be a worshipper of Christ. He comes here sometimes; he goes to all sorts of places of worship, and makes men turn worshippers who have no worship in their hearts; for there is no end to the depth of his cunning,

and many are they that have served the devil best when they have pretended to worship Christ.

[Mark 5:7](#). *And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou son of the Most High God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not.*

Using the lips of this poor man, Satan spoke in him and through him. He is afraid of Christ. This dog of hell knows his Master, and crouches at his feet. He beseeches the “Son of the Most High God” not to torment him before his time.

[Mark 5:8](#). *For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit.*

Christ never wastes words over the devil. He speaks to him very shortly and very sharply. It would be well sometimes if we could be more laconic when we are dealing with evil. It does not deserve our words as it did not observe Christ’s words. Jesus said to the devil, “Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit.”

[Mark 5:9-10](#). *And he asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many. And he besought him much that he would not send them away out of the country.*

The devil can pray; he did so in this case. It is not because a man is fluent in prayer that we are sure of his salvation. It is not because a man prays with such fervor that his knees knock together, that we may conclude that he is a saint. It may be that he is trembling through fear of God’s judgment. Satan besought Christ much.

[Mark 5:11](#). *Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding. And all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them.*

Satan would rather vex swine than do no mischief at all. He is so fond of evil that he would work it upon animals if he cannot work it upon men. What unanimity there is amongst the evil spirits! “All the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them.”

[Mark 5:13](#). *And forthwith Jesus gave them leave.*

The devil cannot enter even a pig without Christ’s leave. So he cannot tempt you, my friend, without our Lord’s permission. You may rest assured that even this great monster of evil is under Christ’s control. He cannot molest you till Jesus gives him leave. There is a chain around the roaring lion, and he can only go just as far as the Lord allows him.

[Mark 5:13-14](#). *And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a deep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand;) and were choked in the sea. And they that fed the swine fled,*

At which we do not at all wonder. Who would not flee when they thus saw the power of Christ?

[Mark 5:14-15](#). *And told it in the city, and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that was done. And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.*

You would have thought that it would have been said, “They marvelled, and they praised Christ for this great and wonderful deed.” No, “They were afraid.” If you see another converted, do not be afraid; but rather have hope that you may be saved yourself. What a beautiful sight these people saw: “they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind.”! That thought ought to have made them rejoice instead of being afraid. There are still people who are afraid of what will happen when they see those whom Christ has blessed spiritually as he had healed this man.

[Mark 5:16-17](#). *And they that saw it told them how it befell to him that was possessed with the devil, and also concerning the swine. And they began to pray him to depart out of their coasts.*

If Jesus should come to you tonight, do not ask him to go away. Open wide the door of your heart, and entreat the Lord to come in, and dwell there for ever and ever. This narrative teaches us that the Lord Jesus Christ will go away if he is asked to do so; he will not remain where his room is preferred to his company.

[Mark 5:18-20](#). *And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him. Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion with thee. And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel.*

He was told to publish what great things the Lord had done for him. He went and published what great things Jesus had done for him. Did he make any mistake? Oh, no! It is but another name for the same Person: for Jesus is the Lord; and when you speak of him as divine, and talk of him in terms

fit only for God, you do but speak rightly; for so he deserveth to be praised. “And all men did marvel.” So our Lord left them all wondering. Leaving this one messenger to bear testimony to him, he went his way elsewhere, to carry blessings to many others on the other side of the sea. The man appears to have gone through the wide district that bore the name Decapolis, and his testimony to the power of Christ was so convincing that, when the Saviour revisited that part of the country, he had a very different reception from that which he received on this occasion. (see chapters 7:31-37, 8:1-10).

Verses 1-43

[Mark 5:1](#). *And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes.*

They had had a very eventful passage across that small but stormy sea, and Christ had proved himself to be the Lord High Admiral of the seas; but now that he steps ashore they are to see his power quite as distinctly displayed as upon the stormy wave.

[Mark 5:2-3](#). *And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains:*

Those ancient graveyards were in remote places, for the people were too wise to bury their dead inside their cities. Very often, the tombs were hewn in caverns in the sides of hills and rocks, and here the dead were laid. Of course, every man who touched a tomb was thereby ceremonially defiled, so that the tombs were fit places for an unclean person possessed by an unclean spirit. What a ghastly dwelling-place! What a grim abode for the man, and yet most fitting, for he was dangerous to all who passed by, — a raving lunatic, who could not be restrained by any bonds or chains that could be put upon him!

[Mark 5:4-5](#). *Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones.*

Poor creature! His howlings must have made night hideous indeed. Those who passed that way were startled by his unearthly cries, he was a terror to the whole district, persons could not bear to live anywhere near the places where he resorted. “Night and day” he was a misery to himself and a terror to all around him, — sad type of some whom we know, to our sorrow,

who have gone madly into sin. It certainly is madness, whatever else it may be; and when madness and badness go together, what a terror such a man becomes!

[Mark 5:6](#). *But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him,*

—
There is a wondrous attraction in the person of our Divine Lord and Master. Though he was a long way off, yet a gracious magnetic influence proceeded from him by which he drew this poor object of pity to him: “When he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him.”

[Mark 5:7](#). *And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not.*

Who was speaking then? The man himself, or the devil within him? It is very hard to tell; the man and the devil were two personalities, but they were so effectually blended into one that it is scarcely possible to tell when it was the man speaking, and when it was the devil. So, when sin enters into a man, it gets so completely into his very nature that, sometimes, we feel it must be the evil spirit speaking in the man, and yet it is not easy to be quite sure that it is so, and we cannot free the man himself from the guilt of his words and actions.

[Mark 5:8](#). *For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit.*

Whenever Christ speaks to the devil, his message is a very short and very sharp one. The Lord treats him like the dog that he is: “Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit.” Christ has no compliment for devils; and it is a pity that some of his servants have such soft words when they are dealing with unbelief, which is but a devil, or one of the devil’s imps.

[Mark 5:9](#). *And he asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many.*

The devil is obliged to tell his name when Christ treats him like a catechized child, and he is compelled to crouch before Christ like a whipped cur at his master’s feet.

[Mark 5:10](#). *And he besought him much that he would not send them away out of the country.*

Satan clings to this world, and to any place where he has had a signal triumph, as he had among those tombs and those rocky ravines.

[Mark 5:11-12](#). *Now there was nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding. And all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them.*

Such is the malice of these evil spirits, that they would rather do mischief among swine than nowhere. But notice their unanimity; with all the faults that can be laid at the door of demons, you cannot find them divided and quarrelling. They are unanimous in evil, and it is a shame that those who are the followers of Christ should often be divided, whereas the kingdom of Satan is not divided against itself. Let us learn from our great enemy at least this one lesson.

[Mark 5:13](#). *And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand;)*

It was strange that there should be so many swine in the country where lived God's people Israel, and as they had no right to be there, and were there contrary to Jewish law, it was well that they should be destroyed.

[Mark 5:13-15](#). *And were choked in the sea. And they that fed the swine fled, and told it in the city, and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that was done. And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.*

Ah, me! How variously different people look upon the same thing! If you and I, who are Christ's disciples, had gone there, and seen this poor lunatic fully restored, we should have been filled with holy joy, and we would have composed new hymns of praise in honour of the great Physician who had cured him. But these people, in their alienation of heart from the Lord Jesus Christ, "were afraid." They feared and trembled in the presence of almighty mercy; omnipotent love awoke no joy in their hearts, but the spirit of bondage was upon them.

[Mark 5:16](#). *And they that saw it told them how it befell to him that was possessed with the devil, and also concerning the swine.*

You may be sure that they dwelt upon the latter part of the story, for the loss of the swine touched them more than the healing of the demoniac.

[Mark 5:17](#). *And they began to pray him to depart out of their coasts.*

O dear friends, let none of us ever get into such a state of mind and heart as to pray Christ to go away from us! Yet we have known people act in such a dreadful way as that; a person troubled in conscience has said, "I will

never go and hear that preacher again; I cannot sleep at nights after listening to him. I will never read such and such a book again, it disturbs me so that I cannot enjoy myself.” This is, in effect, to pray Christ to depart out of your coasts. What! is salvation worth so little that you have no care to possess it? Is Christ himself so small a blessing that you even tremble lest he should change your nature, and save you? I think there were more lunatics than one on that Gadarene shore, the people were all as mad at heart as that one poor man was mad in brain.

[Mark 5:18](#). *And when he was come into the ship, —*

Christ will go from you if you want him to go. He forces himself upon no man; the grace of God does not violate the will of man, it acts in accordance with man’s nature, and achieves the divine purpose without disturbing the individuality of the man. So Christ went from Gadara: “And when he was come into the ship,” —

[Mark 5:18](#). *He that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him.*

Was not that a proper prayer? I think, dear friends, that not only nature, but the man’s new nature must have suggested this petition; he prayed Christ that he might be with him. In our day, it is very natural that, as soon as we are converted, we should wish to go home to heaven; but what is the reason why we should not do so? It is in order that we may bear witness for Christ here on earth, and gather in others unto him.

[Mark 5:19](#). *Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.*

That is one of the chief points on which we ought always to speak, not only to tell of the greatness of the change which the grace of God has wrought in us, but especially to testify to the tenderness of God to us. Oh, how gently did he handle our broken bones! That good Physician of ours has a lion’s heart, but he has a lady’s hand; he does not spare us needful pain, but he never inflicts even a twinge that is unnecessary. And, oh! the pity of his heart toward us when he sees the sorrow which our sin has brought upon us.

[Mark 5:20](#). *And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis —*

In the ten little cities that were in that region: “he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis” —

[Mark 5:20](#). *How great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel.*

This is the kind of ready-made preacher whose service for his Lord is usually most effectual. The man who, though he has studied little on many points, yet knows by experience what the grace of God has done for him, and keeps to that one theme, and tells out the story with simple untrained eloquence, is the man who will do much for his Master, as we read here: “all men did marvel.” If he had plunged into deep doctrinal subjects, it may be that men would have ridiculed him; but inasmuch as he spoke of what he did know, and told of the greatness and graciousness of God, “all men did marvel.”

[Mark 5:21-22](#). *And when Jesus was passed over again by ship unto the other side, much people gathered unto him: and he was nigh unto the sea. And, behold, —*

Wherever we see that word, “behold,” it is saying to us, “Mark well what is coming.” “Behold,” —

[Mark 5:22-24](#). *There cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and when he saw him, he fell at his feet, and besought him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death: I pray thee, come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live. And Jesus went with him; and much people followed him, and thronged him.*

[Mark 5:35-36](#). *While he yet spake, there came from the ruler of the synagogue’s house certain which said, Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further? As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe.*

I can imagine that, if Jairus had not been a man of much faith, he would have looked at the Saviour with a meaning glance, as much as to say, “‘Only believe’? Couldst thou ask more of me when my child is dead? Yet thou biddest me, ‘Only believe.’” But, brethren, here is the very sphere of faith. Where there is no wading, there must be swimming; and where there is no hope in the creature, then we must throw ourselves upon the Creator. So, the child’s death made room for the father’s faith.

[Mark 5:37](#); [Mark 5:39](#). *And he suffered no man to follow him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James. And he cometh to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and seeth the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly. And when he was come in, he saith unto them, Why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth.*

She was dead, but not dead as far as Christ's intention was concerned; she was not so dead as to remain dead. He meant soon to bring her back again to life, and therefore to him it was as if she were but sleeping.

[Mark 5:40](#). *And they laughed him to scorn.*

What a wonderful picture this must have been, — The Lord of glory in the center of a ribald crew who laughed him to scorn! But it is not the man who is laughed at who is necessarily contemptible, it is often the laughers who are the most deserving of scorn. It was so here in Christ's day, and it has often been so since.

[Mark 5:40](#). *But when he had put them all out,*

They were not worthy to be answered in any other fashion.

[Mark 5:40-42](#). *He taketh the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying. And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise. And straightway the damsel arose, and walked; for she was of the age of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment.*

How very often persons were "astonished" in Christ's day! Sometimes it is put, "they marvelled;" at other times, "they were amazed," or, "they wondered." It would have been well if wonder had always turned to faith; but sometimes it corrupted into hate. God grant that our wonder at Christ may always be of that kind which crystallizes into love!

[Mark 5:43](#). *And he charged them straitly that no man should know it; and commanded that something should be given her to eat.*

Life must be nourished; young life especially needs frequent food. If Christ has spiritually quickened your child, see that you feed the child with food convenient. If you have won a convert to Christ in the Sabbath-school, take care that the unadulterated milk of the Word is brought forth, that the new-born child may be fed and nourished till it comes unto the perfect stature of a man in Christ Jesus.

[MARK CONTENTS](#)

Mark Chapter 6

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER 7

Verses 24-30

[Mark 7:24-29](#). *And from thence he arose, and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into an house, and would have no man know it: but he could not be hid. For a certain woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came and fell at his feet: the woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation; and she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter. But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs. And she answered and said unto him, Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs. And he said unto her, For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter.*

Christ capitulated at once, yielded to the strong arms of conquering prayer and faith, and so the pleading woman had her will.

[Mark 7:30](#). *And when she was come to her house, she found the devil gone out, and her daughter laid upon the bed.*

This exposition consisted of readings from [Genesis 32:22-30](#); [Exodus 32:7-14](#); and [Mark 7:24-30](#).

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CHAPTER 8

Verses 1-30

[Mark 8:1-4](#). *In those days the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples unto him, and saith unto them, I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat: and if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way: for divers of them came from far. And his disciples answered him, From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness.*

Why did they not ask their Master what he could do in such an emergency as that? After so much experience of his power as they had already had, it is wonderful that they did not refer the matter to him, and say, "Lord, thou canst feed the multitude; we beseech thee do it." But they

did not act so wisely; instead, they began questioning about ways and means. “From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?”

[Mark 8:5-9](#). *And he asked them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven. And he commanded the people to sit down on the ground: and he took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave to his disciples to set before them; and they did set them before the people. And they had a few small fishes: and he blessed, and commanded to set them also before them. So they did eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets. And they that had eaten were about four thousand: and he sent them away.*

Christ is the great Master of the art of multiplication. However small is the stock with which we begin, we have only to dedicate it all to him, and he will multiply and increase it until it will go far beyond our utmost expectations, and there will be more left after the feast is over than there was before it began. Bring your small talents, bring the little grace you have, to Christ, for he can so increase your store that you will never know any lack, but shall have all the greater abundance the greater the demand that is made upon that store. Had these four thousand people not been miraculously fed by Christ, the seven loaves and the few small fishes would have remained just as they were; but now that the four thousand have to be fed, the loaves and fishes are multiplied by Christ in a very extraordinary manner, so that, in the end, there is far more provision than they had at the beginning. Expect, beloved, to be enriched by your losses, to grow by that which looks as if it would crush you, and to become greater by that which threatens to annihilate you. Only put yourself into Christ’s hands, and he will make good use of you, and leave you better than you were before he used you as the means of helping and blessing others.

[Mark 8:10-12](#). *And straightway he entered into a ship with his disciples, and came into the parts of Dalmanutha. And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with him, seeking of him a sign from heaven, tempting him. And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation.*

Unbelief always pricked him to the heart, and greatly grieved him. When men trusted him, he delighted to exhibit his matchless grace; but

when they caviled and questioned, his heart was heavy, and he turned away from them.

[Mark 8:13](#). *And he left them, and entering into the ship again departed to the other side.*

But, alas! even on board that little ship there was unbelief; and from the small and select circle of his own disciples he had fresh reason for sorrow from the same cause.

[Mark 8:14-21](#). *Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, neither had they in the ship with them more than one loaf. And he charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod. And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have no bread. And when Jesus knew it, he saith unto them, Why reason ye, because ye have no bread? perceive ye not yet, neither understand? have ye your heart yet hardened? Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember? When I brake the five loaves among five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? They say unto him, Twelve. And when the seven among four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? And they said, Seven. And he said unto them, How is it that ye do not understand?*

Can we not learn from past experience? If the Lord has helped us before, is he not equally ready to help us again? What! when there are only a few of you disciples on board ship, do you begin to distrust your Lord because you have only one loaf, when he found enough food for five thousand and for four thousand out of a few scanty loaves? O ye unbelieving children of God, what infinite patience your gracious God has with you, though you so often and so shamefully doubt him! “Do ye not remember?” “How is it that ye do not understand?” Can it be that all your Lord’s lessons of love and deeds of kindness have taught you nothing? Do you still doubt him, -still distrust him? Has he delivered you in six troubles, and can you not trust him in the seventh? Has he kept you, by his grace, till you are seventy years of age, and can you not trust him for the few remaining years of your earthly pilgrimage? Oh, shame upon us that we are such dull scholars in the school of Christ!

[Mark 8:22-26](#). *And he cometh to Bethsaida; and they bring a blind man unto him, and besought him to touch him. And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw ought. And he looked up,*

and said, I see men as trees, walking. After that he put his hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly. And he sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town.

“Your house is outside Bethsaida, so go round-about, and get home without going into the town; and if any of your neighbors call to see you, say nothing about me to them, for I wish to remain concealed for the present.”

[Mark 8:27](#). *And Jesus went out, and his disciples, into the towns of Caesarea Philippi: and by the way he asked his disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am?*

It was Christ’s usual way, when he took a walk with his disciples, to beguile the time with holy conversation. It would be well if we always did the same. We might do much good, and we might get much good, if we made our Lord Jesus the theme of our talks “by the way.” It was an important question that he put to his disciples, “Whom do men say that I am?”

[Mark 8:28-29](#). *And they answered, John the Baptist: but some say, Elias; and others, One of the prophets. And he saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?*

“That is the main point. It matters little to you what other men say about me;—whether they are right, or wrong, may not concern you; but what is your own opinion? What do you know about me? ‘Whom say ye that I am?’”

[Mark 8:29](#). *And Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ.*

“Thou art the Messiah.” We know, from Matthew’s Gospel, that it was this confession of which our Lord said to Peter, “Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona,” son of Jonas:—“for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.”

[Mark 8:30](#). *And he charged them that they should tell no man of him.*

He wished, at that time, to remain in comparative retirement; he was not anxious that his miracles should be blazoned abroad. By-and-by, he was to die; and he preferred to derive his fame from his death rather than from his life, and to gather his honours from his cross rather than from his miracles.

He never bade any man to be silent about his death on the cross; but when honour was likely to come to him among men from his miracles, he

frequently “charged them that they should tell no man of him.” That restriction is no longer in force; it was entirely abrogated after our Lord’s resurrection, when he said to his disciples, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”

MARK CONTENTS

CHAPTER 9

Verses 2-21

Mark 9:2-7. *And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them. And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them. And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus. And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles, one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. For he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid. And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him.*

You and I have sometimes wished that we could see Christ in his earthly glory. We need not however wish it; for, if such a sight were permitted to us, in all probability we should be more full of fear than of joy. These three men, the elect out of the elect, the very choicest of the apostles, yet had little delight in what they saw at the time, for the glory was too bright for their overwhelmed natures.

“At the too transporting sight,
Darkness rushes o’er my sight.”

We had better wait awhile until these eyes shall have been cleansed, and our whole fabric shall be fit for such a weight of glory as the sight of our exalted Lord will be.

Mark 9:8. *And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves.*

Unhappy, indeed, would they have been if they had looked about and seen none but Moses, for poor comfort could Moses bring. Or if, looking around, they had seen none but Elias, for the stern prophet of fire would have been but a poor consolation to them in their life struggles. But Moses may go, and Elijah may go. Lawgiver and prophet may vanish so long as Jesus Christ remains, it is enough. Jesus only is enough for all our wants, — for all our desires.

[Mark 9:9-10](#). *And as they came down from the mountain, he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead. And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean.*

For they did not understand the Master's words — not even these apostles for the Spirit of God was not yet fully given. Happy indeed is he upon whom the spirit of God resteth, and in whom he dwells, for as John says "Ye have an anointing from the Holy One, and know all things", and these men without that measure of anointing did not know at that time even such a simple word as this — that the Son of man should rise again from the dead. Brethren, we must be taught of the Holy Spirit, or we shall never know anything profoundly. We might go to school to Christ himself — now, mark this word — we might go to school to Christ himself and yet learn nothing until the Holy Ghost should come upon us to write the truth upon our heart which Christ has spoken to the ear. Oh, if ye lack wisdom, ask of God, and he will give you of his Spirit.

[Mark 9:11-13](#). *And they asked him, saying, Why say the scribes that Elias must first come? And he answered and told them, Elias verily cometh first, and restoreth all things, and how it is written of the Son of man, that he must suffer many things, and be set at naught. But I say unto you, That Elias is indeed come, —*

John the Baptist was he.

[Mark 9:13](#). *And they have done unto him whatsoever they listed, as it is written of him.*

It is rather singular that the disciples should begin to ask about the scribes, for this was, as it were, a sort of warning note for a battle into which they were about to plunge. They talked about the scribes, but the scribes were down below in conflict with the rest of the apostolic brotherhood, and now, while they are talking about them, they find themselves immediately in their presence.

[Mark 9:14-15](#). *And when he came to his disciples, he saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes questioning with them. And straightway all the people, when they beheld him, were greatly amazed, and running to him saluted him.*

The probability is that the face of Jesus Christ was shining like the face of Moses when he came down from the mount, and the people were amazed though not with that same amazement which seized upon Israel when they saw the face of Moses, for Moses had to cover his face with a veil. But they ran to him and saluted him. The glory of Christ attracts, whereas the glory of Moses repels. The glory of the law is terrible, but the glory of the Gospel is cheering and attractive.

[Mark 9:16](#). *And he asked the scribes, What question ye with them?*

Like some great commander stepping into the field when his under followers are being beaten, he comes right to the front and charges the foe boldly. Christ said, “What question ye with them?” — as much as to say, “Why did ye not wait a bit and ask me. I could have answered you if they can not.”

[Mark 9:17-18](#). *And one the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit; and wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away:*

A case of dreadful epilepsy accompanied with satanic possession.

[Mark 9:18-19](#). *And I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not. He answereth him, and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him unto me.*

That is a grand piece of advice, and a blessed word of permit — “Bring him unto me.” There is no case so bad but, if you bring it to Jesus, he can meet it. “Bring him unto me.” Now, good woman, bring your daughter’s case to Christ tonight in prayer while you are sitting in the pew. Now, come, brother, bring the case of your son who seems utterly to be abandoned to vice. Bring the case before Christ tonight. “Bring him unto me.” Oh, who would not bring his friend — his wife? Who would not bring her husband or her child unto Jesus Christ? “Bring him unto me.”

[Mark 9:20](#). *And they brought him unto him:*

Some came to help the father, probably the bringing of the young man was too much an effort for one alone. “They brought him unto him.” Two or

three of you with united prayer can do what, peradventure, one man's prayer would not. Come, help one another. "Bear ye one another's burdens" in prayer. I would suggest that, if one of you should have an ungodly son who causes you trouble, you should communicate with some few of your brethren and sisters in Christ, and say, "Let us conjointly make this case a matter of prayer till God hears us." And then you must take up a case of theirs, you know, turn and turn about, and see whether God does not in answer to prayer bless one after another that you thus bring to Christ. I know what the result will be, if it be honestly tried in simple confidence in the power of Jesus.

[Mark 9:20-21](#). *And when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him, and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming. And he asked his father, how long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, of a child.*

A terrible case.

Verses 2-29

[Mark 9:2-6](#). *And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them. And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them. And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus. And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. For he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid.*

Brethren, like these disciples of our Lord, we are not yet fit to be favored with a sight of his glory. As we now are, we could not bear it. As our poet says, —

"At the too-transporting light,
Darkness rushes o'er my sight."

These three apostles of Christ were too bewildered to know what to say, they were quite lost, and I suppose that, if we could go to heaven as we are, our bewilderment would even exceed our bliss. But we may rest assured that God will prepare us for that which he has prepared for us.

[Mark 9:7-8](#). *And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him. And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves.*

And although this was not so ravishing or so astonishing a sight, yet it was more encouraging to them, — something which they could more easily bear with joy and peace: “they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves.” May God grant to us, as long as we are here below, that, If no Moses or Elias shall ever come to visit us, at any rate Jesus may never be absent from us! May our fellowship with him be unbroken!

[Mark 9:9-10](#). *And as they came down from the mountain, he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead. And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean.*

These were Peter, and James, and John, the three most privileged disciples of Christ, — probably, the best scholars in that class which had the Lord Jesus Christ himself for its Teacher; yet his plain language, was without meaning to them: “questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean.” I wonder whether, when our Lord comes the second time, we shall discover that the prophecies concerning his advent were wonderfully clear, but that we could not understand them till he came. Plain as his teaching concerning his resurrection was, his disciples could not understand it till that great event had really occurred.

[Mark 9:11-13](#). *And they asked him, saying, Why say the scribes that Elias must first come? And he answered and told them, Elias verily cometh first, and restoreth all things; and how it is written of the Son of man, that he must suffer many things, and be set at nought. But I say unto you, That Elias is indeed come, and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed, as it is written of him.*

John the Baptist had come, in the spirit and power of Elijah, and had reconstituted matters, and prepared the people for the advent of the Saviour, whose herald he was.

[Mark 9:14](#); [Mark 9:16](#). *And when he came to his disciples, he saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes questioning with them. And straightway all the people, when they beheld him, were greatly amazed, and running to him saluted him.*

Some relics of the glory on the mount still remained upon his face, and the people were astounded; so, though deeply interested in the battle which was proceeding between the scribes and the disciples, they left them, and turned to look upon that mysterious radiance which hovered about his brow.

[Mark 9:16](#). *And he asked the scribes, What question ye with them?*

The circumstances of the disciples resembled a battlefield on which the enemy was winning the day, and the loyal troops were about to die defeated; when suddenly, the great Commander himself appears for their relief. His presence is worth more than a thousand battalions of men; and he charges at once upon the adversary, and puts them to rout: “He asked the scribes, What question ye with them?”

[Mark 9:17](#). *And one of the multitude answered —*

One who had a peculiar reason for answering; just as, I trust there will be one in this multitude before me who will have a peculiar reason for listening to my message, and a peculiar reason for remembering it after it is delivered: “One of the multitude answered” —

[Mark 9:17-19](#). *And said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit; and wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not. He answereth him, and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him unto me.*

I suppose our Lord’s rebuke was meant specially for his disciples. It was something like the speech of a schoolmaster, who, having taught his pupils the same lesson a great many times, and laboured hard with them, from year to year, yet finds them failing in the very elements of knowledge. Christ does not speak as if he were tired of his life, and wished to get away from his disciples; but this is his way of saying how disappointed he is that these learners have learnt so little.

“How long shall I suffer you? bring him unto me” Those words struck my heart very forcibly as I read them: “How long shall I suffer you?” Does not the Lord Jesus Christ have to put up with a great deal from every one of us? I applied his words to myself, and I thought I heard him saying to me, “How long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you?” Often, he must derive more pain than pleasure from intercourse with many of his people. How grieved he often must be to see their slowness to learn, their readiness to forget, and the difficulty with which they can be brought to live the lessons which he so carefully imparts to them! Then note what his action is concerning the poor child: “Bring him unto me.”

[Mark 9:20](#). *And they brought him unto him: and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him;*

As soon as ever Christ looked at him, “the spirit tare him.” One look from Christ awakes the devil. Sometimes, sinners are worse for a time when Christ looks upon them. The devil always has great wrath, when he knoweth that his time is short; and he rages and tears most violently when he is about to be ejected. The Jews have a proverb, “When the tale of bricks is doubled, Moses appears,” and we may make it into a Scriptural proverb, “When the devil’s torment of the heart is doubled, then Jesus appears to cast him out.”

[Mark 9:20](#). *And he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming.*

And Jesus, instead of curing him at once, gave his first attention to the other patient before him, namely, the father of the child, He was suffering from an equally bad disease, though the symptoms were different, and Jesus meant to cure him as well as his boy.

[Mark 9:21-22](#). *And he asked his father, how long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child. And oftentimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us.*

He put himself on a level with his child, and that is the best way to pray for your children: “Have compassion on us, and help us.” It will be compassion on you, as well as upon your son, if the Lord saves him.

[Mark 9:23](#). *Jesus said unto him, —*

Catching at his words, “If thou canst do anything,” —

[Mark 9:23-29](#). *If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief. When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him. And the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead. But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose. And when he was come into the house, his disciples asked him privately, Why could not we cast him out? And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.*

There are some things, which we are not fit to do until we have drawn very near to God, and have been deeply humbled, and, with sincere repentance, and the gracious operation of the Holy Spirit, have been cleansed so as to receive so great a boon. Faith alone will not accomplish

everything. Faith must be accompanied by prayer, and prayer must be at least sometimes, in special cases, attended with fasting. The Lord makes reserves of his mercies, which he does not give immediately even to the request of faith, he demands importunity on our part, and heart-searching, and heart-cleansing, before the blessing will be bestowed.

Verses 14-48

Our Lord had been absent from the people, and transfigured on the top of the mountain; when he came down from this manifestation of his glory, he was brought face to face with Satan's work at almost the first step he took.

Let us read about what he did.

[Mark 9:14-15](#). *And when he came to his disciples, he saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes questioning with them. And straightway all the people, when they beheld him, were greatly amazed, and running to him saluted him.*

There was a glory about his face not altogether unlike that of Moses when he came down from the other mountain, so that the people were struck with wonder when they looked upon him.

[Mark 9:16](#). *And he asked the scribes, What question ye with them?*

The battle had been raging between Christ's enemies and his disciples but now that their Captain has come, he rallies his forces, and at once attacks his foes: "What question ye with them?"

[Mark 9:17](#). *And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit;*

We do not know if the scribes gave any answer to Christ's question; and it does not signify at all. What does always signify is practical, living, earnest prayer. So what the scribes may have said is not recorded, but the prayer of the poor father is: "Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit." If any of you have come here to cavil, we shall take no notice of that; but if there is a soul that has come here to pray, the recording angel will write it down in the eternal book.

[Mark 9:18](#). *And wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not.*

No, it was no use going to the disciples, it is of no avail to pray to saints and angels; go to the Master himself. "Straightforward makes the best runner." There is nothing like carrying your case to headquarters. Get to the

Court of King's Bench as soon as you can, for there the matter will be finally settled.

[Mark 9:19](#). *He answereth him, and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him unto me.*

Grand words: "Bring him unto me." Lord, he has a dumb spirit. "Bring him unto me." It is the devil who is his enemy. "Bring him unto me."

[Mark 9:20](#). *And they brought him unto him: and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming.*

What a dreadful sight! He struggled on the ground, like one in a fit of epilepsy.

[Mark 9:21-22](#). *And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him?. And he said, Of a child. And oftentimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us.*

"Help us," he cries, identifying himself with his child. Father, mother, when you pray, use the plural, as this man did, "Have compassion on us and help us." That is the way to pray for every sinner whom you bring before Christ. Join yourself to the poor soul for whom you are pleading and say, "Have compassion on us, and help us."

[Mark 9:23](#). *Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.*

Hear that, any of you who have come in here, desiring to be delivered from sin, to be made holy, to break off old habits, and to become new men in Christ Jesus. "All things are possible to him that believeth." So, take courage, trust in Christ, and cry unto him to save you.

[Mark 9:24](#). *And straightway the father of the child, cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.*

There were within him two men, as it were, a believing man, and an unbelieving man, and the two struggled for mastery; "Lord, I do believe; but there is so much unbelief in me, I pray thee to drive it out, that I may believe in thee wholly."

[Mark 9:25-26](#). *When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him. And the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him:*

It must obey Christ. The Master bids that dog of a devil to lie down, and he must do so. It shows what an abject creature, after all, the prince of darkness is; he must obey the voice of Christ. Lord, speak to him at this moment, and drive him out of other souls by thine omnipotent word!

[Mark 9:26](#). *And he was as one dead; inasmuch that many said, He is dead.*

It was not a case of “kill or cure,” but it seemed to be one of “cure and kill,” and, sometimes, poor sinners, in their struggles with sin and Satan are brought to such despair that they are afraid that they will die before they get a glimpse of hope. “Many said, He is dead;” but he was not.

[Mark 9:27](#). *But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose.*

So may the Lord come, and take by the hand any here who seem to be dead in despair! A touch of his hand will enable them to stand.

[Mark 9:28-29](#). *And when he was come into the house, his disciples asked him privately, Why could not we cast him out? And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.*

The watchword for Christ’s disciples is “intensity.” Here was the devil in an intensely terrible form, and he could only be driven out by intense grace. There must be prayer and fasting. Even Christ himself must exert the greatness of his power to work a cure in such a case as this. Oh, for more intensity in us all! Carry that word in your ear as we read on.

[Mark 9:30-32](#). *And they departed thence, and passed through Galilee; and he would not that any man should know it. For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day. But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him.*

See how intense he was; always thinking of his approaching death, that cruel, bitter death, yet he hasted towards it, longed for that baptism to be accomplished, for the great redeeming price to be paid. Oh, that you and I were as fully absorbed in the service of God as our great Master was!

Now let us see what intensity he requires of us.

[Mark 9:43](#). *And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:*

Anything is better than the loss of your soul. It is better to lose the greatest joy, skill, comfort, honour, that you ever had, than to lose your soul

for ever.

[Mark 9:44-46](#). *Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off; it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.*

That is the second time he said these words. Our Lord was not fond of dreadful metaphors and terrible language, but he knew that they must be used, though some of his servants shrink from the use of them. Are they more loving than he is? Is it, after all, a greater love for souls that makes men keep back terrible truths? Is it not more honest and loving to tell the whole truth, whatever it may be? It is harder to speak, but does it not show a tenderer heart to be able to speak so as to warn men of their peril? If anything should seem as necessary to you as your foot, so that you can make no progress in life without it, yet if it would cost you your soul, give it up. Just as it would be better to live without a foot than to die, so is it better to go to heaven without even the necessities of life on the road than to perish everlastingly.

[Mark 9:47](#). *And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out:*

Notice how severe our Saviour is, how deep he goes. He does not say, "Shut it, cover it up with a green shade;" but, "Pluck it out."

[Mark 9:47-48](#). *It is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hellfire: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.*

That is the third time he has uttered those terrible words; then they must mean something, what do they mean? Can they mean anything less than everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord? Oh, that we might be prepared to sacrifice everything rather than be lost for ever! Dear hearts, are you saved or not? If you are not saved, see first to this all-important business; let everything else go sooner than that, in eternity, you should find yourself for ever shut in where hope can never come.

Verses 20-41

This miracle is one that shows the transforming power of the Saviour in a remarkable fashion.

[Mark 9:20-21](#). *And when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming. And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child.*

A terrible case.

[Mark 9:22-25](#). *And oftentimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us. Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief. When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him.*

That is one way in which Christ cures. When he drives the devil out of a man, he adds, “Enter no more into him.” I believe in the final perseverance of the saints, because I believe in the omnipotent ejection of Satan out of men, when Christ speaks the word, “Come out of him, and enter no more into him.”

[Mark 9:26-29](#). *And the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead. But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose. And when he was come into the house, his disciples asked him privately, Why could not we cast him out? And he said unto them, —*

According to another evangelist, it was from want of faith. Howbeit, he added: —

[Mark 9:29](#). *This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.*

God does not give us everything in answer to one prayer. It may be necessary for some blessings that the prayer should be reiterated — that it should deepen — that it should grow into an aching. It may be even necessary, in order that a blessing should come, that fasting should be used with prayer in order to show the intense eagerness and earnestness of the petitioner.

Now notice the 38th verse.

[Mark 9:38](#). *And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbid him, because he followeth not us.*

John in this case was like a good many people at the present day. You notice it. They could not cast out the devils themselves, and when they found somebody else that did it, they forbade his doing it because he did not follow with them. I have known learned, eloquent, respectable ministers who cannot save sinners. And they hear that certain poor, illiterate,

uneducated men have snatched sinners like brands from the burning, and they forbid them to do what they cannot do themselves. It is insanity — that would stop any man from doing what God enables him to do; and we ought to be the very last to forbid others from doing it.

[Mark 9:39](#). *But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me.*

These people were dissenters, we may say — a sort of outsiders. And John puts forth the whole power of his apostolical authority to put them down; and then Jesus Christ puts forth the full power of his divine authority to give them liberty to go on.

[Mark 9:40-41](#). *For he that is not against us is on our part. For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.*

Verses 30-40

[Mark 9:30-32](#). *And they departed thence, and passed through Galilee; and he would not that any man should know it. For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of Man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day. But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him.*

Here is the ruling passion of Christ which was ever prominent throughout his life; though he has just won a glorious victory over Satan, he does not stay to congratulate himself upon it, but his heart is still away to the cross where he is to suffer. He is thinking of his dying for his people, and lodging until he shall have paid the ransom price for their redemption, and set them free. Oh, the heights and depths of the love of Christ! See how steadfastly he sets his face to go unto Jerusalem where he must die. Let us imitate him; let us think as much of his passion now it is over as he thought of it ere it was come.

[Mark 9:33-34](#), *And he came to Capernaum: and being in the house he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way? But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest.*

It was a dreadful descent from communing with Moses and Elias on the mount of transfiguration to meeting the furious demon at the hill-foot; but this looks like a far greater descent, from the self-sacrifice of the Divine Master to the petty jealousies and self-seeking of his chosen servants. Oh,

sometimes, it makes our hearts sick - when we have been almost lost in rapturous meditation, when we have been taken up well-nigh to heaven in communion with the Lord, and then we have had to attend to some paltry squabble between two brothers or two sisters! It does seem such a terrible come-down, yet our Lord and Master does not disdain thus to come down, for in tenderness he deals with these diseases of the sheep like a good shepherd.

[Mark 9:35-37](#). *And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all. And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them, Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me.*

Perhaps they were jealous of Peter; possibly they were even more jealous of James and John. So the Lord gently pacifies them; he does not impatiently say, "I cannot enter into your disputes, I cannot be worried with you." Oh, no! but he just sits down, and talks with them. I like that picture, it is almost as grand as the group of Christ and his disciples at the supper table in the upper room. "He sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all." That is the way they come to be first, by being willing to be last of all, and the servant of all. This is the only way to get to the front of Christ's army; he who would be chief, must always be aiming at the rear rank, willing to do the most humble service, and to be the lowest menial in his Master's service. Only in this way can we rise. In Christ's kingdom, the way to go up is to go down. Sink self, and you shall surely rise.

[Mark 9:38](#). *And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbid him, because he followeth not us.*

He did it, I daresay, in love to his Master; but not in the love of his Master. He did it, no doubt, with the desire to honour his Master, but he did not honour his Master by what he did.

[Mark 9:39-40](#). *But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is on our part.*

Thus the Master had to talk to his poor disciples after having conversed with Moses and Elias. Again, I say, what a come-down it was from

fellowship with the great law-giver of Israel, and with the mighty prophet of fire, to talk with these childish men who had fallen out among themselves, and fallen out with other people! O blessed Master, we may fain hope that thou wilt commune with us as thou didst commune with them! We may also trust that some poor sinner, even though the devil may be in him, may catch thine eye of pity and love, and that thou mayest heal him.

[MARK CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 10

Verses 13-52

[Mark 10:13](#). *And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them.*

They thought them too little, too insignificant, and that the Master had greater things to do; but he thinketh not so. None are too little for him. He receiveth even childish honours to himself.

[Mark 10:14](#). *But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.*

Many of them come into that kingdom, and all who some think must be like them. The child is not the hardest subject of conversion; nay, rather:

[Mark 10:15](#). *Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.*

Instead of growing wiser, in order to be fit for Christ, we must be more conscious of ignorance, more trustful towards him, more dependent upon him, mere childlike.

[Mark 10:16-18](#). *And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them. And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God.*

He did not here unveil his Deity to that young man, but if he had thought a while, he might have seen it. However, he answered his question. “If you are to be saved by your doings, this is what you have to do — not attend to sacraments and go through performances, but this.”

[Mark 10:19-20](#). *Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother. And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth.*

And he probably had very cautiously and anxiously done so, yet, for all that, he had not really kept all those commands without a flaw. We are right well sure of that, but as yet his eyes were not open to see his own shortcomings.

[Mark 10:21](#). *Then Jesus beholding him loved him, There was so much that was amiable about him.*

[Mark 10:21](#). *And said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me.*

He knew that there was a weak point in the young man's character — that he did not yet supremely love God, but loved his wealth — that he was living for this world, after all. And are there not many such — most correct in character? No one could point to a single flaw in their morals, but they are living purely for self — altogether that they may buy and sell, and get gain. No thought of God, except a fear lest they should come under his rod, but no thought of serving him, and laying themselves out for his glory, nor much thought, either, for their fellow-men. Christ had hit the blot — marked it out for him.

[Mark 10:23-24](#). *And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions. And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! And the disciples were astonished at his words.*

For the Rabbis had pretty well taught that money would answer everything — that if you could give so much, and pay so much, it was all well with you. Christ went against all such teaching, and showed that, in this respect, money was of no service — in fact, that it often was a hindrance.

[Mark 10:24](#). *But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trustest in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!*

It is an impossibility. Only God can do it.

[Mark 10:25-27](#). *It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be*

saved? And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.

[Mark 10:32-34](#). *And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them: and they were amazed: and as they followed, they were afraid. And he took the twelve again, and began to tell them what things should happen unto him, Saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles: And they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him: and the third day he shall rise again.*

From the number of these sentences it is clear that our Saviour entered into a very detailed account of his sufferings, dwelling upon each particular which he plainly foresaw, wherein we see his prophetic character. But it is more to our point to see that he knew beforehand what it would cost him to redeem our souls. “When the Saviour knew the price of pardon was his blood, his pity ne’er withdrew.” He knew not only that he must die, but he knew all the circumstances of pain and shame with which that death should be attended. They should condemn him: should deliver him to the Gentiles; mock him; scourge him; spit upon him; kill him. Thus we learn that we also should dwell in holy, grateful meditation upon every point of our Lord’s passion. There is something in it. He would not himself thus have divided it out, and laid it, as it were, piece by piece, if he had not intended us to do with it as they did with the burnt-offering of old, when they divided it — a picture of what every intelligent, instructed believer should do with the passion of his Master. He should try to look into the details of the great sacrifice, and have communion with God therein. Now, albeit that this revelation of his coming shame, and sorrow, and death afflicted the hearts of his disciples, yet, for all that, observe what they did.

[Mark 10:35](#). *And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto him, saying, Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire.*

Strange request! First of all, read those words, “We would that thou shouldest do for us.” Now the genuine spirit of a Christian is not to ask that something should be done to him, but to ask his Master, especially in such a time as that, what they could do for him. Christ was all unselfishness, but his disciples had not yet learned the lesson. “We would that thou shouldest do for us.” And then see how much they indulged their ambition. “We

wouldest that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we desire.” And yet I question whether we are, any of us, free from this spirit; for when the Lord reproveth us a little, and we have not everything our own way, how apt we are to rebel! The fact is, we have got this tincture — this gall — in us — we would that he should do for us whatsoever we shall desire. Should it be according to thy mind? Should the disciple dictate to his Master? Should the child Be lord of the family?

[Mark 10:36-39](#). *And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you? They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory. But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? And they said unto him, We can.*

Again, he might have said, “Ye know not what ye say.”

[Mark 10:39-40](#). *And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized: But to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared.*

They are not content, you see, with being ambitious themselves: they would fire him with ambition — that humble, lowly servant of God, who had laid aside for a while the power to distribute crowns and thrones. But he does not forget himself, nor the position which he had taken up in reference to the Father, but said, “It is not mine to give.”

[Mark 10:41-43](#). *And when the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John. But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you:*

However, how sad the contrast is — the Master’s thoughts all taken up with his death for others, and their thoughts occupied with little petty jealousies as to who should be the greatest! It is a sad thing when this creeps into Christian churches (and it still does), when souls are perishing, and this poor world wants our weeping eyes and our labourious hands, and we get quarreling about points of precedence. This brother thinks the other too forward. This one has not enough respect paid to him. This one has spoken sharply, and the other cannot bear it. Oh! what poor disciples we are! What a blessing it is we have a patient. Master, who still bears with us,

and will not leave us until he has infused his own spirit into us, which spirit is the spirit of self-denial, self-abnegation — the spirit which desireth not its own, but looketh on the things of others. God grant us all to be full of it.

[Mark 10:43](#). *But whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister:*

Your servant.

[Mark 10:44](#). *And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all.*

And that is the way to be truly great in the Church of God. It is to be less and less in your own esteem, and willing to be nothing. The way up is downward That is not a contradiction, but it is a paradox. Sink, and you shall rise. Be willing to serve the very least, and you shall have honour amongst your brethren. Remember that the King of kings was the servant of servants. “Whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all.”

[Mark 10:45-49](#). *For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many. And they came to Jericho: and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the highway side begging. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me. And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, thou son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort,*

“Cheer up.” That would be a very exact translation.

[Mark 10:49-51](#). *Rise; he calleth thee. And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus. And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?*

Do you notice here a sort of gentle rebuke that the Saviour gives to James and John? Read the 36th verse, and then read this again. “He said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you?” And now here is a blind beggar, and he sweetly puts the same question to him, “What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?”

[Mark 10:51](#). *The blind man said unto him,*

And here he might well have shamed John and James. He asked for no thrones or kingdoms.

[Mark 10:51](#). *Lord, that I might receive my sight.*

“Lord, that I might look up.” That was the word he used exactly; for no doubt he had been conscious that the light came from the sun as he felt its warmth upon him as he sat by the wayside; and, therefore, he thought that seeing must be looking up towards the place whence the sunlight came. “Lord, that I might look up.”

[Mark 10:52](#). *And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.*

It is a very remarkable thing that you will not often find the Lord Jesus Christ granting a favor without ascribing it to some excellency in that person to whom he grants it. It is generally “Great is thy faith,” or something of that sort — “I have not seen such faith.” Now this is a very remarkable thing, because we know there really was nothing whatever in the persons that they should deserve his great favor.

Verses 17-45

[Mark 10:17-18](#). *And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God.*

This was a hint that Christ was more than man. If he was really worthy of the title that the enquirer gave him, he was God as well as man, for “there is none good but one, that is God.”

[Mark 10:19-20](#). *Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother. And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth.*

Possibly, in the ordinary sense of the words, he had observed these commandments, but Christ tested the reality of his declaration.

[Mark 10:21-22](#). *Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.*

Thus he proved that he had not kept either table of the law perfectly, for he did not love the Lord with all his heart, nor did he love his neighbor as himself.

[Mark 10:23-27](#). *And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved? And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.*

It is impossible for man, unaided by the Spirit of God, to enter the kingdom of heaven, but that which is impossible to man by himself is made possible by the grace and power of God.

[Mark 10:28](#). *Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee.*

He spoke as if they had done what the rich man had failed to do, and evidently he thought they should be rewarded, for, according to Matthew, he added, “What shall we have therefore?”

[Mark 10:29-31](#). *And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospels, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life. But many that are first shall be last; and the last first.*

In the final account, it shall be found that no man has been a loser through giving up anything for the Lord Jesus Christ though he has his own method of deciding who are to be first and who are to be last.

[Mark 10:32](#). *And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem;*

It was well known to them all that the crisis of our Saviour’s history was close at hand and a sort of indefinable dread was upon them all. The bravest spirit in the whole company was their blessed Lord and Master. He knew that he was going up to Jerusalem to die, so you may view him as the Sacrifice going to the altar, or as the Hero going to the conflict in which he would die and yet conquer. They were in the way going up to Jerusalem; —

[Mark 10:32](#). *And Jesus went before them:*

The disciples might well have been filled with holy courage as their Leader was in the van. This is true concerning the whole life of all the

saints: Jesus went before them.” What if trials lie beyond, and the dark river itself is in front of them, yet Jesus goes before them, so they need not fear to follow.

[Mark 10:32](#). *And they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid.*

They did not know much about what was to happen, but a great depression was upon their spirits. They must have wondered at the cheerful bravery of their Master when all of them were ready to turn back from this mournful march.

[Mark 10:32-34](#). *And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto him, Saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles: and they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him: and the third day he shall rise again.*

He thought it right that the twelve, who led the way, should be better acquainted than the rest with the sad history that was so soon to be enacted. So he tells them about it in private, and I want you to notice how he dwells in detail upon his sufferings. He does not describe them in general terms, but he brings out into strong relief each separate set of infamy: “they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him and shall kill him;” — from which we learn that our Saviour knew all that he had to endure, yet he went bravely forward to bear it for our sakes. For this reason, we should admire his divine courage and complete self-sacrifice. Mere men may promise to do a certain thing without knowing what it will involve, but

—
“This was compassion like a God,
That when the Saviour knew The price of pardon was his blood,
His pity ne’er withdrew.”

I think, too, that as our Lord thus dwells upon each point, he means us also to dwell upon the details of his redeeming griefs. We should not be strangers at the cross-foot, nor in Gethsemane; but should hear each one of these notes ring out its sorrowful yet joyful music: “They shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him.” But what a glad note that concluding one is: “and the third day he shall rise again.” Death cannot hold him in her bands, the sepulcher cannot continue

to enclose him in her gloomy prison This is the glory and boast of our Christianity, our hope and our joy, for —

“As the Lord our Saviour rose,
So all his followers must.”

[Mark 10:35-36](#). *And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto him saying, Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire. And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you?*

Our Saviour’s question suggests to us the prudent lesson, never to promise in the dark. If anyone shall say to you, “Promise that you will do whatever I ask,” follow the example of Christ and first ask, “What would you that I should do for you?” Otherwise, you may entangle yourself with your own words. These young men evidently needed to have this question put to them, for they had not themselves thoroughly considered what they were asking their Lord to do for them.

[Mark 10:37](#). *They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory.*

There was, undoubtedly, much that was wrong about this request, and you have often heard that view of the matter dwelt upon, so I will call your attention to that which was right about it. These disciples showed their faith that this same Jesus, who was to be mocked, and scourged, and spit upon, and killed, would yet reign; and I think it was wonderful faith that, after they had heard from his own lips, in sorrowful detail, the description of how he should die, yet nevertheless they so fully believed in his kingdom that they asked to have a share in its honours. It is true that they were ambitious, but their ambition was to be near the Saviour. It would be well if all those, who ask for right hand and left hand places, wanted them at the right hand and the left hand of the Saviour.

[Mark 10:38](#). *But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask:*

Has the Lord ever said to us, when we have been praying, “Ye know not what ye ask”? I suppose that is usually true in a certain sense; we do not fully understand the compass of the most of our prayers, and sometimes we ask so unadvisedly that we prove that we know not what we are asking.

[Mark 10:38](#). *Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?*

“Can ye share my drinking in Gethsemane and my sinking on Golgotha?”

[Mark 10:39](#). *And they said unto him, We can.*

They knew not what they said, but they felt that such was the strength of their love, that they could share anything that had to do with Christ! His throne! Yes, they would like to sit at the right hand of it. His cup! Yes, they can drink of it. Immersion into his suffering! Yes, they can endure that baptism.

[Mark 10:39](#). *And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized:*

And so they were, for James was soon put to death, and John lived, the last and longest of the apostles, a life-long martyrdom for the Master's sake.

[Mark 10:40-41](#). *But to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared. And when the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John.*

Why were they displeased? Because they were of the same spirit as James and John. As they were displeased with James and John, it is evident that they wanted those places themselves, and many a man is thus displeased with his own faults. Did you ever see a dog bark at himself in a glass? You and I have often done that; we have even grown very angry with what was, after all, only our own image.

[Mark 10:42-45](#). *But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: and whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.*

Christ instituted bishops, that is, overseers; but never prelates. He never had any idea of setting some men in his Church over the heads of others, but he put all his servants upon an equality. They are to exercise no lordship the one over the other, nor to seek it, for the truest honour in the Church of God is found in service. He that serves most is the greatest He that will occupy the lowest office, he that will bear patiently to be the most put upon, he that is readiest to be despised, and to be the servant of all, shall be the chiefest of all. The way to rise in the kingdom of heaven is to descend, for

even so was it with our Lord himself. God give to all of us the humble and lowly spirit that will make us willing to be the least of all!

Verses 46-52

We have several records of blind men being cured by the Lord Jesus Christ. One of them is in [Mark 10:46-52](#).

10:46. *And they came to Jericho: and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people, —*

For, now, his march to the battle was like a triumphal march, which was by-and-by to be attended with the waving of palms and the shout of Hosannas: “as he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people,”-

[Mark 10:46-47.](#) *Blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the highway side begging. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, —*

That is all that the crowd called him “Jesus of Nazareth —

[Mark 10:47.](#) *He began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me.*

He had advanced much further than the mass of the people. To him it was not “Jesus of Nazareth,” but it was “Jesus, thou Son of David.”

[Mark 10:49-50.](#) *And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, Thou son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee. And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus.*

Blind as he was, he found his way to the Saviour: I suppose the ear directed by the voice helped him to do so.

[Mark 10:51.](#) *And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight.*

His request was plainly put, but it was most respectfully and even adoringly addressed to Christ.

[Mark 10:52.](#) *And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole.*

You will find that it is often the Saviour’s way thus to give the credit of his own work, to the patient’s faith. “Thy faith,” saith he, “hath made thee whole.” Whereas, you and I, if we do a good thing, are very anxious that nobody else should take the credit of it. We are very willing to have all the honour put upon ourselves, but Jesus does not say, “I have made thee

whole,” though that was true enough; but, “Thy faith hath made thee whole.” And why is it, think you, that Christ takes the crown of his own head to put it on the head of faith? Why? Because he loves faith, and because faith is quite certain not to wear that crown, but to lay it at his feet; for, of all the graces, faith is the surest to deny herself, and ascribe all to him in whom she trusts.

[Mark 10:52](#). *And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.*

Another of these records is in [John 9:1-7](#).

This exposition consisted of readings from [Mark 10:46-52](#); and [John 9:1-7](#).

MARK CONTENTS

Mark Chapter 11

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER 12

Verses 12-44

[Mark 12:12](#). *And they sought to lay hold on him, but feared the people: for they knew that he had spoken the parable against them: and they left him, and went their way.*

Christ’s enemies could not injure him then, partly because the people heard him gladly, and were ready to protect him, but still more because the appointed time for his suffering and death had not fully come.

[Mark 12:13-14](#). *And they send unto him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians, to catch him in his word. And when they were come, they say unto him, Master, we know that thou art true, and carest for no man: for thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth:*

They meant “to catch him in his words,” if they could, so they baited their trap with flattery. Whenever a man begins to flatter you, be on your guard against him. If he tries to commence a conversation with you by uttering words of excessive admiration, depend upon it that he admires something that you have got more than he admires you; and, therefore, be

on the watch against him. Our Saviour must, in his heart, have utterly despised men who were so foolish as to imagine that they could entrap him by their flattering words. After that preface, they asked the questions which they thought would impale him upon the horns of a dilemma: —

[Mark 12:14-15](#). *Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not? Shall we give, or shall we not give?*

They knew very well that, if Christ said, “Do not give tribute to Caesar,” the Romans would have taken him up, and imprisoned him for preaching sedition, but, on the other hand, if he said, “Pay tribute to Caesar,” the Jews would have said that he was their enemy, and not a true patriot, or else he would not have admitted that the chosen people were bound to pay taxes to their Roman conquerors.

[Mark 12:15-17](#). *But he, knowing their hypocrisy, said unto them, Why tempt ye me? bring me a penny, that I may see it. And they brought it. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? And they said unto him, Caesar’s. And Jesus answering said unto them, Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s. And they marvelled at him.*

He had answered them with matchless wisdom without committing himself in any way.

[Mark 12:18-23](#). *Then come unto him the Sadducees, which say there is no resurrection; and they asked him, saying, Master, Moses wrote unto us, If a man’s brother die, and leave his wife behind him, and leave no children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. Now there were seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and dying left no seed. And the second took her, and died, neither left he any seed: and the third likewise. And the seven had her, and left no seed: last of all the woman died also. In the resurrection therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of them, for the seven had her to wife.*

No doubt they thought that they had completely entangled him that time. How could he answer such a difficult question as that? But, you see, they had based their enquiry upon the erroneous supposition that things are to be in another state as they are here; so Jesus was able at once to answer them as effectively as he had just answered the Pharisees and Herodians.

[Mark 12:24-27](#). *And Jesus answering said unto them, Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God? For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in*

marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven. And as touching the dead, that they rise: have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err.

His answer carried the war into the enemies' camp. They professed to believe in Moses, yet they denied the existence of spirits and the fact of the resurrection; but Jesus Christ proved to a demonstration that God cannot be the God of the dead. If, therefore, he is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are still alive; and if he be your God, and my God, dear friends, we need not fear extinction; we must live, and we must live for ever.

[Mark 12:28-34](#). *And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all? And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these. And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he; and to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbor as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him any question.*

He had so decidedly put all his questioners to the rout that no other man had the audacity to court defeat at his hands. The infallible wisdom of Christ had put all his accusers and tempters to flight.

[Mark 12:35-36](#). *And Jesus answered and said, while he taught in the temple, How say the scribes that Christ is the son of David? For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, —*

In [Psalms 110:1](#), —

[Mark 12:36-37](#). *The Lord said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool. David therefore himself calleth him Lord; and whence is he then his son?*

They could not answer that riddle, but we can. We know that Jesus is both David's son and David's Lord; a man like ourselves, of the great human race, yet "very God of very God," blessed be his holy name!

[Mark 12:37-40](#). *And the common people heard him gladly. And he said unto them in his doctrine, Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the marketplaces, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts: which devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation.*

We often hear foolish people say "You must always preach in love, and not say anything against anybody; Jesus did not denounce anybody." Oh, dear! then what about this denunciation of the scribes? Were Jesus here today, he would not be the molluscus creature that some people want us to be. He had a backbone, and a conscience, and a very heavy right hand, and he brought that hand down, like a sledge-hammer, upon cant and hypocrisy and error, and if we would be like Christ, we must be manly, and bold, and outspoken. They tell us this in order that we may easily glide through the world, and that all men may speak well of us. But so did their fathers to the false prophets; and do you suppose that we who preach God's Word, are going to keep back any part of our testimony because it will bring us into ill repute with the ungodly? God forbid! We live for something higher and nobler than being fed upon the breath of evil men. If there be error in high places, if there be vice anywhere, it is the duty of the minister of Christ, in his Master's name, to attack it with all his might. Here we find our Lord and Master plainly declaring that the scribes, the great masters of the law, were a set of pretentious hypocrites who robbed even the widow and the fatherless, and who would, in due time, "receive greater damnation." Even so must the truth still be spoken, whoever may be offended by it.

[Mark 12:41-42](#). *And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, —*

Doubly poor, because she was not only a widow, but in poverty: "a certain poor widow," —

[Mark 12:42-44](#). *And she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: for all they did cast in of their abundance; —*

Christ measures what we really give by what we have left, — by the proportion which what we give bears to what we possess: “For all they did cast in of their abundance;” —

[Mark 12:44](#). *But she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.*

So she gave more than any or all the others did.

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Mark Chapter 13

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER 14

Verses 1-9

[Mark 14:1-3](#). *After two days was the feast of the passover, and of unleavened bread: and the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take him by craft, and put him to death. But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar of the people. And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper,*

A well-known person. There were plenty of Simons, and so they had to put another name to distinguish him. You remember Simon the Pharisee, in whose house Christ was anointed by a woman, who washed his feet with tears. This is another Simon. Not Simon the Pharisee, but Simon the Leper.

A healed man, no doubt, or he could not have entertained guests. There can be no question by whom he was healed; for there was nobody else that could heal leprosy, except our Divine Lord. “And being at Bethany in the house of Simon the Leper.”

[Mark 14:3](#). *As he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head.*

It does not want any “it,” “poured on his head.” The liquid nard flowed over his locks, and, as it was with Aaron, it went, doubtless, down his beard to the utmost skirts of his garments.

[Mark 14:4](#). *And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made?*

Matthew says that they were disciples. Shame upon them. The ointment was put to its proper use. It was more wasted when it was in the box than when it was out of it, for it was doing nothing inside the alabaster box. But when it came out, it was answering its purpose. It was perfuming all round about. “Why was this waste of the ointment made?” When lives are lost in Christ’s honour, or strength is spent in his service there is no waste. It is what life and strength are made for — that they may be spent for him.

[Mark 14:5-6](#). *For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her. And Jesus said, Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me.*

Or “in me.”

[Mark 14:7](#). *For ye have the poor with you always,*

If you help them one day, they are poor, and they want helping the next. Or if you help them and leave them, leaving them because they go home to God, there are other poor people sure to come, for they will never cease out of the land. “Ye have the poor with you always.”

[Mark 14:7](#). *And whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always.*

“Ye can only do this for me during the few days that I shall be with you.

Within a week I shall be crucified. Forty more days I shall be gone from you. Me ye have not always.”

[Mark 14:8-9](#). *She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.*

And it is so to this day. Christ’s gospel is preached tonight, and this woman’s love will be remembered. John also speaks of this in his 12th chapter.

This exposition consisted of readings from [John 8:29-59](#). [Mark 14:1-9](#). [John 12:1-7](#).

Verses 22-41

[Mark 14:22](#). *And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: this is my body.*

It was part of a meal. It was no celebration. It was no sacrifice, bloody or unbloody. It was simply a commemorative ceremony, of which he would now give them a specimen even before it became commemorative. “As they did eat, Jesus took bread.” No seeking for consecrated wafers or some special food, but such bread as they had been eating. “Blessed” — thanking God for it. “And break it and gave it to them, and said, Take, eat: this is my body.”

[Mark 14:23-24](#). *And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it. And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many.*

There was no fear of their making the mistake, which had been made by Humanists, of taking these words literally, because Jesus Christ was sitting there. They could not imagine that, as he took bread, he would say literally, “This bread is my body.” Why, there was his body sitting there before them. Had he two bodies? When he gave them the cup and said, “This is my blood in the new covenant,” they never dreamt of such a thing as that the wine in the cup was really and literally his blood. His blood was in his veins. They saw him living there, not bleeding. No, it is an extraordinary thing that men who have the life of God in them, and have some spiritual discernment, have, nevertheless, in some instances, been found driving their faith into the belief of the absurd fable of transubstantiation. Jesus Christ means “This represents my body. This represents my blood” — the usual way of uttering such a sense both in the Old and New Testament, even as Christ said, “I am the door.” Yet nobody thought that he was a door. “I am the way.” Nobody thought he was a roadway. “I am the shepherd,” and yet nobody supposed that he carried a crook, and that he literally kept sheep. So says he, “This is my body, this is my blood” and they who sat there were in their senses, and they were not superstitious. They knew what he meant.

[Mark 14:25-26](#). *Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God. And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.*

I cannot resist repeating the remark I have often made about that singing of a hymn. It seems to me such a grand, brave thing for the Saviour to sing a hymn after the last meal that he would eat with his disciples before his death when he knew that he was going forth to all the torture of Pilate’s hall, and to death at Calvary. Yet he says, “Let us sing a hymn.” He chose a

Psalm of David, and, I dare say, himself pitched a tune. “And when they had sung a hymn, they went out unto the Mount of Olives.”

[Mark 14:27](#). *And Jesus saith unto them,*

As they walked along.

[Mark 14:27-28](#). *All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered. But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee.*

What sweet comfort was there — as much as to say, “Though you are scattered, I will gather you. Though you forsake me, I will not forsake you. I will go before you into our old haunts, into that Galilee of the Gentiles where I was wont to preach aforetime. I will go before you into Galilee.”

[Mark 14:29-30](#). *But Peter said unto him, Although all shall be offended, yet will not I. And Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, that this day, even in this night,*

The day begins at sunset.

[Mark 14:30-31](#). *Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice, But he spake the more vehemently, if I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise. Likewise also said they all.*

So Peter was not alone in his intense, though rash expression of attachment. They did mean, all of them, to stand to their Master, and to die with him, as you and I mean to. But shall we carry it out better than they, think you? Not if our resolve, like theirs, is made in our own strength.

[Mark 14:32](#). *And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane:*

The garden on the side of the hill of Olivet.

[Mark 14:32](#). *And he saith to his disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray.*

Eight of you keep watching at the garden gate to let me know when my betrayer comes.

[Mark 14:33](#). *And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy;*

They had not seen him in that state before. He seemed like one distracted, so amazed — like one astonished out of all composure unable to collect himself or to contain himself, and to be very heavy, as if an awful weight pressed on his soul.

[Mark 14:34](#). *And saith unto them, my soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch.*

These three were to make his closest bodyguard, to intimate to him if any came.

[Mark 14:35](#). *And he went forward a little,
A stone's cast, so as to be retired from them.*

[Mark 14:35-36](#). *And fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt.*

That was the point of the prayer, the very pith and marrow of it not what I will, but what thou wilt.

[Mark 14:37](#). *And he cometh, and findeth them sleeping.*

Three choice guards — his bosom companions.

[Mark 14:37](#). *And saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? couldest not thou watch one hour?*

Matthew and Luke tell us that he said “Could ye not watch with me one hour?” and Mark tells us here that he especially said that to Peter. Now remember that Mark is the gospel of Peter. No doubt Mark was the great friend of Peter, and writes his gospel from Peter's point, so Peter in the Gospel of Mark records the worst things about himself, and he just puts it here that the Master said, “Simon, sleepest thou?” Bad enough for the others to be asleep, but “Simon, sleepest thou? Couldst not thou watch one hour?”

[Mark 14:38](#). *Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak.*

Oh! that was a kind excuse to make for them — to say something good about them, even though they slept when they ought to have comforted him. He did see that their spirit was ready, but the flesh was weak.

[Mark 14:39-40](#). *And again he went away, and prayed, and spake the same words. And when he returned, he found them asleep again, (for their eyes were heavy), neither wist they what to answer him.*

How could they excuse their conduct? A second time asleep! They were in a muddled state.

[Mark 14:41](#). *And he cometh the third time, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: it is enough, the hour is come; behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.*

This exposition consisted of readings from [2 Samuel 15:13-23](#); Isaiah 61.; [Mark 14:22-41](#).

Verses 27-72

[Mark 14:27-29](#). *And Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered. But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee. But Peter said unto him, Although all shall be offended, yet will not I.*

There was love in that utterance, and so far it was commendable; but there was also much self-trust in it, but there was great presumption, for Peter dared even to contradict his Master to his face; and, at the same time, he contradicted the inspired Scripture, for Jesus had told the disciples that it was written that the sheep should be scattered. Yet Peter boldly denied both what God had written and what Christ had said. Alas! there is nothing of evil which proud self-confidence will not make us do. God save us from such a spirit as that!

[Mark 14:30-31](#). *And Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. But he spake the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise.*

See how positive he was, how reliant upon the strength of his own love. It was well to feel such love, but it was ill to mix with it such self-confidence.

[Mark 14:31](#). *Likewise also said they all.*

Whenever a man, who is called to be a leader, goes astray, others are pretty sure to follow him. It was so on this occasion, for when Peter made his boastful speech, “Likewise also said they all,” all the rest of his brethren chimed in, and so shared in his sin, but he was chief in the wrong-doing, for he led them all. In the 53rd verse, we read what happened after Christ’s agony and betrayal in Gethsemane:—

[Mark 14:53-54](#). *And they led Jesus away to the high priest: and with him were assembled all the chief priests and, the elders and the scribes. And Peter followed him afar off, even into the palace of the high priest: and he sat with the servants, and warmed himself at the fire.*

Meanwhile, Christ was being put to the utmost derision and contempt. In the 66th verse, we are told more concerning the boastful apostle:—

[Mark 14:66-70](#). *And as Peter was beneath in the palace, there cometh one of the maids of the high priest: and when she saw Peter warming Himself, she looked upon him, and said, And thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth. But he denied, saying, I know not, neither understand I what thou*

sayest. And he went out into the porch; and the cock crew. And a maid saw him again, and began to say to them that stood by, This is one of them. And he denied it again. And a little after, they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely thou art one of them: for thou art a Galilaeen, and thy speech agreeth thereto.

He could not hold his tongue, you see. He was always fast and forward in speech; and no sooner did he begin to speak than the people said, "That is the Galilaeen brogue; you come from that part of the country, your speech betrays you."

[Mark 14:71-72](#). *But he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom ye speak. And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. And when he thought thereon, he wept.*

This exposition consisted of readings from [Mark 14:27-31](#); [Mark 14:53-54](#); [Mark 14:66-72](#); and [John 18:15-18](#); [John 18:25-27](#).

Verses 53-65

[Mark 14:53-54](#). *And they led Jesus away to the high priest: and with him were assembled all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes. And Peter followed him afar off, even into the palace of the high priest: and he sat with the servants, and warmed himself at the fire.*

We may regard what was said to Jesus, by Annas and Caiaphas, as a sort of unofficial preliminary examination; and, meanwhile, their fellow conspirators were scouring the streets of Jerusalem to gather together the members of the Sanhedrim, and also searching among the slums in order to find witnesses who could be bribed to give false evidence against Jesus.

[Mark 14:55](#). *And the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put him to death; and found none.*

A pretty court that was, occupied in seeking for witnesses who might enable them to condemn to death a prisoner against whom no charge had yet been formulated.

[Mark 14:56-59](#). *For many bare false witness against him, but their witness agreed not together. And there arose certain, and bare false witness against him, saying, We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands. But neither so did their witness agree together.*

It was a rule that they should be examined separately, and there had not been time for them to be coached up as to what they were to say, so one

contradicted the other, and it looked as if the trial must break down.

[Mark 14:60](#). *And the high priest stood up in the midst,*

Losing all patience, he stood up, in a furious rage at the turn things were taking.

[Mark 14:60-61](#). *And asked Jesus, saying, Answered thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee? But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?*

This time, according to Matthew's account, the high priest said to Jesus, "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God." Being thus, as it were, put upon his oath, the Saviour felt compelled to answer. He could not remain silent when such a great and important question was at stake.

[Mark 14:62-65](#). *And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Then the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, What need we any further witnesses? Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death. And some began to spit on him, and to cover his face, and to buffet him, and to say unto him, Prophecy: and the servants did strike him with the palms of their hands.*

Perhaps we have the same narrative in Luke; possibly, however, he gives us a continuation of the sad story; it is difficult to say which is the case. (See [Luke 22:63-71](#))

This exposition consisted of readings from [John 18:12-14](#); [John 18:19-26](#); [Mark 14:53-65](#); and [Luke 22:63-71](#); [Luke 3:1](#).

Verses 53-72

[Mark 14:53-54](#). *And they led Jesus away to the high priest: and with him were assembled all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes. And Peter followed him afar off, even into the palace of the high priest: and he sat with the servants, and warmed himself at the fire.*

Thus we learn what a cold night it was,-that night in which the Saviour's "sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." Often, at Jerusalem, the days are extremely hot, yet the nights are as cold as if it were winter, through the abundant dews that fall, and cause a dampness everywhere.

[Mark 14:66-67](#). *And as Peter was beneath in the palace, there cometh one of the maids of the high priest: and when she saw Peter warming*

himself, she looked upon him,-

I think I see her, with her eyes fixed upon him, as he was warming himself at the fire: “She looked upon him,”-

[Mark 14:67-68](#). *And said, And thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth. But he denied, saying, I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest. And he went out into the porch; and the cock crew.*

This first time was not the regular season of cock-crowing, but those birds crow when they please. Before the fixed period called the cock-crowing, Peter was to deny his Master three times; this was the first time.

[Mark 14:69-70](#). *And a maid saw him again, and began to say to them that stood by, This is one of them. And he denied it again. And a little after, they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely thou art one of them: for thou art a Galilaean, and thy speech agreeth thereto.*

“Thou hast the peculiar brogue of that part of the country: ‘Thou art a Galilaean, and thy speech agreeth thereto.’”

[Mark 14:71-72](#). *But he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom ye speak. And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cockcrow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. And when he thought thereon, he wept.*

He does not say that he went out, and wept bitterly, as Luke says in his version of the incident. This is Peter’s own account of it, so he says as little as he can to his own credit, while he tells all that is to his discredit. You notice that there seem to be some slight differences between these two accounts, and it is quite natural that it should be so. If any two honest men here were to describe any scene that they had witnessed, the two would be sure to differ in some particulars, yet both accounts might be true. Matthew tells us that Jesus said to Peter, “Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice;” but Mark tells us that he said, “Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice.” Yes; but there is no real contradiction, and the incident introduced by Mark shows how, to the very letter, both of those utterances of our Saviour were fulfilled, So is it with regard to those who spoke to Peter; when we come to another account, you will see that they differ very considerably, yet they are all true, for all that. (See [Luke 22:54-62](#))

This exposition consisted of readings from [Matthew 26:31-35](#); [Matthew 26:57-58](#); [Matthew 26:69-75](#); [Mark 14:53-54](#); [Mark 14:66-72](#); [Luke 1:54-62](#); and [John 18:15-18](#); [John 18:25-27](#).

MARK CONTENTS

CHAPTER 15

Verses 1-41

Let us read again what we have often read before, that saddest of all stories which, nevertheless, is the fountain of the highest gladness,-the story of our Saviour's death, as recorded by Mark.

Mark 15:1. *And straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, and bound Jesus, and carried him away, and delivered him to Pilate.*

“The whole council” could be there, so early in the morning, for such an evil purpose. Wicked men are very diligent in carrying out their sinful schemes; so, when Christ was to be murdered, his enemies were there, as Luke tells us, “as soon as it was day.” How much more diligent ought the followers of Christ to be to give him their devoted service! It is a good thing to begin the day with united prayer and holy converse with his people. Let these wicked men, who were so early in the morning seeking to secure the death of Christ, make us ashamed that we are not more diligent in his blessed service.

Mark 15:2-3. *And Pilate asked him, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answering said unto him, Thou sayest it. And the chief priests accused him of many things: but he answered nothing.*

Silence was the best answer, the most eloquent reply, that he could give to each accusers; they deserved no other answer. Moreover, by his silence, he was fulfilling the prophecy, “As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.”

Mark 15:4-5. *And Pilate asked him again, saying, Answerest thou nothing? behold how many things they witness against thee. But Jesus yet answered nothing; so that Pilate marvelled.*

You will often find that your highest wisdom, when you are slandered, will lie in the imitation of your Lord and Master. Live a blameless life, and it shall be the best reply to the false charges of the wicked.

Mark 15:6-10. *Now at that feast he released unto them one prisoner, whomsoever they desired. And there was one named Barabbas, which lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed*

murder in the insurrection. And the multitude crying aloud began to desire him to do as he had ever done unto them. But Pilate answered them, saying, Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews? For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy.

And he therefore hoped that the people, who were not moved by the same envy, would have chosen to have Jesus set at liberty.

[Mark 15:11-13](#). *But the chief priests moved the people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them. And Pilate answered and said again unto them, What will ye then that I shall do unto him whom ye call the King of the Jews? And they cried out again, Crucify him.*

This was the very best reply to the charge of high treason; for, if Jesus had really set himself up as a king in the place of Caesar, the people; when they were thus publicly appealed to, would not have cried out, “Crucify him.” If there had been and truth in the allegation that he was the ringleader of a sedition, the Jews would not have said again and again, “Crucify him.” Thus Christ gave Pilate a much more effectual answer than if he had himself spoken.

[Mark 15:14-16](#). *Then Pilate said unto them, Why, what evil hath he done? And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify him. And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified. And the soldiers led him away into the hall, called Praetorium;-*

The hall of the Praetorian guard; —

16; 17. *And they call together the whole band. And they clothed him with purple,*

The uniform of the Roman soldiers was purple, as if to indicate that they belonged to an imperial master; so, when these soldiers, in mockery put on our Lord the old cloak of one of their comrades, it sufficed to clothe him with the royal purple to which, as King, he was fully entitled.

[Mark 15:17-19](#). *And platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his head, and began to salute him, Hail, King of the Jews! And they smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and bowing their knees worshipped him.*

All this homage was paid to him in mockery yet what stern reality there was in that mockery! That band of soldiers really preached to Christ such homage as a whole world could give him.

[Mark 15:20](#). *And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him.*

They “led him out to crucify him.” It seems as if Christ had to lean upon those who led him; the word almost signifies as much as that; at least, it might be the word employed concerning anyone leading a child or a sick man who needed support, for the Saviour’s weakness must have been very apparent by that time. After the agony and bloody sweat in Gethsemane, and the night and morning trials, and scourging, and mockery, and the awful strain upon his mind and heart in being made a sacrifice for sin, it was no wonder that he was weak. Besides, he was not like the rough, brutal criminals that are often condemned to die for their crimes; he was a man of gentle mould and more delicate sensibilities than they were, and he suffered much more than any ordinary man would have done in similar circumstances.

[Mark 15:21](#). *And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross.*

Christ would not bear it himself; the soldiers saw that he was faint and weary, so they laid the cross, or at least one end of it, on Simon’s shoulders.

[Mark 15:22](#). *And they bring him-*

Here the word almost implies that they lifted him, and-carried him, for his faintness had increased. They “led him out to crucify him,” but now they bear him —

[Mark 15:22](#). *Unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of a skull.*

We sometimes speak of it as mount Calvary, but it was not so; it was a little rising ground, the common place of execution, the Tyburn or Old Bailey of Jerusalem.

[Mark 15:23](#). *And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but he received it not.*

He did not wish to have his sufferings abated, but to bear them to the bitter end. Christ forbids not that pain should be alleviated, in the case of others, wherever that is possible; but, in his own case, it was not fit that it should be so relieved, since he was to bear the full brunt of the storm of vengeance that was due on account of sin.

[Mark 15:24](#). *And when they had crucified him, they parted his garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take.*

Christ's garments must go to his executioners in order to carry out the full shame associated with his death as well as to fulfill the prophecy, "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture."

[Mark 15:25-27](#). *And it was the third hour, and they crucified him. And the superscription of his accusation was written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS. And with him they crucify two thieves; the one on his right hand, and the other on his left.*

As if, in carrying out that ordinary etiquette which gives the central place to the chief criminal, they gave to Christ the place of greatest contempt and scorn.

[Mark 15:28](#). *And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors.*

You could not count the "transgressors" on those crosses without counting him, there were three, and the One in the middle could not be passed by as you counted the others.

[Mark 15:29-32](#). *And they that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself, and come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests mocking said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others; himself he cannot save. Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe.*

That is the world's way: "that we may see and believe." But Christ's way is, "Believe, and thou shalt see." Christ off the cross is admired by worldlings, but Christ on the cross is our hope and stay, especially as we know that this same Christ is now on the throne waiting for the time when he should return to claim his own, all who have trusted in the Crucified.

[Mark 15:32](#). *And they that were crucified with him reviled him.*

Out of their black hearts and mouths came words of obloquy and scorn even then.

[Mark 15:33](#). *And when the sixth hour was come,--*

When the sun had reached the zenith, at high noon, —

[Mark 15:33-41](#). *There was darkness over the whole land until this ninth hour. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me? And some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said, Behold, he calleth Elias. And one ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink, saying, Let alone; let us see*

whether Elias will come to take him down. And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost. And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. And when the centurion, which stood over against him, saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God. There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome (who also, when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered unto him;) and many other women which came up with him unto Jerusalem.

We can read further about these gracious women if we turn to Luke 8.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Mark 15:1-41](#), and [Luke 8:1-3](#).

Verses 15-23

[Mark 15:15-23](#). *And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified. And the soldiers led him away into the hall, called Praetorium; and they call together the whole band. And they clothed him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his head, And began to salute him, Hail, King of the Jews! And they smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and bowing their knees worshipped him. And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him. And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross. And they bring him unto the place called Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, the place of a skull. And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but he received it not.*

I shall have to show you that this was given to him in mercy. The Romans always gave, before crucifixion, a cup of myrrhed wine, in order to lessen the sensibilities of the victim. In this case there was not only myrrh in the cup, but gall; a second cup of gall Christ did drink, but this cup, being intoxicating, he would not receive; when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink. He needed the possession of all his faculties, and in their clearest state, in order to do combat with the dreadful powers of darkness.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Psalms 69:1-21](#). [Mark 15:15-23](#). [Luke 23:26-33](#).

Verses 15-39

We will read two short passages from the Gospels this evening. May the blessed Spirit, who taught the Evangelists to record the sad story of our Lord's sufferings and death, give us fully to enter into the blessed meaning of it while we read it! First turn to [Mark 15:15](#).

[Mark 15:15-16](#). *And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified. And the soldiers led him away into the hall, called Praetorium;*

The guard-room of Herod's palace, where the Praetorian guards were wont to gather.

[Mark 15:16-20](#). *And they call together the whole band. And they clothed him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his head, and began to salute him, Hail, King of the Jews! And they smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and bowing their knees worshipped him. And when they had mocked him,*

To the utmost, and gone the full length of their cruel scorn,

[Mark 15:20-23](#). *They took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him. And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross. And they bring him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of a skull. And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but he received it not.*

They did for him what they did for others who were crucified, they gave him myrrhed wine, as a stupefying draught; "but he received it not." He came to suffer, and he would bear even to the end the full tale of his suffering.

[Mark 15:24-27](#). *And when they had crucified him, they parted his garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take. And it was the third hour, and they crucified him. And the superscription of his accusation was written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS. And with him they crucify two thieves; the one on his right hand, and the other on his left.*

They gave him the place of eminence, as if he were a greater offender than either of the two thieves.

[Mark 15:28](#). *And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors.*

Sinners to the right of him, sinners to the left of him, sinners all round him, compassed about with those who sinned in the very highest degree by putting him to death: "He was numbered with the transgressors." Oh, that

sweet word! It is the hope of transgressors now that he was counted with them, and for his sake all the benefactions of heaven now descend upon transgressors who accept him as their Substitute and Saviour.

[Mark 15:29](#). *And they that passed by railed on him,*

Not only those who sat down to gloat their cruel eyes upon his miseries, but even the passers-by, “They that passed by, railed on him,”-

[Mark 15:29-30](#). *Wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three day, Save thyself, and come down from the cross.*

He never said he would destroy the literal temple. He did, however, say concerning the temple of his body, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up,” and he did raise it up in three days after they had destroyed it.

[Mark 15:31](#). *Likewise also the chief priests mocking said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others; himself he cannot save.*

What they said in bitter scorn was true; for mighty love had bound his hands for self-salvation. Infinite in love, found guilty of excess of love to men, “He saved others; himself he could not save.”

[Mark 15:32-33](#). *Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with him reviled him. And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.*

A supernatural darkness, which could not have occurred according to the laws of nature. It did, as it were, “set a tabernacle for the sun,”-the Sun of Righteousness was canopied a while in darkness, that no longer might those horrible eyes gaze upon his terrible anguish.

[Mark 15:34](#). *And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*

There was a denser darkness over his spirit than was over all the land, and out of that darkness came this cry of agony.

[Mark 15:35](#). *And some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said, Behold, he calleth Elias.*

Ah, me! This was either a cruel jest upon our Saviour’s prayer, or an utter misapprehension of it.

[Mark 15:36](#). *And one ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink, saying, Let alone; let us see whether Elias*

will come to take him down.

Jesus did receive this vinegar, and so fulfilled [Psalms 69:21](#) : “In my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.”

[Mark 15:37-38](#). *And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost. And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.*

Even as the flesh of Christ, which is the veil of the Incarnate God, was rent, so now was the veil of mystery taken away. The temple in her sorrow rent her veil. The old ceremonial law passed away with this token of grief by the rending of the veil. It was a strong, I might say, a massive veil; it could not have been rent by any ordinary means; but when the hand of God takes hold upon the veil of Jewish types, it readily rends, and into the innermost mystery of the holy of holies we may gaze, yea, and through it we may enter.

[Mark 15:39](#). *And when the centurion, which stood over against him, saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God.*

Convinced by the cross. Oh, the triumphs of Christ! The last word he speaks won this testimony from the centurion in charge of the crucifixion. Now we will read part of Luke’s narrative.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Mark 15:15-39](#); and [Luke 23:27-49](#).

Verses 34-47

Concerning the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall read in three portions of the New Testament. First, in the Gospel according to Mark, the fifteenth chapter, beginning at the thirty-fourth verse.

[Mark 15:34](#). *And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*

It is, “My El, my strong God, my mighty One, why hast thou forsaken me?” — the bitterest words that were ever uttered by mortal lips, and expressing the quintessence of agony. Alas! that my Saviour should ever have had to say as much as this when he hung upon the cross, suffering and dying for me.

[Mark 15:35](#). *And some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said, Behold, he calleth Elias.*

Did they misunderstand his bitter cry of woe? Could they mistake what he meant? Was it not, on the part of these people that stood by, a willful wicked witticism upon what our Lord Jesus had said? We fear that it was so.

[Mark 15:36-37](#). *And one ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink, saying, Let alone; let us see whether Elias will come to take him down. And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost.*

His last words were, “It is finished.”

“It is finish’d!”

— Oh what pleasure Do these charming words afford!

Heavenly blessings without measure Flow to us from Christ the Lord:

“It is finish’d!”

Saints, the dying words record.”

[Mark 15:38-39](#). *And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. And when the centurion, which stood over against him,*

The officer who had charge of the arrangements for the execution: “when the centurion, which stood over against him,” —

[Mark 15:39](#). *Saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God.*

Probably saying a great deal more than he understood. There was something so extraordinary about this central Sufferer that the Centurion could not understand who he could be unless he was truly “the Son of God.”

[Mark 15:40-41](#). *There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome; (Who also, when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered unto him;) and many other women which came up with him unto Jerusalem.*

Where was Peter? We know that John was near the cross; but James and the rest of the apostles were apparently hiding away; yet the holy women were there.

[Mark 15:42-43](#). *And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, an honourable counselor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus.*

I have no doubt that Pilate was very surprised that a member of the Sanhedrim should come and ask for the body of Jesus, when, a little while before, he had put him to death really by the mandate of that body of men.

[Mark 15:44](#); [Mark 15:46](#). *And Pilate marvelled if he were already dead: and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether he had been any while dead. And when he knew it of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph.*

This very centurion, who had declared that Jesus was the Son of God now came forward to bear witness that he had seen him die; and then Pilate told Joseph that he might go and take the body.

[Mark 15:46](#). *And he bought fine linen,*

This was probably the first time that fine linen had touched the flesh of the Son of man; he had been accustomed to much coarser stuff in his lifetime, but now Joseph “bought fine linen.”

[Mark 15:46-47](#). *And took him down, and wrapped him in the linen, and laid him in a sepulcher which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulcher. And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph beheld where he was laid.*

That is Mark’s account of our Lord’s death and burial, very terse, and very suggestive. Let us now read John’s description of the sad scene.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Mark 15:34-47](#); [John 19:38-42](#); John , [1 CORINTHIAN 5:1-9](#).

[MARK CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 16

Verses 1-14

[Mark 16:1-2](#). *And when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him. And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulcher at the rising of the sun.*

Their love made them prompt. Their affection was about to attempt a needless, and, indeed, impossible thing; yet I do not doubt that it was acceptable before God. Oh, that we had such hope that even the dead body of the Christ should be so dear to us that we should be ready at great expense to anoint it! I fear that, nowadays, even his living Word is not

valued as it should be. How few, therefore, should we be likely to find who would have cared for his dead body! These holy women had had cause enough to love their Lord, and they showed that their hearts were full of affection for him even after he had been taken from them.

[Mark 16:3](#). *And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulcher?*

A question that has puzzled many other people concerning many other things perplexed these holy women, yet there was no reason for the question to be raised at all. Peradventure, some of you are at this time distressed when there is no cause for distress, and in fear where no fear is. It was so with these women, who said, one to another, “Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulcher?”

[Mark 16:4](#). *And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great.*

And, therefore, hard to roll away; and, therefore, the more easily seen when it was rolled away; and, therefore, the greater cause for joy that it was rolled away. In the greatness of our troubles there may often be space for the greater display of the goodness of God; a great trial may be nothing more than the prelude of a great joy. Do not dread the foaming billows, for they may wash you ashore; it is the worst that they can do, and it is the best also. The stone at the door of the sepulcher was very great, but it was rolled away, so that it mattered not to the women how great it was.

[Mark 16:5](#). *And entering into the sepulcher, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted.*

An angel had been allowed to assume the appearance of a man; that usually seems to be the way in which angels appear to men. I suppose there is, after all, a great kinship between angels and men; otherwise, angelic beings would not so constantly assume that form when they appear to men. At the sight of the young man clothed in a long white garment, these good women were affrighted.

[Mark 16:6-7](#). *And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye such Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him. But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.*

Make sure, beloved, that you know the truth for yourselves, and then hasten to tell it to others. I pray you, run not without knowing what your

errand is to be; but I also pray you, when you have an errand for the Lord, do not tarry, but, “Go your way, tell his disciples.” It was very thoughtful of this angel to say “and Peter,” thus linking with the disciples the name of him who had most glaringly transgressed, and denied his Master,

[Mark 16:8](#). *And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulcher; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they anything to any man; for they were afraid.*

But, after this, they summoned up courage, and did tell the story of their Lord’s resurrection.

[Mark 16:9-13](#). *Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils. And she went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept. And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not. After that he appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country. And they went and told it unto the residue: neither believed they them.*

Unbelief is very hard to kill, even in hearts that are right with God; so we need not wonder that divine grace is required to expel unbelief from the hearts of the unregenerate.

[Mark 16:14](#). *Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.*

The story of our Lord’s appearance to the disciples is more fully told by Luke in the twenty-fourth chapter of his Gospel, to which let us turn.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Mark 16:1-14](#); [Luke 24:32-44](#).

Verses 1-20

[Mark 16:1](#). *And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him.*

True love had made a mistake; but it was true love for all that, and the Lord accepted it, although he had no need of the sweet spices that the women brought.

[Mark 16:2](#). *And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulcher at the rising of the sun.*

There had already been another rising of the sun that morning, for the Sun of righteousness had risen; and, with his rising, our hopes had risen,

and eternal life had come to light. These holy women proved their affection to their Lord by being there so early. Love will not wait; it delights to render its service as speedily as ever it can: “They came unto the sepulcher at the rising of the sun.”

[Mark 16:3-4](#). *And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulcher? And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great.*

Take comfort from this verse, you who are seeking to serve your Lord. There will be sure to be stones in your way, and some of them may be very great ones; but they will be rolled away in the Lord’s good time, and in the rolling away often you will have all the greater joy. If the effort shall need the strength of an angel, then an angel will be sent from heaven for the purpose. There might have been no angel if there had been no stone; and you might have no revelation of the power of heaven to help you if you had not first had a revelation of your own weakness and inability to roll away the stone.

[Mark 16:5](#). *And entering into the sepulcher, they saw a young man silting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted.*

An angel had assumed the appearance of a young man sitting inside the sepulcher.

[Mark 16:6](#). *And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted:*

Why should they be affrighted? They had come to serve their Lord, and so had the angel, so there was no cause for fear. Those who love Jesus need never be afraid of angels; nor, for the matter of that, of devils either; for the Lord, whom they serve, will take care of them.

[Mark 16:6](#). *Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified:*

This was the first gospel sermon preached after the resurrection, so note particularly how the angel describes Christ. He calls him by his lowly name, “Jesus of Nazareth,” and does not speak of him as the risen or reigning Christ, but as “Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified.” The angels are evidently not ashamed of the cross of Christ, they do not attempt to hide the shame of it; for this one speaks of “Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified.”

[Mark 16:6](#). *He is risen; he is not here:*

That is the epitaph inscribed on Christ’s tomb: “He is not here.” On other people’s graves it is written, “Here lies so-and-so;” but on Christ’s

sepulcher it is recorded, "He is not here." He is everywhere else, but "he is not here." He is with us in our solitude, he is with us in our public assemblies; but there is one place where he is not; and that is, in the empty tomb. Thank God that he is not there; we do not worship a dead man lying in the grave. He, on whom we rely, has risen from the dead, and gone up into the glory, where he ever liveth to carry out the great design of salvation. "He is not here."

[Mark 16:6-8](#). *Behold the place where they laid him. But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you. And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulcher; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they any thing to any man; for they were afraid.*

There was a mixture of joy with their fear, and of fear with their joy, and that tended to keep them silent for a while. Some people tell all they know, even when it would be wiser not to speak; but these godly women waited till they reached those to whom they were bidden to speak. They said nothing to anybody by the way, but hurried on to find the disciples, that they might give them the blessed tidings of their Lord's resurrection.

[Mark 16:9](#). *Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils.*

Where grace had wrought its greatest wonders, there Christ paid his first visit: "He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils."

[Mark 16:10-11](#). *And she went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept. And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not.*

I can imagine that scone,-the weeping and mourning disciples, and this eager woman telling out her story, and telling it with evident truthfulness and deep pathos, but they believed her not. Do you expect to be believed whenever you tell the story of your Lord's resurrection, or any other part of the gospel message? You have to tell it, not to Christ's disciples, but to those who are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel; and, probably, you do not tell it as well as Mary Magdalene did. Marvel not, therefore, if many a time those who hear your message believe it not. Mind that you believe it yourself, and keep on telling it whether others believe it or not, and God will bless it to some of them by-and-by

[Mark 16:12-13](#). *After that he appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country. And they went and told it unto the residue: neither believed they them.*

Unbelief is not easily driven out of even true disciples; but let none of us ever harbor it in our hearts. As we see how unbelieving these disciples were, and know how wrong their unbelief was, let us not be like them.

[Mark 16:14-20](#). *Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen. And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following.*

A-men God bless to us the reading of his holy Word! Amen,

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CHAPTER 1

Verses 5-17

[Luke 1:5-6](#). *There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.*

You have here a very interesting couple, Zacharias and Elisabeth, a priest with a wife. I have often marveled why the Church of Rome should think it wrong that priests should be married, when it is evident that the priests under the law were so. The priests had grown so numerous that there was not room for them all to work at the Temple at one time; they were divided into twenty-four courses, and Zacharias would, therefore, come up to Jerusalem for a fortnight to take his share of the service. Zacharias and Elisabeth were notable for excellence of character: "They were both righteous before God." Not only did they stand high in the esteem of men, but the great God, who reads the hearts of all, and sees how they live in secret, reckoned them to be righteous: "They were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments"-that is, in the moral precepts of the law-"and ordinances"-that is in the ceremonial rites-" of the Lord blameless."

[Luke 1:7-9](#). *And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years. And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course, according to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord,*

Certain offices of the priest were considered to be more honourable than others; and so, to prevent any jealousy, they cast lots as to which they should take in turn. It fell to the lot of Zacharias to burn incense; this did not happen by chance. "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord;" and there was a special reason why this good man should stand at the altar at this particular time.

[Luke 1:10](#). *And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense.*

While he, in the inner shrine, was burning incense, the multitudes in the outer courts were engaging in prayer. I think that is a very beautiful symbol,-the priest unseen, like the Lord Jesus Christ in the Holy of Holies above, and the mass of the people engaged in prayer while the unseen priest is offering the sacred perfume before the altar of Jehovah.

[Luke 1:11-12](#). *And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.*

He was a good man, yet he was troubled at the sight of an angel.

Consciousness of sin, even in an outwardly blameless man, makes us all tremble in the presence of anything heavenly. This bright spirit had come fresh from the courts of God; he was a courtier of the heavenly Temple, and he had come down on a sudden with a sweet and cheering message for the earthly priest; but the priest "was troubled, and fear fell upon him." Brethren, we cannot know much of heaven here below, because it would cause us trembling; we are as yet unfit for all the glories of that upper state. Good John Berridge wrote,-

And now they range the heavenly plains,
And sing their hymns in melting strains;
And now their souls begin to prove The heights and depths of Jesus' love.

"Ah Lord, with tardy steps I creep,
And sometimes sing, and sometimes weep;
Yet strip me of this house of clay,
And I will sing as loud as they."

Yes, and so will we; we will be as much at home as the happy saints, who dwell in light, when once we are delivered from this hampering flesh and blood.

[Luke 1:13](#). *But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard;*

The best quietus to fear is answered prayer. If God has heard thee, be not thou again afraid.

[Luke 1:13](#). *And thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.*

“The grace” or “the gift of God”, so the name “John” signifies; and it is a sweet name for anyone to bear: “Thou shalt call his name John.” I do not think the prayer alluded to here was so much a prayer for a son; if so, methinks that Zacharias had long ago left off praying it, and now his old prayers are heard, after he had discontinued them. I think that it alludes rather to his prayer for the coming of the Christ, the appearance of the Messiah; that prayer was heard, as we shall see further on.

[Luke 1:14-15](#). *And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink;*

I do not say that it is the duty of every man to drink neither wine nor strong drink, but I beg every man to notice that if anyone was to be peculiarly consecrated to a holy calling, it was always to be so; “He shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink.” If there be nothing defiling about wine or strong drink, there is certainly nothing sanctifying about it; and the tendency seems to lie the other way, else it is a strange thing that men dedicated to God were so continually bidden to drink neither wine nor strong drink.

[Luke 1:15-17](#). *And he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother’s womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.*

In the third chapter of this Gospel, you will find the record of John beginning to fulfill this prophecy concerning himself.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Luke 1:5-17](#); [Luke 3:1-18](#).

Verses 5-56

[Luke 1:5-6](#). *There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth. And they were both*

righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.

There have been some good people who have lived in very bad times; never was there a worse reign than that of Herod; seldom or never a better man and woman than Zacharias and Elisabeth. Let no man excuse himself for sinning because of the times in which he lives. You may be rich in grace when others around you have none, even as Gideon's fleece was wet with dew when the whole floor was dry. God help us, in these evil days, to be "righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless"!

[Luke 1:7](#). *And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years.*

We do not, at the present time, understand the anguish which filled the heart of an Eastern woman who had no child. It was considered to be a disgrace, and many suffered very bitterly on that account; as did Hannah, and Rachel, and others besides.

[Luke 1:8-12](#). *And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course, according to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense. And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.*

Zacharias must have been astonished as he saw that strange visitant; no wonder that "fear fell upon him."

[Luke 1:13-17](#). *But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.*

Happy is the father of such a child! Happy is that man whose office it is to be the herald of Christ! Brethren, many of us are called to that office in a

certain sense as we come in our Master's name, and preach concerning him "Tis all my business here below To cry, 'Behold the Lamb.'" And in this way we may be partakers of John the Baptist's joy.

[Luke 1:18-20](#). *And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years. And, the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to show thee these glad tidings. And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things —*

These glad tidings —

[Luke 1:20](#). *Shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.*

Many a child of God is dumb, because of unbelief. Mary believed, and therefore she sang a holy, joyous song, — a sweet canticle of delight: "My soul doth magnify the Lord." But Zacharias, because of his unbelief, was unable to speak. I wonder whether there is a man here who might have spoken for his God with power, but whose mouth is closed because of his unbelief. If so, may the Lord hasten the time when his dumbness shall be ended!

[Luke 1:21-22](#). *And the people waited for Zacharias, and marvelled that he tarried so long in the temple. And when he came out, he could not speak unto them: and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple: for he beckoned unto them, and remained speechless.*

By the signs he made, he impressed them with the fact that something extraordinary had happened.

[Luke 1:23-25](#). *And it came to pass, that, as soon as the days of his ministration were accomplished, he departed to his own house. And after those days his wife Elisabeth conceived, and hid herself five months, saying, Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on me, to take away my reproach among men.*

I do not wonder that, in her solemn joy, she shunned the gossips of the neighborhood and kept herself in seclusion. I do believe that there is many a soul which, when it has found Christ, feels itself much too full of joy to speak, and asks not for a crowded temple, but for a quiet chamber where the heart may pour itself out before God.

[Luke 1:26-35](#). *And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man*

whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favor with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man! And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.

So was she thus visited, and thus she believed with a wonderful faith, much too wonderful for me to describe in this place. But now let us see what Mary said when she went to visit her cousin Elisabeth.

[Luke 1:46-47](#). *And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.*

She needed a Saviour, you see. Though about to become the mother of Jesus, Mary did not think herself without sin. Her eyes still looked to him who should be her Saviour from guilt and condemnation.

[Luke 1:48-55](#). *For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name. And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation. He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away. He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy; as he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.*

This is one of the sweetest songs that was ever sung, and is equal to any of those which came from the inspired lips of the Hebrew prophets. Well might she sing who had been thus favored. Oh, if Christ Jesus should come to any of us by faith, what reason should we have for singing! And will not

each one of us, who has been thus honoured, cry with Mary, “My soul doth magnify the Lord”?

[Luke 1:56](#). *And Mary abode with her about three months, and returned to her own house.*

What wonderful interviews those two holy women had! The one well stricken in years, and the other youthful; yet both highly favored of God. I wonder what they said; doubtless angels remember their charming conversation. May the day come when all that fear the Lord, both men and women, shall speak often one to another concerning their Redeemer, and all that relates to his glorious cause; and then the Lord shall write another Book of Remembrance concerning their hallowed fellowship and intercourse!

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 148; and [Luke 1:5-35](#); [Luke 1:46-56](#).

Verses 26-56

[Luke 1:26-27](#). *And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.*

It was by the temptation of an evil angel that man fell, and Paradise was lost, it was, therefore, most appropriate that good angels should be sent to announce the coming of the Restorer, through whom Paradise is regained: “Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth.” Christ’s coming to earth must be announced in the lowliest of cities, and he must be born in the small Judaeen town of Bethlehem; but it was also decreed that he must die at Jerusalem, — in the metropolitan city. Mark the simplicity, and yet the sublimity, of the arrangement by which the meek and lowly Saviour was to be born in our nature. The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a virgin, whose name was Mary.

[Luke 1:28-29](#). *And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be.*

The best of news may sometimes cause the greatest perturbation of mind and heart. If you feel troubled when you receive a message from God do not be astonished, as though some strange thing had happened unto you. See how Mary, who was told that she was to receive the greatest honour and

favor possible to a mortal being, was troubled by the angel's speech, perplexed by his extraordinary salutation.

[Luke 1:30](#). *And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favor with God.*

If we have found favor with God, there is no cause for us to fear. If God is gracious to us, we are raised above all reason for alarm. Some court the fickle favor of men; but, even if they gain it, they may well fear that they may shortly lose it, but the angel said, "Fear not, Mary; for thou hast found favor with God;" and having found that favor, she would never lose it.

[Luke 1:31-32](#). *And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, —*

How true is that prophecy; "He shall be great." Christ is the greatest of all great ones. How great he is in our esteem! The tongues of men and of angels could not tell all his greatness. "He shall be great," —

[Luke 1:32-37](#). *And shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And, behold, thy cousin Elizabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible.*

It seemed meet that the gospel dispensation should thus begin with two great wonders. The age of wonders has opened upon us now that the day of grace has dawned. Now shall the barren woman keep house, and be the joyful mother of children, according to the ancient prophecy.

[Luke 1:38](#). *And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.*

Oh, that we all had such a spirit of submission as she had, that we might be willing to place ourselves absolutely at God's disposal, for him to do with us as he pleased!

[Luke 1:38](#). *And the angel of the Lord departed from her.*

His mission was accomplished, so he might go back to the glory from which he had come at God's command.

[Luke 1:39-43](#). *And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Judah; and entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elizabeth. And it came to pass, that, when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?*

The most gracious people are always the most humble people. This question of Elizabeth, “Whence is this to me?” has been one that we have often put concerning ourselves. She was the older woman of the two, but she felt herself highly honoured by this visit from her younger relative, whom the Lord had so wondrously favored. It is well when Christian people have a high regard for one another, and think less of themselves than they do of others whom God has especially favored. It is one of the traits in the character of God’s true people, that they have this mind in them; while they who think themselves great prove that they are not the Lord’s. If you think much of yourself, he thinks little of you.

[Luke 1:44-45](#). *For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed is she that believed:*

Not only Mary, who believed the angel’s message, and was therefore blessed; but every one of us, who believes in God, may share in this benediction.

[Luke 1:45-46](#). *For there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord. And Mary said,*

This humble Jewish maiden was a woman of great natural ability. This song of hers is worthy to be sung throughout all ages. It is true that it is mainly taken from the song of Hannah, and other songs of devout persons in former ages; but this shows how Mary had studied the Word of God, and laid it up in her heart. The best preparation that you young people can have for the highest honour and service in your future life is to bathe frequently in the Word of God, and to perfume your whole life by a familiar and accurate acquaintance with Scripture truth. Nothing else can make you so pure, or so prepared for all service which God may yet have for you to perform.

[Luke 1:46](#). *My soul doth magnify the Lord, —*

That is a good beginning. Mary does not magnify herself in her Magnificat, she has nothing to say concerning her own dignity, though she was of a noble lineage; but she sang, “My soul doth magnify the Lord,” —

[Luke 1:47](#). *And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.*

She needed a Saviour as much as we do, for she was a sinner like ourselves; and though she was blessed among women, she here indicates that she owed all that blessedness to the grace of God, who had become a Saviour to her, as well as to us.

[Luke 1:48](#). *For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden:*

The family from which Mary sprang had become poor, and she dwelt in lowliness at Nazareth.

[Luke 1:48-49](#). *For, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name.*

She was indeed a blessed woman to have such holy thoughts, such reverence for God, such a true idea of his might and majesty, and of the marvellous favor which he had shown to her.

[Luke 1:50](#). *And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation.*

Remember this, it was not mercy to Mary only; it was mercy to us, and mercy to all, who truly trust the Saviour in whom she trusted.

[Luke 1:51](#). *He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.*

Sometimes, we read of God’s “finger,” That refers to a part of his great power. At other times, we read of his “hand.” That is a more brilliant display of his power. But here, as elsewhere, we read of his “arm.” This is the majesty of his omnipotence. Pharaoh’s magicians told the king that it was the finger of God that wrought the plagues of Egypt, but it was with his outstretched arm that he divided the Red Sea, and overthrew Pharaoh and his hosts: Mary felt that, in the work of salvation we see God’s arm; not merely his finger, or his hand.

[Luke 1:52](#). *He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree.*

This is what God is constantly doing, — casting down the high and mighty ones, and lifting up the meek and lowly.

[Luke 1:53](#). *He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.*

They who are self-satisfied shall sooner or later be cast out; but those who look to God alone, and are hungry after him, shall be satisfied with his favor.

[Luke 1:54-56](#). *He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy: As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever. And Mary abode with her about three months and returned to her own house.*

Verses 39-56

[Luke 1:39-41](#). *And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda; and entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth. And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost:*

We do not read that Mary was filled with the Holy Ghost, possibly because she was always in that condition, living very near to God in hallowed fellowship. Some of us have occasional fillings with the Holy Spirit, but blessed are they who dwell in him, having been baptized into him, and enjoying continual nearness to God as the blessed result.

[Luke 1:42-43](#). *And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?*

Those who are most holy are most humble; you will always find those two things go together. Elisabeth was the older woman, but, inasmuch as Mary was more highly favored than she was, she asked, “Whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?” Genuine Christians do not exalt themselves above their fellow-believers, but they have a self-depreciatory spirit, and each one esteems others better than himself.

[Luke 1:44-45](#). *For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.*

What a benediction that is! If any of us truly believe God’s Word, we are blessed from that very fact, for God’s promise never misses its due performance. Men find it convenient to forget their promises, but God never forgets; he takes as much delight in keeping his promise as he does in making it.

[Luke 1:46](#). *And Mary said, —*

We do not read that she spoke with a loud voice. Occasionally, the visitation of the Spirit causes excitement. Thus, Elisabeth spoke with a loud voice; but Mary, though full of a rapturous joy, spoke calmly and quietly, in a royal tone of holy calm. “Mary said,” —

[Luke 1:46](#). *My soul doth magnify the Lord, —*

She was weary, for she had come a long journey, but she was like Abraham’s servant, who said, “I will not eat, until I have told mine errand.” So Mary will not eat until she has sung the praises of her God: “My soul doth magnify the Lord,” —

[Luke 1:47-48](#). *And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.*

Some have done so to the grief of genuine Christians, for they have apostatized from the faith, and made Mary into a kind of goddess, and, therefore, Protestant Christians have gone to the other extreme, and have not always given to her the respect which is due to her.

[Luke 1:49-50](#). *For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name. And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation.*

Notice how Mary quotes Scripture. Her mind seems to have been saturated with the Word of God, as though she had learned the books of Scripture through, and had them “by heart” in more senses than one; and it is significant that, though the Holy Spirit was speaking by her, yet even he quoted the older Scriptures in preference to uttering new sentences. What honour he put upon the Old Testament by so continually quoting it in the New Testament, even as the Lord Jesus also did. Let us, too, prize every part of God’s Word, let us lie asoak in it till we are saturated with Scriptural expressions; we cannot find any better ones, for there are none.

[Luke 1:51-53](#). *He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.*

Mary’s song reminds us of the song of Hannah, yet there is a different tone in it. Hannah’s has more of exultation over enemies cast down, but Mary’s is more becoming to the new dispensation as Hannah’s was to the old. There is a gentle quietness of tone about the Magnificat all through, yet

even Mary cannot help rejoicing that the Lord “hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.”

[Luke 1:54-56](#). *He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy; As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever. And Mary abode with her about three months, and returned to her own house.*

Wondrous as her future was to be, she would not neglect the duties of her home. When any of you are privileged to share high spiritual enjoyments, mind that you always return to your own home not unfitted for your domestic duties. We read that David, after he had danced before the ark, “is returned to bless his household.” We must never set up God’s altar in opposition to the lawful duties of our home. The two together will make us strong for service, and enable us to glorify the name of the Lord.

Verses 46-55

[Luke 1:46-47](#). *And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.*

The burden of Mary’s Magnificat is very similar to Hannah’s song, though there was one respect in which she could raise an even loftier note, for she had been chosen to be the mother of our Lord.

[Luke 1:48-55](#). *For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name. And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation. He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he hath sent empty away He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy; as he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.*

You see that the theme of the song is the same all through,-the casting down of the proud and the mighty, and the uplifting of those that are bowed down and despised; and all this is ascribed to the sovereignty of God.

This exposition consisted of readings from [1 Samuel 2:1-10](#); and [Luke 1:46-55](#).

[LUKE CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 2

Verses 1-19

We WILL now read the story of our Saviour's birth as it is recorded in the Gospel according to Luke.

[Luke 2:1-6](#). *And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the City of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.*

Little did any idea enter into Caesar's head that he was accomplishing the purpose of God by bringing Mary to Bethlehem, at that particular time, so that her child might be born there. But God can accomplish the purpose of his providence, and of his grace, in any way that he pleases and although Caesar is not aware of all that is involved in his action, his decree, which he intends simply to be a means of registering his subjects, and of filling his exchequer, is to be overruled by God for the fulfillment of the prophecy, uttered centuries before the event happened, that Christ must be born at Bethlehem. It may seem, to some of you, a strange thing that there should be an imperial edict, issued from Rome, which should have an important influence upon the place of birth of the Child; yet I do not doubt that, in God's esteem, the whole of the great Roman Empire was of very small account in comparison with his Son, our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ; and today, the thrones and dominions of the mightiest monarchs are only like the small cogs of the wheels of divine providence where the welfare of even the least of the Lord's people is concerned. He reckons not events according to their apparent importance; the standard of the sanctuary is a very different measure from that which worldlings use. When any purpose of God is to be accomplished, all other things will be subordinated to it.

[Luke 2:6-7](#). *And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.*

Now hath heavenly glory wedded earthly poverty; and, henceforth, let no man dare to despise the poor and needy, since the son of the Highest is

born in a stable, and cradled in a manger. How low the King of glory stoops, and how gloriously he uplifts the lowly to share his glory!

[Luke 2:8-9](#). *And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.*

For such is the condition, even of gracious souls, that the near approach of the divine glory begets in them trembling and alarm. Oh, how wondrously changed shall we be when we are able to bear even the glories of heaven! Have you ever thought of this, dear friends? The beloved apostle, John, saw Christ in his glory, and he wrote, “When I saw him, I fell at his feet, as dead; “and these shepherds, even at the sight of “the angel of the Lord,” “were sore afraid.” You and I, beloved, must undergo a marvellous change before we shall be able to be at home with God in his glory; but that change shall, through his abundant grace, take place ere long.

[Luke 2:10-12](#). *And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.*

“This shall be a sign unto you,” said the angel to the shepherds; and this is the ensign of the Christ of God even unto this day. There are some, who are constantly bringing discredit upon religion by their pompous ritual and gorgeous ceremonies, and it is buried beneath the weight of their sensuous worship, but the living Christ is still found in simple, lowly guise, “wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.”

[Luke 2:13](#). *And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host —*

They had heard the heavenly herald’s proclamation, and hurried down to join him in publishing the glad tidings. They could not bear that only one angel should announce the birth of the Christ; so, “suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host” —

[Luke 2:13-19](#). *Praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with*

haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.

Mary laid these things up in store, and pondered them, giving them their due weight and value. Oh, that we did the same with every truth that we learn!

Verses 1-40

[Luke 2:1-9](#). *And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.*

These men were probably poor and illiterate, but that did not hinder God from revealing himself to them, nor prevent the coming of his Son to them. They were engaged in their ordinary calling, “keeping watch over their flock by night,” when this great blessing came to them. Seldom does such a blessing as this come to idlers. It was not while they were gadding abroad, and wasting their time, but while they kept watch over their flock that “the angel of the Lord came upon them.” First one angel led the way, and then a multitude of the heavenly host followed and these poor men, perhaps troubled with the common superstition of the Jews that the appearance of God, or any supernatural visitation, would always be followed by death, “were sore afraid.”

[Luke 2:10-11](#). *And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.*

The anointed Saviour has full power to save, for he “is Christ the Lord;” and therefore he is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by him.

[Luke 2:12](#). *And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.*

Not in marble halls, wrapped in purple and fine linen, and welcomed by the great and mighty of earth, nay, this greatest of all princes is born amid the poverty of our ordinary manhood. He is One chosen out of the people, the people’s Saviour, and a manger receives the people’s King.

[Luke 2:13](#). *And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God,--*

They could not stay behind. The news spread through heaven that an angel had gone to announce the birth of Christ, and the others flew through the pearly gates, and hastened to overtake the herald, and reached him just as he had concluded his message: “Suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host.” These cohorts of the Lord came riding post haste, Praising God,--

[Luke 2:13-17](#). *And saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.*

Good news is not to be kept to ourselves. When we have ascertained its truth we are to tell it to others, and we are especially to tell the goodness of salvation. Tell it, O ye who know it in your own hearts by blessed experience! Tell it, though it will sometimes be with broken accents in the feebleness of your flesh yet even then tell it in the ardor of your heart’s affection, and God will bless your testimony, and others will learn the good news through you.

[Luke 2:18-19](#). *And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them--*

Weighed them, estimated them at their right value,^{3/4}

[Luke 2:19](#). *In her heart.*

The best of coffers to lay up anything in is the heart. Happy are those who, like Mary, store up the things of Christ, not in their brain though that would make them orthodox; but in their heart, for that will bring them salvation.

[Luke 2:20-24](#). *And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them. And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb. And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord; (as it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;) and to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.*

Our Saviour put himself under the law for our sakes, and in every jot and tittle he observed it. So we are delivered from its dominion; for if Christ hath fulfilled the law on our account, it hath no more claim upon us. “Ye are not under the law, but under grace.”

[Luke 2:25](#). *And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout,^{3/4}*

This combination makes up a complete character, “just” towards man, “devout” towards God. There are many who think they are just, but their justness does not extend to their fellow-creatures, and they forget the claims of the Most High upon them. On the other hand, I have known men who have pretended to a vast amount of devotion, but who have never been just. Such persons are hypocrites, as the others are robbers of God; but he who is just and devout, just towards man and devout towards God, hath the character of a true man. Such was Simeon, “just and devout,” —

[Luke 2:25-29](#). *Waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law, then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word:*

You see, dear friends, he was not afraid to die, and he knew that he could not die until he had seen the Messiah. Some of us, if we had a

revelation that, on the occurrence of a certain event, we should die, might be filled with alarm or anxiety, but it is not so with holy Simeon; he rather longs to depart in peace. He looks upon the coming of “the Lord’s Christ” with great joy, because now he knows the battle of life for him will soon be over, and that he will enter into his victory.

[Luke 2:30-34](#). *For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel. And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him. And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel;*

There were many who fell through their offences against Jesus: but blessed be his name, there are still many who rise through him, rise first to newness of life on earth and afterwards to resurrection life in glory. Jesus is set for both, he must be to one the savor of death unto death, and to another he must be the savor of life unto life.

[Luke 2:34](#). *And for a sign which shall be spoken against;*

How true has this been. The cross has been to many a stumbling block, and to the worldly wise it has been foolishness; and so will it be to the world’s end.

[Luke 2:35](#). *(Yea, a sword shall pierce through thine own soul also,)*

Great privileges often involve great troubles. Mary was highly favored, and truly blessed among women, yet no woman ever had greater sorrow than she had.

[Luke 2:35](#). *That the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.*

Christ’s death revealed the thoughts of many hearts. It revealed the thought in the heart of Pilate, that he loved popularity better than the truth. It revealed the thought of the heart of Judas, that he loved gold better than he loved his Master. It revealed the thought in the heart of Caiaphas, that he would keep to old customs rather than to the right. It revealed the thought in the hearts of the disciples, and showed what poor timid, trembling hearts they had. Peter’s impulsive spirit, too, was revealed in all its weakness by the death of the Saviour. The cross is the great touchstone; wherever it comes, it tests and tries us, ³/₄even as the crucible tries the metal that is put into it,³/₄ and lets us know what manner of men we are. Dost thou love Christ? Dost thou glory in his cross? Then it is well with thee. But dost thou despise the cross? Dost thou set up thine own righteousness in opposition to

it? Art thou depending upon anything beside Jesus Christ and him crucified? Then his cross reveals thee to be self-righteous, and dead in trespasses and sins. Our Saviour was not only to be received by men, but he was to be welcomed by women also, so now we read:³⁴

[Luke 2:36-40](#). *And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity; and she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem. And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth. And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.*

Verses 21-38

[Luke 2:21](#). *And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called Jesus, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb.*

Although the old law ends with Christ, it is very instructive to notice that he came under the law, and conformed to all its appointments. Jesus, therefore, had to be circumcised. In him the law was fulfilled in every point, even to the jots and tittles; nothing was omitted. Behold, how perfect is the righteousness which he wrought out for his people!

[Luke 2:22](#). *And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord;*

Everything was done that was required by the Jewish law, you see. “When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” “Being found in fashion as a man,” and a man under the Jewish law, Jesus and his parents were obedient to all its requirements.

[Luke 2:23-24](#). *(As it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;) and to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtle-doves, or two young pigeons.*

This proves the poverty of our Lord's parents. If they had been able to bring a costlier sacrifice, they should have done so. The law required the offering of a lamb for a burnt offering; but there was a gracious provision in the case of the poor mother: "If she be not able to bring a lamb, then she shall bring two turtles, or two young pigeons; the one for the burnt offering, and the other for a sin offering: and the priest shall make an atonement for her, and she shall be clean." Even in the case of a working-woman, the birth of her first-born son required from her a sacrifice; but it might be of the smallest kind: "A pair of turtle-doves, or two young pigeons." Think of your Lord himself redeemed by a sacrifice, a pair of doves offered in his stead! What a wonderful coming down to our condition and position was this!

[Luke 2:25](#). *And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout,*

He blended in his character his duty to man and his duty to God, he was just and devout."

[Luke 2:25](#). *Waiting for the consolation of Israel:*

His devotion was not that of a blind devotee. He had eyes of expectation, he was expecting the Messiah to come, who is "the consolation of Israel."

[Luke 2:25-26](#). *And the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ.*

That which the Holy Ghost reveals will assuredly come to pass, as it did in the experience of old Simeon.

[Luke 2:27](#). *And he came by the Spirit into the temple:*

Men who have the Spirit will be led by the Spirit. Simeon came into the temple at the right moment. Just when a young man was entering, with his wife and new-born child, "He came by the Spirit into the temple."

[Luke 2:27-28](#). *And when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law, then took he him up in his arms,*

He came in, I say, at the right time. Did ever anybody, who was not led by the Spirit, find Christ? Somebody has come in here tonight, and he does not know why he has come; but he has been led here by the Spirit that he may see Jesus, and may have such a sight of him as shall be his salvation. God grant that it may be proved that many an aged Simeon has traveled

here this Sabbath night, led by the Spirit for this purpose, to find the Saviour in his own house!

[Luke 2:28](#); [Luke 2:32](#). *And blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.*

Simeon had studied the ancient prophecies to good purpose, and he perceived from them that “the Lord’s Christ” would be “a light to lighten the Gentiles” as well as “the glory of” God’s ancient people, “Israel.”

[Luke 2:33](#). *And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him.*

We may be very near to Christ, and yet know very little about him. Joseph and the virgin mother did not understand “those things which were spoken of him.” One wonders it was so after all that had been revealed to them; we marvel that they marvelled.

[Luke 2:34](#). *And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel;*

Do you understand that? Whenever Christ comes to a man, there is a fall first, and a rising again afterwards. You never knew the Lord aright if he did not give you a fall first. He pulls us down from our pride and self-sufficiency, and then he lifts us up to a position of eternal safety. He is “set” for this purpose; this is the great design of Christ’s coming: “This child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel.”

[Luke 2:34](#). *And for a sign which shall be spoken against;*

Christ and his gospel will always be spoken against. If you know a gospel which is approved by the age, and patronized by the learned, that gospel is a lie. You may be sure of that; but if it be spoken against, if it be slandered, if it be called absurd, unscientific, and I know not what, all that is in its favor.

[Luke 2:35](#). *(Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,)*

This favored woman had the greatest smart to go with her great honour. She saw the suffering and anguish of her son; and the nearer you are to Christ, the more of sorrow it will cost you, sorrow which you may be well content to bear. You know how it is put in that hymn of which many of us are very fond, —

“If I find him, if I follow,
What his guerdon here?”

Many a labour, many a sorrow,
Many a tear.”

Yet, I say again, you may be well content to bear it all for his sake; for you remember what the next verse of the hymn is, —

“If I still hold closely to him,
What hath be at last?
‘Borrow vanquished, labour ended,
Jordan past.’”

[Luke 2:35](#). *That the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.*

Christ and his cross are the revealers of the thoughts of men’s hearts. Men’s hearts can conceal their thoughts until Christ’s cross comes near; then the old enmity rises up, the heart rebels, and we see what is really in men’s hearts.

[Luke 2:36-37](#). *And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity; and she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. It would have been a pity for Christ to have been received in the temple only by a man. There must be a woman there, too, to join in Simeon’s swan song, and to unite her testimony with his.*

[Luke 2:38](#). *And she coming in that instant —*

God knows how to time what we call our accidental walks: “She coming in that instant” —

[Luke 2:38](#). *Gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.*

So that the song of Simeon was sweetened by the voice of Anna, and they both rejoiced in God their Saviour; and their joy was shared by “all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.” May many of us have a share in that same joy as, by faith, we lovingly gaze upon “the Lord’s Christ.”

[LUKE CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 3

Verses 1-18

Luke 3:1-7. *Now in the fifteenth yea of the reign of Tiberias Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judaea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituraea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins; as it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filed and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God. Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned yea to flee from the wrath to come?*

Does not John the Baptist speak like Elijah? Here are no honeyed phrases to delight the popular ear. The prophet of the wilderness talks like one who is all on fire with zeal for God, and indignation against evil.

Luke 3:8-11. *Bring forth therefore worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn is laid down, and cast into the fire. And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise.*

John was wonderfully practical in his advocacy of a holy charity and benevolence. His words cut against all greed, all hoarding, all hardening of the heart towards our fellow men.

Luke 3:12-13. *Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you.*

They were accustomed to gather the taxes unfairly, and to increase the rates by oppressing the people, getting, perhaps, twice or even ten times more out of them than they could legally claim. John speaks to the point, does he not?

Luke 3:14. *And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do And he said unto them, Do violence to no man,*

Those rough Roman soldiers, as they had conquered the country, were very apt to treat the people as though they were their slaves; so John says to them, “Do violence to no man,^{3/4}

Luke 3:14. *Neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wage^{3/4}*

“With your rations, your allowances,” so it runs. They were very apt to be contending for an increase in their pay, and to drag civilians before the courts with false accusations unless they chose to give them bribes to let them go. John does not mince matters with any of his hearers; he speaks with wonderful plainness and courage, and therein proves himself to be a true herald of his Master.

Luke 3:15-18. *And as the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ, or not; John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire: whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable. And many other things in his exhortation preached he unto the people.’*

This exposition consisted of readings from Luke 1:5-17; Luke 3:1-18.

[LUKE CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 4

Verses 1-15

[Luke 4:1](#). *And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness ^{3/4}*

“Full of the Holy Ghost” ^{3/4}and then led “into the wilderness” to be tempted. You would not expect that. Yet it is a sadder thing to be led into a wilderness when you are not filled with the Spirit, and a sadder thing to be tempted when the Spirit of God is not resting upon you. The temptation of our Lord was not one to which he wantonly exposed himself, he “was led by the Spirit into the wilderness.” The Spirit of God may lead us where we shall have to endure trial. If he does so, we are safe; and we shall come off conquerors even as our Master did.

[Luke 4:2](#). *Being forty days tempted of the devil.*

Six weeks of temptation. We read the story of the temptation, perhaps, in six minutes; but it lasted for nearly six weeks Forty days tempted of the devil.”

[Luke 4:2](#). *And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterward hungered.*

It does not appear, therefore, that Jesus hungered while he was fasting. He was miraculously sustained during that period. After fasting, one looks for deeper spiritual feeling, and more holy joy; but the most prominent fact here is that “he afterward hungered,” Think not that you have lost the benefit of your devout exercises when you do not at once feel it. Perhaps the very best thing that can happen to you, after much prayer, is a holy hunger; I mean not a natural hunger, as it was with our Lord; but a blessed hungering after divine things. “Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.”

[Luke 4:3](#). *And the devil said unto him, “If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread.”*

Satan met the hungry Man, and suited his temptation to his present pangs, to his special weakness at that moment: “If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread.” The devil suspected, and I think he knew that Jesus was the Son of God; but he began his temptation with an “if.” He hissed that into the Saviour’s ear: “If thou be the Son of God.” If you, believer, can be led to doubt your sonship, and to fear that you are not a son of God, Satan will have begun to win the battle. So he begins to storm the fort royal of faith: “If thou be the Son of God.” Our Lord was the Son of God, but he was then suffering as our Substitute; and in that condition he was a lone and humble man; what if I call him “a common soldier in the ranks”? Satan invites him to work a miracle of an improper kind on his own behalf; but Jesus wrought no miracle for himself. Now, it may be, that the devil is trying some of you tonight. You are very poor, or business is going very awkwardly, and Satan suggests that you should help yourself in an improper manner. He tells you that you can get out of your trouble very easily by some action which, although it may not be strictly right, may not be so very wrong after all. He said to Jesus, “If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread.”

[Luke 4:4](#). *And Jesus answered him, saying, “It is written,”*

That is Christ’s sword. See how swiftly he drew it out of its sheath. What a sharp two-edged sword is this to be used against Satan! You also,

believer, have this powerful weapon in your hand; let no man take it from you. Believe in the inspiration of Scripture. Just now there is a fierce attack upon the Book of Deuteronomy. It is a very curious thing that all the texts Christ used during the temptation were taken out of Deuteronomy, as if that was to be the very armoury out of which he would select this true Jerusalem blade, with which he should overcome the tempter, “It is written,” “It is written,” “It is said.”

[Luke 4:4](#). *That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.*

“God can sustain me without my turning the stone into bread. God can bring me through my trouble without my saying or doing anything wrong I am not dependent upon the outward and visible.” If you can feel like that, if you can appropriate the promise of God, and quote it to Satan, saying, “It is written,” Using it as Christ did, you will come off conqueror in the time of temptation even as he did.

[Luke 4:5](#). *And the devil,*

Now he tries him again. There is wave upon wave trying to wash the Son of man off his feet.

[Luke 4:5](#). *Taking him up into an high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.*

Skeptics have asked how that could be done. Well, they had better ask him who did it. He knows more about them, and they know more about him, than I do; but he did it: I am sure, for here it is written, that he “shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.”

[Luke 4:6](#). *And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me and to whomsoever I will I give it.*

Does not he talk proudly in the presence of his Lord and Master? What an audacious dog he must have been thus to howl in the presence of him who could have destroyed him by a look or a word, if he had wished to do so!

[Luke 4:7-8](#). *If thou therefore, wilt worship me, all shall be thine. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan:*

The temptation annoyed him, it was so foreign to his holy nature, it vexed his gracious spirit, so he cried out indignantly to the tempter: “Get thee behind me, Satan.”

[Luke 4:8](#). *For it is written,*

Here flashed forth the sword again.

[Luke 4:8](#). *Thou, shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.*

Then let us pay no reverence, no worship, to any but God. Consciences and minds are made for God alone; before him let us bow; but if all the world were proffered us for a moment's idolatry, let us not fall into the snare of the tempter.

[Luke 4:9](#). *And he brought him to Jerusalem,*

Satan now takes Christ to holy ground. Temptations are generally more severe there.

[Luke 4:9](#). *And set him on a pinnacle of the temple,*

The highest point of all; elevated high above the earth.

[Luke 4:9-11](#). *And said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, test at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.*

Now Satan tries to quote Scripture, as he can do when it answers his purpose; but he never quotes it correctly. You young brethren who go out preaching, mind that you do not imitate the devil by quoting part of a text, or quoting Scripture incorrectly. He did it, however, with a purpose; not by misadventure or from forgetfulness; he left out the very necessary words, "In all thy ways." "He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways." Satan left out those last four words, for it was not the way of a child of God to come down from a pinnacle of the temple headlong into the gulf beneath.

[Luke 4:12](#). *And Jesus answering said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.*

Do nothing presumptuously. Do nothing which would lead the Lord to act otherwise than according to his settled laws, which are always right and good.

[Luke 4:13-14](#). *And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season. And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee:*

He had not lost anything by the temptation, the power of the Spirit was still upon him.

[Luke 4:14-15](#). *And there went out a fame of him through all the region round about. And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all.*

He became popular; the people resorted to him, and were glad to hear him. He who has had secret temptation and private conflict is prepared to bear open success without being elevated by it. Hast thou stood foot to foot with Satan? Thou wilt think little of the applause or of the attacks of thy fellow-men.

Verses 14-32

[Luke 4:14](#). *And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee:*

Ah, dear brethren, if our Lord Jesus needed “the power of the Spirit”, how much more do you and I need it! We have no power of our own, but he was the Son of God. He was a divine Teacher, and yet, when he went to his work, it was “in the power of the Spirit.” Tarry, brother, till you have that power; it is of no use for you to go without it.

[Luke 4:14-15](#). *And there went out a fame of him through all the region round about. And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all.*

There was a wondrous power about his teaching: “Never man spake like this man.” Perhaps his hearers did not understand what the power was; but they glorified the new Teacher who had come into their midst.

[Luke 4:16](#). *And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up:*

It is always a difficult thing for a young man to begin preaching in His own native town. A prophet is not without honour save in his own country, yet Jesus “came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up.”

[Luke 4:16](#). *And, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read.*

It was the custom to read parts of Holy Writ in the synagogue, and then to say a few words by way of exposition; and this the Saviour did.

[Luke 4:17](#). *And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Isaiah.*

And when he had opened the book, that is, unrolled the parchment containing Isaiah’s prophecy, —

[Luke 4:17](#). *He found the place where it was written,*

You will find the passage in the sixty-first chapter of Isaiah.

[Luke 4:18-19](#). *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.*

There he stopped; it was all of the passage that then seemed suitable.

[Luke 4:20](#). *And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down.*

In those days, the preacher sat down, and those who listened stood up, I daresay that practice tended to keep the hearers awake, and it was all the easier for the speaker. Well might the Saviour sit down, weighted as he was with a burden of holy instruction that he was about to impart to the people; or, perhaps, sitting down as if himself at rest, he appeared the more ready to give rest to them also.

[Luke 4:20](#). *And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.*

The young Nazarene, who had quitted them for a while, and had come home again, was the center of his fellow-townsmen's attention.

[Luke 4:21](#). *And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.*

He thus declared that he was the anointed Messiah.

[Luke 4:22](#). *And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious word which proceeded out of his mouth.*

They did not at first cavil at or deny what Jesus said; his doctrine was pleasing and comforting; and they were ready to accept it.

[Luke 4:22](#). *And they said, Is not this Joseph's son?*

Now they began to question: "Is not this the son of the carpenter?"

[Luke 4:23](#). *And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me the proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country.*

"You have been doing great things over yonder at Capernaum, do the same at Nazareth. You should not leave your own native town without working miracles here." Now there was an opportunity for Jesus to ingratiate himself with the people, and win their good word. If he would only perform miracles among them, he should be highly exalted in their esteem.

[Luke 4:24-25](#). *And he said, Verily I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country. But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the day, of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land;*

Many husbands died, and many widows in Israel were left desolate in those terrible days of trial.

[Luke 4:26](#). *But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.*

This was as much as to say, “It is not because I lived here that I shall work miracles in this place. There were many widows round about Elijah, but he was not sent to one of them, he was sent to a widow in Sarepta, a city of Sidon, a heathen woman in another country.” Mark the sovereignty of God; he bestows his mercy where he wills, according to his declaration to Moses, “I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.” We dare not ask God why he does this, “for he giveth not account of any of his matters.” He acts wisely; but he acts according to the good pleasure of his own will.

[Luke 4:27](#). *And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman; the Syrian.*

He, too, was a heathen from a distant country. Healing came unto him, but unto none of the lepers of Israel. God will do as he pleases with his own mercy and grace. The question that he asks is, “Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?” “This doctrine of divine sovereignty was not according to the taste of these people, they did not like it, and some of you, I fear, do not like it. They grew very angry, they began to gnash their teeth, and to say, “This young man must be silenced; we will not listen to such doctrine as this from him.”

[Luke 4:28](#). *And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath,*

They did not mind hearing the first part of his teaching; but now that he exalts the sovereignty of God, and lays the sinner low, he speaks too plainly for them: “They were filled with wrath.”

[Luke 4:29-30](#). *And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. But he passing through the midst of them went his way,*

They could not destroy him at that time. His work was not done, and he was immortal till it was fully accomplished.

[Luke 4:31-32](#). *And came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the sabbath day. And they were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power.*

God grant that his Word may be with power tonight! Amen.

Verses 16-30

We will read, from the Revised Version, two passages which record attempts made to kill our Lord before his time had come. You will see, from the sermon, why we read them.

[Luke 4:16-21](#). *And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and he entered, as his custom was, into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Isaiah. And he opened the book, and found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor: he hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down: and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, Today hath this scripture been fulfilled in your ears.*

Alas, not in their hearts. They had heard Christ read the prophecy that related to himself, but they had not accepted its message.

[Luke 4:22-27](#). *And all bare him witness, and wondered at the words of grace which proceeded out of his mouth: and they said, Is not this Joseph's son? And he said unto them, Doubtless ye will say unto me this parable, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done at Capernaum, do also here in thine own country. And he said, Verily I say unto you, No prophet is acceptable in his own country. But of a truth I say unto you, There were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when there came a great famine over all the land; and unto none of them was Elijah sent, but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.*

Thus the Saviour taught God's absolute right to deal out his mercies as he pleases. To that great doctrine of divine sovereignty, Christ's hearers would not submit, even as many in the present day will not yield.

[Luke 4:28](#). *And they were all filled with wrath in the synagogue,—*

They admired Christ's style of speech, but when he came to that man-humbling and God-glorifying doctrine, they were filled with wrath,—

[Luke 4:28-30](#). *As they heard these things; and they rose up, and cast him forth out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their*

city was built, that they might throw him down headlong. But he passing through the midst of them went his way.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Luke 4:16-30](#); and [John 8:37-59](#). (R.V.)

Verses 33-36

We are going to read the inspired records of several of our Saviour's Sabbath cures, for they are very instructive.

[Luke 4:33-36](#). *And in the synagogue there was a man, which had a spirit of an unclean devil, and cried out with a loud voice, saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art; the Holy One of God. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the devil had thrown him in the midst, he came out of him, and hurt him not.*

And they were all amazed, and spake among themselves, saying, What a word is this! For with authority and power he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out, This was a very remarkable cure wrought by the Lord Jesus Christ on the Sabbath-day. Now let us turn to another, which is recorded in the sixth chapter of this same Gospel. (See [Luke 6:6-11](#))

This exposition consisted of readings from [Luke 4:33-36](#); [Luke 6:6-11](#); [Luke 13:10-17](#); [Luke 14:1-6](#); [John 5:1-9](#); ND 9:1-14.

Verses 33-41

We are going to read some verses in the fourth and fifth chapters of Luke's Gospel, — hospital chapters, I may call them, for they record many marvellous cures which were wrought by the great Physician, the Lord Jesus Christ. We shall begin at the 33rd verse of the fourth chapter.

[Luke 4:33-34](#). *And in the synagogue there was a man, which had a spirit of an unclean devil, and cried out with a loud voice, saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth?*

There are many people, at the present day, who have this evil spirit in them and they also say, "Let us alone." They do not want to have their consciences disturbed; they would rather sleep on until they wake up in another world where their awaking will be too late to avail for their repentance.

[Luke 4:34](#). *Art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.*

That is an old trick of the devil, to acknowledge the excellence of the Preacher that he may avoid the personal application of the sermon; and

there are many people, who are quite satisfied when they have said concerning the Word which they have heard, “Yes, it was all true, and it was very well put.” But that is not the purpose of a true minister of the gospel, — simply to win the compliment of your approbation; he wants to see the devil cast out of you, and to stir up your hearts so that you will no longer let religion alone, but will flee to Christ to save you.

[Luke 4:35-36](#). *And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the devil had thrown him in the midst, he came out of him, and hurt him not. And they were all amazed, and spake among themselves, saying, What a word is this! for with authority and power he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out.*

Ah, dear friends! when we see what the gospel can do, — how it can reclaim the thief, how it can make chaste the harlot, how it can lift up the very vilest of men from the lowest depths of degradation, — we may well say, “What a Word is this!” The power of the gospel does not lie in the preacher, but in the truth which he proclaims. What a Word is this, which not only knocks at the door of the human heart, but which carries on its girdle the key with which it can open that door? It does not simply invite the sinner to trust the Saviour, but there is a power, which goes with it, which sweetly woos the heart until the unwilling become willing, and those who have hitherto despised God and his great salvation, cheerfully yield themselves to him. Christ not only comes to those who seek him; but, in the splendor of his grace, he is often found of them that sought him not; yea, those who cried “Let us alone,” are not let alone, for grace brings them beneath her blessed sway.

[Luke 4:37-39](#). *And the fame of him went out into every place of the country round about. And he arose out of the synagogue and entered into Simon’s house. And Simon’s wife’s mother was taken with a great fever; and they besought him for her. And he stood over her, and rebuked the fever; and it left her: and immediately she arose and ministered unto them.*

Here is a type of another form of the disease of sin. This time it is a hot and burning fever, and there are many men who have the fever of pride, or the fever of ambition, and some who have the fever of impetuous lust. Yet we have never read of such a cure as this in the lives of the doctors of ancient or modern times. They have wrought remarkable cures by long dosing the patient with various drugs, but Christ just stood over Peter’s wife’s mother, and rebuked the fever, and instantly it fled.

[Luke 4:40](#). *Now when the sun was setting,*

Ah, it is setting with some of you! Those gray hairs are like the streaks of light upon the horizon as the sun goes down; but blessed be God, he who heals the spiritually sick in the early morning, by bringing children to himself, does not cease to work until the sun goes down.

[Luke 4:40](#). *All they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto him and he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them.*

Oh, that he would do that just now! Still is he mighty to save; oh, that he would now display his ancient power, and lay his healing hands on every one of you! What fame he would get if he would do so! What joy there would be if all of you should now be turned to God! And why should it not be? Christ is able to do this; then, let us ask it of him in earnest believing prayer

[Luke 4:41](#). *And devils also came out of many, crying out, and, saying, Thou art Christ, the Son of God. And he rebuking them suffered them not to speak: for they knew that he was Christ.*

Perhaps they thought that their testimony would tend to blacken his character. We are, in a sense, pleased when bad men find fault with us, for that is really the best commendation that they can give us; but when they begin to praise us, we feel suspicious that there is something wrong. We think of how Christ acted when the devils said to him, “Thou art Christ, the Son of God,” and we would fain have them hold their tongues. What a vile thing sin is, for it makes even good words to be evil when they come out of sinful lips!

This exposition consisted of readings from [Luke 4:33-41](#); and [Luke 5:12-17](#).

[LUKE CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 5

Verses 1-32

[Luke 5:1-2](#). *And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret, and saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets.*

Before folding them up, as if they intended to do no more with them just then, as they had been working all night in vain.

[Luke 5:3](#). *And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land.*

It is very difficult to speak effectively when the people come too close to the speaker; and, sometimes, a little inconvenience like that may interfere with the flow of the speaker's thoughts and words. Even the Saviour seems to have felt that he needed a little breathing space between himself and his audience.

[Luke 5:3](#). *And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship.*

That was what some people would have called an unconsecrated place, but Christ's presence consecrated it, as it does every place where he condescends to meet with us.

“Where're we seek him, he is found,
And every place is hallowed ground.”

[Luke 5:4](#). *Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.*

Whenever he borrows a pulpit, or anything else, he pays good interest for the loan. Christ will not be in even a boatman's debt. For every cup of cold water given to his disciples in his name the Master will take care to pay.

[Luke 5:5](#). *And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.*

Out of personal respect and obedience to Christ, having perhaps but a slender hope of any good coming of it, yet, nevertheless, he will let down the net.

[Luke 5:6-7](#). *And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them.*

For they had launched out so far into the sea so scarcely to be within hearing, so they beckoned to their partners in the other ship, and they rowed out to them.

[Luke 5:7](#). *And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink.*

We can have too much of a good thing, aye, too much even of the best things, for our poor frail vessel cannot hold all that God would be willing to put into it.

[Luke 5:8](#). *When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.*

Not knowing what he said, though he knew what he meant; feeling as if he, so sinful, had come too close to the Lord who was so gracious, so he must not dare to keep near to him. Have you never felt the same as that? If not, methinks you have neither known your Lord, not yet yourselves for the knowledge of Christ, combined with the knowledge of ourselves, is sure to produce this holy shrinking, in which we have no need for anyone to say to us, "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet," for we are almost ready to put off our very body, for we can scarcely bear the glory of the presence of the Lord.

[Luke 5:9-10](#). *For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken: and so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.*

He seemed to imply that he should catch them after the same rate, too; and so he did, for the first throw of the net brought in three thousand, and very soon the number caught was increased to five thousand. That was good fishing by those first Gospel fishermen; oh, that we could throw the net as they did!

[Luke 5:11-12](#). *And when they had brought the ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him, and it came to pass, when he was in a certain city, behold a man full of leprosy:*

That is a characteristic touch of Luke, who, as a physician, with a glance of his eye, took in the condition of the man, not as merely a leper, but as one "full of leprosy."

[Luke 5:12-13](#). *Who seeing Jesus fell on his face, and brought him, saying, Lord if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And he put forth his hand, and touched him, —*

The perfectly pure One touched the leprous man without himself becoming contaminated. In any other house, the man who touched a leper would have been defiled; but, when Christ comes into contact with impurity, he is not defiled, but he removes it. This is what the gospel is meant to do to the world. We are to go and seek the good of the most fallen

and abandoned of men and those who do so, ought to have so much of the spirit of Jesus Christ in them, and so much vitality in their piety, that they will not be tempted by the sin upon which they look, but, on the contrary, will overcome that sin, and impart spiritual health instead of receiving infection. May we be in such a state of health as Jesus was! Then shall we be able to touch the leper, and not be defiled. Jesus touched him, —

[Luke 5:13](#). *Saying, I will: be thou clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him. —*

Ask him to touch thee also, poor leprous soul; thou who art full of sin, thou who art deeply conscious that the deadly disease of sin is upon thee incurably. Ask him but to touch thee, for the touch of his finger shall make thee clean in a moment. Christ's cures are often instantaneous. He, who could speak a world into being with a word, can also speak a man into perfect spiritual sanity with a word.

[Luke 5:14-15](#). *And he charged him to tell no man: but go, and shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing, according as Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them. But so much the more went there a fame abroad of him:*

Some fires burn the more fiercely for being damped, and such was the fame of Christ; it was not to be kept under. The more he bade men be quiet, “so much the more went there a fame abroad of him.”

[Luke 5:15](#). *And great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by him of their infirmities.*

Two words that I long to see linked together in this house: “to hear, and to be healed by him.” You come to hear; can you not also come “to be healed by him of your infirmities”?

[Luke 5:16](#). *And he withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed.*

The tense of the verb implies that he often did this; it was his habit to withdraw himself for private prayer even in his busiest times, and when he could occupy every minute with great advantage to the people. Thus he gathered new strength from above for each day's work; and when there was most to be done, then he took most time to pray. It is an evil economy that tries to take time for other things that should be spent in prayer, for the shortening of prayer will be the weakening of our power.

[Luke 5:17](#). *And it came to pass on a certain day, as he was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which were*

come out of every town of Galilee, and Judaea, and Jerusalem: and the power of the Lord was present to heal them.

Not the Pharisees and doctors of the law; they do not often get healed by Christ, but “the power of the Lord was present to heal the multitude.” The only people for whom there seems to be no power to heal are these Pharisees and doctors, as will appear by the following narrative.

[Luke 5:18](#). *And, behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy:*

He had had a stroke of paralysis.

[Luke 5:18-19](#). *And they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before him.*

And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop, — By the external staircase, —

[Luke 5:19](#). *And let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus.*

Probably into the courtyard of the house where Jesus was preaching.

[Luke 5:20](#). *And when he saw their faith, he said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee.*

Laying the axe at the root; not healing the paralysis at first, but forgiving the sin which depressed the man’s spirit, and so was, in a measure, the cause of the paralysis. By removing the sin, he raised the man’s spirits, and with his renewed spirits, there came back strength. Note that it was when he saw their faith that he said unto the man, “Thy sins are forgiven thee.”

[Luke 5:21](#). *And the scribes and the Pharisees*

Here they are, these caviling gentlemen, these Pharisees and doctors of the law, —

[Luke 5:21-23](#). *Began to reason, saying, Who it this which speaketh blasphemies? ho can forgive sins, but God alone. But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answering said unto them, What reason ye in your hearts? Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Rise up and walk?*

He that could do the one could do the other. He who bids the paralyzed man walk is divine; he, therefore, can forgive sin.

[Luke 5:24-26](#). *But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins, (he said unto the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go into thine house. And*

immediately he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God. And they were all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear, saying, we have seen strange things today.

May we often see such “strange things” spiritually!

[Luke 5:27-32](#). *And after these things he went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he said unto him, Follow me. And he left all, rose up, and followed him. And Levi made him a great feast in his own house: and there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them. But their scribes and Pharisees murmured against his disciples, saying, Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners? And Jesus answering said unto them, They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.*

The murmuring of those Pharisees and doctors of the law had one good result, for it led the Saviour to declare the purpose of his mission to the earth: “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.”

Verses 12-17

[Luke 5:12](#). *And it came to pass, when he was in a certain city, behold a man full of leprosy: who seeing Jesus fell on his face, and besought him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.*

There was not much faith there, but faith even as a grain of mustard seed will serve; and therefore Christ did not refuse the poor leper’s plea.

[Luke 5:13-15](#). *And he put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will: be thou clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him. And he charged him to tell no man: but go, and shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing, according as Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.*

But so much the more went there a fame abroad of him: and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by him of their infirmities. Oh, that sinners would come to Christ in this spirit now, — “to hear, and to be healed by him of their infirmities!” Some of you have come to hear, but have you come to Christ to be healed? Have you really come for that purpose? Alas! Some come even to God’s house only to see, or to be seen; how can such people expect to receive a blessing? Yet my Master is so gracious that, often, he is found of them that sought him not. So may it be with any careless ones who are with us now!

[Luke 5:16-17](#). *And he withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed. And it came to pass on a certain day, as he was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judaea, and Jerusalem: and the power of the Lord was present to heal them.*

These were the least hopeful patients that the great Physician ever had; for to heal these doctors of divinity, and to bring these proud learned Pharisees down to accept the gospel, needed an omnipotent display of divine power. Penitent sinners are readily brought to Christ; but, often, the self-righteous, who think they are rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, are not to be persuaded to accept the fine gold which Christ presents to all who ask him for it. The Lord grant that, if any such people be here, the power of the Lord may be here to heal them!

This exposition consisted of readings from [Luke 4:33-41](#); and [Luke 5:12-17](#).

Verses 12-26

[Luke 5:12](#). *And it came to pass, when he was in a certain city, behold a man full of leprosy:*

As far gone with leprosy as he could be; thoroughly tainted, and eaten up with that loathsome disease.

[Luke 5:12](#). *Who seeing Jesus fell on his face, and besought him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.*

He felt that the difficulty lay in the will of Christ, not in his power. No other teacher would have looked at such a man. Everybody shrank from him, for he scattered defilement wherever he moved. A leper was a being from whom all kept clear, so this one was afraid that the great Teacher was not willing to cure him. "If thou wilt," said he, "thou canst," ³/₄ 'I know that thou canst make me clean.'

[Luke 5:13](#). *And he put forth his hand, and touched him,*

This was a wonderful instance of condescending love on the part of the Lord Jesus; and touching the leper did not defile him. On the contrary, Christ removed the defilement from the leper: "He touched him,"

[Luke 5:13](#). *Saying, I will: be thou clean.*

It was the will of Christ that wrought the miracle, that secret movement of the heart of Christ, that silent omnipotent going forth of divine energy that accomplished the leper's cure.

[Luke 5:13](#). *And immediately the leprosy departed from him.*

Christ can heal sin in the same way that he cured this leper. If he touches the worst man in this place, he can make sin to depart from him the moment he touches him. It does not require years in order to perfect the work of salvation, it can be done in a moment. Such is the wonderworking power of Christ: “immediately the leprosy departed from him.”

[Luke 5:14](#). *And he charged him to tell no man: but go, and shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing, according as Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.*

Our blessed Master did not court fame; he did not wish to make himself notorious, the crowds that flocked around him were inconvenient to him, so he did not wish to have them increased. There was danger in such crowding, and Jesus was wise in his generation, so he charged the healed leper to tell no man, but to show himself to the priest, and to present the offering enjoined under the law.

[Luke 5:15](#). *But so much the more went there a fame abroad of him:*

Fame is like fire. If you heap anything on it to prevent it from spreading, it often acts as fuel to the flame; so, the very effort to hide the light of Christ’s power, made it spread all the more widely.

[Luke 5:15](#). *And great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by him of their infirmities.*

I wish that all congregations would come together from the same motives, ^¾to hear and to be healed by Christ. What is thy disease, my hearer? What ails thy soul? What is the mischief in thy spirit? What is the malady in thy heart? Jesus can heal thee. Oh, that thou wouldst at once seek to be healed by him!

[Luke 5:16](#). *And he withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed.*

Just when there were such grand opportunities of doing good, just when everybody sought him, does he get right away from them into the wilderness to pray? Yes, because he felt what we ought to feel but often do not, that he needed fresh power, that as the servant of God he must wait upon God for fresh power for his great life-work: “He withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed.” No doubt it was the constant habit of Christ to pray, but there were certain special times when he retired into lonely places, and his prayer was peculiarly fervent and prolonged.

[Luke 5:17](#). *And it came to pass on a certain day, as he was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which were*

come out of every town of Galilee, and Judaea, and Jerusalem: and the power of the Lord was present to heal them.

The word “them” scarcely gives the right sense of the original; it should be, “the power of the Lord was present to heal.” Jesus did not heal the Pharisees and doctors of the law, but he healed many of the congregation. Now, how do you account for this power present to heal? Why, by that wilderness prayer: “He withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed,” and afterward, in a very high and remarkable manner, “the power of the Lord was present to heal.” And when the power to heal was present, the patient to be healed was very soon present, too.

[Luke 5:18-19](#). *And, behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy: and they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before him.*

And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop, and let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus. There does appear to have been, according to Mark, some breaking up of the material that formed the roof of the house where Christ was. It was not altogether such an easy matter as some have imagined to let this poor palsied man down into the presence of Jesus; and if some of the dust from the roof fell down upon the Pharisees and doctors of the law who were sitting by, it would only be what they were accustomed to throw into other people’s eyes.

[Luke 5:20](#). *And when he saw their faith, he said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee.*

Christ has eyes with which he can see faith. You and I cannot see it; but he can: “When he saw their faith, he said unto him, Man, thy sins be forgiven thee.” This was going to the very root of his disease. Jesus knew what the man really ailed; he was palsied in spirit as well as in body, and Christ removed the root of his disease by forgiving his sin.

[Luke 5:21](#). *And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason,*

The gentlemen I alluded to just now began to reason. It was just like them; instead of beginning to praise God, they “began to reason,”-

[Luke 5:22](#). *Saying, Who is this, which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone? But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answering said unto them, Why reason ye in your hearts?*

See, Jesus can perceive thoughts. I have heard of “thought-reading.” Here is a true specimen of it: “Jesus perceived their thoughts, and said unto them, Why reason ye in your hearts?”

[Luke 5:23](#). *Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Rise up and walk?*

Anyone can say, “Thy sins be forgiven thee,” or, “Rise up and walk,” but to forgive sins, or to give the power to rise up and walk, equally needs a God. If God be present, and can make the palsied man arise and walk, he is also able to forgive his sins.

[Luke 5:24-26](#). *But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins, (he said unto the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go into thine house. And immediately he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God. And they were all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear,*

With awe, and reverence. They felt that God had come very near to them, and they perhaps said, like Jacob of old, when he was afraid, “flow dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.” They were filled with fear,^¾

[Luke 5:26](#). *Saying, We have seen strange things today.*

Oh, that we might see such “strange things” in this house tonight, and whenever we meet to worship God!

Verses 12-32

[Luke 5:12](#). *And it came to pass, when he was in a certain city, behold a man full of leprosy:*

What a contrast there was between these two persons,— the Lord Jesus full of purity,— and this man full of impurity,— full of leprosy! He could not be more than full; he had as much leprosy as a man could contain.

[Luke 5:12](#). *Who seeing Jesus fell on his face, and besought him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.*

This was splendid faith. Here was adoration of the noblest kind; no angel before the throne of God could render the Son of God more honour than this poor leprous man did. He believed in Christ’s power at once to rid him of that otherwise incurable disease: “Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.”

[Luke 5:13](#). *And he put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will: be thou clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him.*

This is just what Christ can do also in the spiritual realm. If a man be full of sin, let him but fall down on his face before Jesus, and say, “Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean,” and the Lord will put out his hand, and touch him, and he will be clean in a moment. “Immediately “not needing the lapse of a single hour,—“immediately the leprosy departed from him.”

[Luke 5:14](#). *And he charged him to tell no man: but go, and shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing, according as Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.*

As long as the ceremonial law was in force, Christ very diligently obeyed it, and bade others do the same. That law is now abolished, and the Jewish priesthood has also ceased to be. But mark the modesty of our Saviour. As a man, he sought no fame or honour, but, as far as he could do so, he suppressed the voices that would have brought him notoriety; yet grateful tongues could not all be silenced, even at his bidding.

[Luke 5:15](#). *But so much the more went there a fame abroad of him: and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by him of their infirmities.*

There was a double attraction about the Lord Jesus, —his sweet, instructive speech, and his gracious, healing hand. There is a somewhat similar attraction still in every true gospel ministry, not the attraction of the mere words of human eloquence, but in the truth which every faithful minister preaches, and in that matchless soul-healing power which goes with the Word wherever it is believingly heard.

[Luke 5:16](#). *And he withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed.*

That is just what you and I would probably not have done under such circumstances. We should have said, “We must seize this golden opportunity of publishing our message. There is a tide in the affairs of men which, taken at the flood, leads on to plenitude of blessing; and we must take advantage of it.” But our Saviour did not wish for fame, he cared nothing about excitement and popularity; so “he withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed” for more of that real power which touches the hearts of men so as to save them, caring nothing for that power which merely attracts a crowd, and excites momentary attention. O servant of God, when thou art succeeding best in thy service, imitate thy Lord, withdraw thyself and pray!

[Luke 5:17](#). *And it came to pass on a certain days, as he was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judaea, and Jerusalem; and the power of the Lord was present to heal them.*

To heal the people? Yes, and to heal the doctors, too; and that was a far more difficult thing than to heal the ordinary folk. It must have been a time of great mercy and favor when Christ was ready to bless even the Pharisee and doctors of the law who were sitting by.

[Luke 5:18](#). *And, behold,—*

For it was a great wonder,—

[Luke 5:18](#). *Men brought in a bed a man which was taken with palsy:*

A paralyzed man.

[Luke 5:18-19](#). *And they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before him. And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop,—*

There was, no doubt, a staircase outside, as there usually is to Eastern houses: “They went upon the housetop,”

[Luke 5:19-21](#). *And let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus. And when he saw their faith, he said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee. And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?*

Most true, O Pharisees; and, therefore he is God, for he can forgive sins, and he has forgiven this poor sinner!

[Luke 5:22-23](#). *But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answering said unto them, Why reason ye in your hearts? Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, rise up and walk?*

“Does not each of these require the same divine power? If I am able to bid him rise up and walk, I am also able, by the same divine authority, to forgive his sins.”

[Luke 5:24-26](#). *But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins, (he said unto the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go into thine house. And immediately he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God. And they were all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear,*

With a reverent awe,

[Luke 5:26-27](#). *Saying, We have seen strange things today. And after these things he went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom:*

This Levi, or Matthew, was a tax collector; not like those of our own day, but one who farmed the taxes for the Roman governor, and made what he could for himself out of them; at least, that is what many of the “publicans” did.

[Luke 5:27-28](#). *And he said unto him, Follow me. And he left all, rose up, and followed him.*

This was just a parallel case to that of curing the palsied man; it is precisely the same morally as the other was physically. The office of a publican was disreputable in the eyes of the Jews, and this Levi was probably making money fast at the cost of his own countrymen. He was paralyzed morally as the other man was physically; but as soon as Christ said to him, “Follow me,” “he left all, rose up, and followed him.”

[Luke 5:29-30](#). *And Levi made him a great feast in his own house: and there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them. But their scribes and Pharisees murmured against his disciples, saying, Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners?*

It seems that there can never be a great wonder wrought by Christ without somebody or other objecting to it. I suppose that the sun never rose without annoying thieves, who would like a longer time to perpetrate their deeds of darkness; and no miracle of mercy is ever wrought without somebody finding fault with it for some reason or other. Be not dismayed, therefore, now that in these modern days there have arisen many cunning objectors to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Let them object to it, as the dog barks at the moon; but still the moon shines on in her silver brightness. So, when all objectors shall have howled themselves to silence, the eternal gospel will shine on with never-failing splendor. These scribes and Pharisees murmured against Christ’s disciples, and said to them, “Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners?” Their Master did not leave there to defend themselves, but he took the case into his own hands.

[Luke 5:31](#). *And Jesus answering said unto them, They that are whole — “Such as you scribes and Pharisees claim to be*

[Luke 5:31](#). *Need not a physician; but they that are sick.*

“You regard them as sick, and I regard them in the same way, and therefore am I found where these sick ones are. Why should I turn aside

from them to insult you, who are so wonderfully healthy and think yourselves so good?”

[Luke 5:32](#). *I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.*

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CHAPTER 6

Verses 6-11

[Luke 6:6-10](#). *And it came to pass also on another sabbath, that he entered into the synagogue and taught: and there was a man whose right hand was withered. And the scribes and Pharisees watched him, whether he would heal on the sabbath day; that they might find an accusation against him. But he knew their thoughts, and said to the man which had the withered hand, Rise up, and stand forth in the midst. And he arose and stood forth. Then said Jesus unto them, I will ask you one thing; Is it lawful on the sabbath days to do good, or to do evil? To save life, or to destroy it? And looking round about upon them all, —*

I think I see that piercing glance, which read their very hearts, and condemned the wickedness it saw there: “Looking round about upon them all,” —

[Luke 6:10-11](#). *He said unto the man, Stretch forth thy hand. And he did so and his hand was restored whole as the other. And they were filled with madness; and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus.*

This was a second miracle wrought by our Lord on the Sabbath-day, and it also was a very notable one. Follow on in the same Gospel until you come to the thirteenth chapter, at the tenth verse. (See [Luke 13:10-17](#))

This exposition consisted of readings from [Luke 4:33-36](#); [Luke 6:6-11](#); [Luke 13:10-17](#); [Luke 14:1-6](#); [John 5:1-9](#); ND 9:1-14.

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CHAPTER 7

Verses 18-50

[Luke 7:18](#). *And the disciples of John shewed him of all these things. John was in prison, and, possibly, troubled in spirit.*

[Luke 7:19](#). *And John calling unto him two of his disciples sent them to Jesus saying, art thou he that should come? or look we for another?*

Did John doubt, then? Perhaps not. It may be that he saw that his disciples doubted, and that he wished their fears to be removed. It is possible, however, that he did himself have doubts. It is no unusual thing for the bravest hearts to be subject to fits of doubt. Elijah, you remember sat under a juniper tree in the wilderness, “and he requested for himself that he might die,” though he was the man who never was to die. And John, — the Elijah of the Christian dispensation, though a man of iron, was but a man, so he sent two of his disciples to Jesus, saying, “Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?”

[Luke 7:20-22](#). *When the men were come unto him, they said, John Baptist hath sent us unto thee, saying, Art thou he that should come, or look we for another? And in that same hour he cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind he gave sight. Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard;*

Our old proverb says that actions speak louder than words, so an answer in his actions would be more eloquent with these inquirers than even an answer in our Lord’s own words. He bade them look at the evidences of his Messiahship which he gave them by his miraculous cures, and then he said to them, “Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard.” It would be well if our lives were such that, if any enquired what we were, we should only have to say that they might judge us by what they had seen and heard in our common everyday life and conversation.

[Luke 7:22-23](#). *How that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.*

According to our Lord’s testimony, the preaching of the gospel to the poor is as great a proof of his Messiahship as the raising of the dead. Then how highly it ought to be prized by them, and how glad should they be who have the gospel now preached freely in their hearing!

[Luke 7:24](#). *And when the messengers of John were departed, he began to speak unto the people concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness for to see? A reed shaken with the wind?*

The wind on the banks of the Jordan, where there are plenty of reeds growing; — did you see a man who would bow before every breath of

popular favor or popular wrath? Was John the Baptist such a man as that? No, certainly not.

[Luke 7:25](#). *But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment Behold, they which are gorgeously appareled, and live delicately, are in kings' courts.*

They do not preach repentance. As is their clothing, so is their doctrine. They try to show a royal road to heaven — a smooth and easy path. But was John the Baptist a preacher of that kind? No, that he was not.

[Luke 7:26-28](#). *But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet. This is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.*

Passing into the dispensation of clearer light, he who is least among the believers of the gospel of Jesus is, in some respects, greater than this man, who could only preach repentance, and point to a coming Saviour.

[Luke 7:29-32](#). *And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him. And the Lord said, Whereunto then shall I liken the men of this generation and to what are they like?*

They are like unto children sitting in the marketplace, at play; the playing of children is often according to the manners and customs of grown up people.

[Luke 7:32](#). *And calling one to another, and saying, we have piped unto you, and ye have not danced;*

“You would not play a merry game when we asked you to do so.”

[Luke 7:32](#). *We have mourned to you, and ye have not wept.*

“You would not play either at funerals or weddings.”

[Luke 7:33](#). *For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and ye say, he hath a devil.*

“He came among you as an ascetic, denying himself, not only the luxuries of life, but even the common comforts that others enjoyed, and ye say, ‘He hath a devil.’”

[Luke 7:34](#). *The Son of man is come eating and drinking;*

“He does not pretend to be an ascetic, he comes, on the contrary, to show that neither meat nor drink can save a man. What do you say, then, of this Son of man?”

[Luke 7:34-35](#). *And ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners! But wisdom is justified of all her children.*

Though the world contemns all wisdom’s children, whichever way they go, and is not pleased with their manners, whatever manners they possess, yet, in the long run, when the wisdom of God shall be all unfolded, it will be seen that the roughness of John and the gentleness and lovingkindness of Jesus were both right in their proper place. If fish are not caught in the gospel fishery, it may sometimes be the fisherman’s fault, but more often, it is the fault of the fish themselves. Here we have two very different kinds of fishermen, yet neither of them attracts all, though each of them draws some.

[Luke 7:36-37](#). *And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee’s house, and sat down to meat. And, behold, —*

For it is a wonder of grace: “Behold,” —

[Luke 7:37](#). *A woman in the city, which was a sinner, —*

A sinner by profession, a public and notorious sinner, —

[Luke 7:37-44](#). *When she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster box; of ointment, and stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner. And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet:*

“Though it was only a common act of courtesy, such as should always be shown to a guest, thou didst neglect that;” —

[Luke 7:44](#). *But she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head.*

“She has given my feet no common washing, for she has washed them with her tears. You would only have brought me a linen napkin, but she hath ‘wiped them with the hairs of her head.’”

[Luke 7:45](#). *Thou gavest me no kiss,*

Which was usually given as a greeting to guests at that time. Simon had not given to Jesus the honour which was due to him, which would have been to kiss his forehead.

[Luke 7:45](#). *But this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet.*

Every word is emphatic to show how far she had gone beyond Simon, who thought himself so much better than she was.

[Luke 7:46](#). *My head with oil thou didst not anoint:*

Another usual Eastern custom with guests whom the host intended to honour.

[Luke 7:46](#). *But this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment.*

Anointed them, not with ordinary olive oil, but with precious costly ointment.

[Luke 7:47](#). *Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much:*

“You know that her sins were many, and I tell you that they have been forgiven, and you can see, by her actions, that she loves much.”

[Luke 7:47-48](#). *But to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven.*

What music that sentence “Thy sins are forgiven,” must have been to her! ‘Ah!’ says one, “I also should like to hear that sentence. Beyond everything else in the whole world would I desire to hear Jesus say to me, ‘Thy sins are forgiven.’ Then put yourself in the place that this woman occupied.

When Joab clung to the horns of the altar, he had to die there, but this woman had fled to the feet of Jesus, and she did not die there; nor shall you, but at those blessed feet, weeping for sin, and trusting the great Sin-bearer, you shall receive assurance of pardon: “Thy sins are forgiven.”

[Luke 7:49-50](#). *And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also? and he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.*

He did not want this young convert, this beginner in the Christian life to hear the bickerings and controversies of these coarse spirits, so he said to her, "Go in peace; and, dear soul, if you have begun to find out that, even in the Christian Church there are many opinions concerning many things, do not trouble yourself about those things. This is enough for thee: "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." There may be some who are called to contend for this or that point of the faith; but, as for thee, poor child, if,

with thy broken heart, thou hast found the Saviour, and if thou lovest him with an inward, warm, and hearty love, do not spoil that love by getting into a controversial spirit: "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."

Verses 24-50

[Luke 7:24](#). *And when the messengers of John were departed, he began to speak unto the people concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness for to see? A reed shaken with the wind?*

Certainly not; John could never be compared to a reed shaken with the wind, for he was strong, sturdy, firm, and steadfast. He was not like so many preachers, nowadays, who are swayed by the ever-changing opinion of the age, — the thought of these modern times, — and so prove themselves to be mere reeds shaken with the wind.

[Luke 7:25](#). *But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment! Behold, they which are gorgeously appareled, and live delicately, are in kings' courts.*

John had been preaching in the desert, with all his might warning sinners to flee from the wrath to come. He was no court preacher, but a minister to the multitude, who delivered his heaven-inspired message in his own straightforward earnest style.

[Luke 7:26-27](#). *But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet. This is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.*

John was the morning star, and Christ the glorious Sun. John was the herald proclaiming the coming of Christ, and Christ himself followed close at his heels.

[Luke 7:28](#). *For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist:*

His was the highest office of all, immediately to precede Messiah himself.

[Luke 7:28](#). *But he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.*

We have a fuller gospel to preach than John had, and we may expect to see greater results from the preaching of that gospel than John could hope to see.

[Luke 7:29-32](#). *And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him. And the Lord said, whereunto then shall I liken the men of this generation? and to what are they like? They are like unto children sitting in the marketplace, and calling one to another, and saying, we have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned to you, and ye have not wept.*

These children could not agree as to what game they would play. "Come," they said, "let us imitate a wedding, we will pipe, and you can dance." But the others would not dance. "Well," they said, "let us play at something. Let us imitate a funeral; we will be the mourners." Then the others would not weep. They would agree to nothing that was proposed, and that is the point of the Saviour's analogy, that there are multitudes of men who always quarrel with any kind of ministry that God may send to them. This man's style is much too florid; he has a superabundance of the flowers of oratory. That other man is much too dull; there is nothing interesting about his discourses. This man is too coarse; he is so rough as even to be vulgar. That other man is too refined, and uses language which shoots over people's heads. It is easy to find fault when you want to do so. And stick will do to beat a dog, and any kind of excuse will do to allow your conscience to escape from the message of an earnest ministry. Our Lord told the people that this was the way they had acted towards himself and John the Baptist.

[Luke 7:33](#). *For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; —*

An ascetic of ascetics, —

[Luke 7:33](#). *And ye say, He hath a devil.*

"He is out of his mind altogether, possessed by the devil."

[Luke 7:34](#). *The Son of man is come eating and drinking; —*

That is the Lord Jesus himself. He comes as a man among men, and sits with you at your feasts, and does not lead the life of an ascetic.

[Luke 7:34](#). *And ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!*

There was no pleasing them either way; whichever form of preacher the Lord sent, whether an ascetic or one like themselves, they found fault.

[Luke 7:35](#). *But wisdom is justified of all her children.*

There shall come a day when it shall be seen that, after all, God knew best what style of preacher to send. He had work for each man to do, and he adapted the man for the work he had entrusted to his charge.

[Luke 7:36](#). *And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat.*

Invitations from Pharisees were rather scarce; they did not often ask Christ to their houses. Even before this meal is over, there will be sure to be something like a quarrel, depend upon it.

[Luke 7:37](#). *And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, —*

Her name is not given; and there are good reasons why it should not be given. Certainly, she was not Mary the sister of Lazarus, nor yet Mary Magdalene, we may be quite sure of that. Our Saviour leaves her in an anonymous condition; and it is usually best that converts of this character should not be exhibited, and their names made known. I believe that much cruel wrong has been done to reclaimed sinners when they have been pushed to the front. “Behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner,” —

[Luke 7:37-38](#). *When she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at his feet behind him weeping, —*

His feet probably lay towards the door as he reclined at the table, and she could readily get at them without becoming too conspicuous in the room: she “stood at his feet behind him weeping,” —

[Luke 7:38](#). *And began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.*

What a blessed amalgam of humility penitence, gratitude, and love! All these are seen in what she did, especially in that unbinding of the tresses of her beauty, which had been her nets in which she had taken the souls of men, now she uses these for a towel. She “began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.”

[Luke 7:39](#). *Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, —*

He did not like to say it in so many words, but he spoke loudly enough for himself to hear it, and for Christ to hear it, too.

[Luke 7:39-44](#). *Saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner. And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman?*

“You did see this woman, and you looked upon her with a frowning face; now take another look at her by the light of my parable.” “Simon, seest thou this woman?”

[Luke 7:44](#). *I entered into thine house, —*

“Therefore thou wast bound by the obligations of a host,” —

[Luke 7:44](#). *Thou gavest me no water for my feet: —*

An ordinary commonplace courtesy in the East, almost a necessity for those who have walked far, and whose feet are weary and dusty: “Thou gavest me no water for my feet.” —

[Luke 7:44](#). *But she hath washed my feet with tears, —*

Costly water this! “She hath washed my feet with tears.”

[Luke 7:44](#). *And wiped them with the hairs of her head.*

“She has done it, she has done it better than thou wouldst have done it, she has done it best of all, she has done what thou oughtest to have done, she has done it when there seemed to be no claim upon her to do it.”

[Luke 7:45](#). *Thou gavest me no kiss: —*

Though that was the ordinary mode of !an honoured guest, —

[Luke 7:46](#). *But this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet.*

You said in your heart that, if I had been a prophet, I should have known who and what manner of woman this was. I do know, and I am telling you. If you had given me a kiss, you would only have coldly kissed my brow, but she has found it in her heart to honour me by kissing my feet. Since I came

in, she has not ceased to kiss them, unwashed as they were; and she has not only kissed them, but she has also washed them with her tears.”

[Luke 7:46](#). *My head with oil thou didst not anoint: —*

“Thou, the host, whose duty it was to anoint guest, didst not do it,” —

[Luke 7:46](#). *But this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment.*

The best unguent she possessed or could procure.

[Luke 7:47-48](#). *Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven.*

“Not because she has done this, but this is an evidence that her sins are forgiven. This act of greater love is the proof that she must be conscious of the greater forgiveness: ‘she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.’” It is always like that; your converted Pharisees have to be made to feel like this woman before they will render love like hers; and if Simon is ever made to feel that his sin, in a certain light, is as great as the sin of this fallen woman, then he will love as much as she does, but not till then.

Jesus said unto her, “Thy sins are forgiven.” Oh, the marvellous music of that short sentence! If I had to choose from all language the choicest sentence that my ear could hear when under a sense of him, it would be these four words which the Master addressed to this woman who was a notable public sinner, “Thy sins are forgiven.”

[Luke 7:49](#). *And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also?*

Now, you see, they begin to mutter and to cavil. What is this poor woman to do? Probably she felt ready to speak up for her Master; but, sometimes, it happens that the Lord Jesus Christ will not permit certain even of his forgiven ones to be very prominent.

[Luke 7:50](#). *And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.*

She was best out of the way of all controversy; she would honour him most by going home, and there sweetly singing to his praise, and drinking deep draughts of his love. If any of you converts are meeting with those who cavil at you, do not stop where they are, but go about your business with these sweet words of your Master ringing in your ears: “Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.”

Verses 36-48

[Luke 7:36](#). *And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat.*

They sat according to the Eastern custom of sitting, which was rather lying at length, with the feet far out upon the couch or sofa.

[Luke 7:37](#). *And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner,*
In a particular sense, a sinner; one whose very trade was sin.

[Luke 7:37-38](#). *When she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment And stood at his feet behind him weeping.*

As she could do, you see, without coming into the room, except for a few yards, especially if the Saviour's feet were close against the door.

[Luke 7:38](#). *And began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.*

For water she gives her tears, for a towel, her hair; to heal the blisters of his weary pilgrimage, there are her soft lips for liniment; and then for ointment comes this precious salve.

[Luke 7:39](#). *Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him; for she is a sinner.*

She is a sinner, and does he let her touch him, and kiss his feet, and show such tokens of affection? What man must he be who allows a harlot's kiss, even though it be upon his feet? Ah! poor foolish Pharisee! He judged according to the sight of the eye, or else he might have known that the best of men would never be angry at a harlot's tears, for the tears of repentance, come from whatever heart they may, are always like diamonds in the esteem of thee who judges rightly.

[Luke 7:40-42](#). *And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay,*

And were, therefore, likely to be cast into prison, and to be sold as slaves.

[Luke 7:42-43](#). *He frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most. Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged.*

There were no bonds, no promises of what they would do in the future, but he frankly forgave them both.

[Luke 7:44](#). *And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house,*

And it was, therefore, thy duty to attend to me.

[Luke 7:44](#). *Thou gavest me no water for my feet:*

Though that was the common custom.

[Luke 7:44-45](#). *But he hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head Thou gavest me no kiss;*

Which was the customary welcome to every honoured guest — a kiss upon the cheek or upon the forehead.

[Luke 7:45](#). *But this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet.*

She has done what thou oughtest to have done; she has done it better than thou couldst have done it; she has done it when there was no claim upon her to do it, except that she had been forgiven much, and, therefore, loved much.

[Luke 7:46](#). *My head with oil thou didst not anoint;*

This, too, was the usual custom.

[Luke 7:46-48](#). *But this woman, hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven.*

Verses 36-50

[Luke 7:36](#). *And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat.*

It was usually a suspicious circumstance when a Pharisee desired to be familiar with Christ; it might generally be suspected that he wished to entrap him. Yet, on this occasion, if there was no real friendliness to Christ, there was at least the appearance of it. We see what our Saviour did when the Pharisee gave him an invitation: "He went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat." The Lord saw there an opportunity for usefulness. He knew that he would have a good reason for speaking personally to this Pharisee, who, peradventure, was one of the other sort. At all events, our Lord felt that it was right for him to go into that house, even if they did watch him, and try to catch him in his talk. If there was hypocrisy there,

there was the more need for his presence, as Jesus himself said concerning his eating with publicans and sinners, “They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick.”

[Luke 7:37-38](#). *And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hair of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.*

She was not a sinner in the ordinary sense of the word, but she was “a sinner” by trade, “a sinner” by profession. It always seems to me that, in this description of her, every word is emphatic. There is much meaning in every separate action of the woman; and even in her little mannerisms there is something that is instructive to us. Our Lord was reclining at his meal, and his feet were turned towards the door, so that she had not to come far into the house before she reached his feet; and there she stood “at his feet.” Those are blessed words: “at his feet.” That is where we also would stand and weep. That is where we would sit and learn. That is where we would wait and serve. That is where we hope to live and reign for ever: “at his feet.” This woman “stood at his feet behind him,” — as if she were unworthy to be looked upon by him, but found it honour enough to be behind him, so long as she was but near him: “at his feet behind him weeping,” — with sorrow for her sin, with joy for her pardon, with delight in her Lord’s presence, perhaps with grief at the prospect of what yet awaited him. And she “began to wash his feet with tears.” O sweet repentance, which fills the basin better than the purest streams of earth could ever do! Then she unbound her tresses, — those nets in which she had, mayhap, caught many a man when she had hunted for the precious life after her former sinful manner. But now she uses those tresses for something better, she makes a towel of her hair. That which was her pride shall now fill that humble office, and even be honoured thereby. “And kissed his feet.” Oh, the tenderness of her love, and the strength of her passion — a sacred one, not born of earth at all, — for that dear Lord of hers! she kissed his feet; and then she poured upon them the precious perfumed ointment which had cost so much.

[Luke 7:39](#). *Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, —*

Well, what did he say? I think that, if some of us, taught of God, and let into the secret of eternal love, had been there, we should have whispered to one another, “What a change has been wrought in that woman! There she is, weeping, and washing the Saviour’s feet, when, but the other day, she was standing at the corners of the streets, in the attire of a harlot, plying her accursed trade.” How greatly we should have rejoiced to see her! But it is only grace that teaches us to rejoice over even one sinner that repenteth, and Simon the Pharisee appeared to know little or nothing of grace. He had, however, the good manners not to say aloud what he thought, but “he spake within himself, saying,” —

[Luke 7:39](#). *This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner.*

Yet “this man” was a prophet, and he did know “who and what manner of woman” that was who touched him. More than that, he knew what manner of woman his grace had made her, and how true, how pure, was the love which she was then manifesting to him; and he knew how deep was her repentance, how changed her heart, how renewed her entire life was. He knew all about her, but poor Simon could not know “this woman” as Christ knew her.

[Luke 7:40](#). *And Jesus, answering, said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on.*

Christ often answers people who do not speak audibly, he answers those who only speak in their hearts. So you, who are silently praying, may take comfort. If Jesus answers a Pharisee who speaks in his heart against him, much more readily will he answer his own people when they are speaking in their hearts to him. It was a hopeful sign that Simon used a respectful title in speaking to Christ, and that he was willing to listen.

[Luke 7:41-43](#). *There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both.*

“Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most.” Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. Now, dear friends, I hope that those of us who have had much forgiven are proving, by the warmth of our love, how right was this judgment on the part of Simon. If thou hast had much forgiven, be well to the front in every struggle on behalf of the cause of Christ. Be well to the front also with thy gift for him; bring thy alabaster

box, and break it for him. With not for anyone to ask thee, much less to press thee, to give to him who gave his all for thee, but, spontaneously, out of the love thou bearest to trial who has loved thee so much as to die for thee, prove that thou lovest him most of all.

[Luke 7:44](#). *And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman?*

Christ knew that Simon did see her, and that he had just been sneering at her in his heart: “Seest thou this woman?”

[Luke 7:44](#). *I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and washed them with the hairs of her head.*

“I became thy guest; and, therefore, as my host, the first thing thou shouldst have done was to give the ordinary Oriental hospitality of washing my feet: ‘Thou gavest me no water for my feet; but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head.’” What a changing of places there is now! The Lord has made the first to be last, and the last to be first. Simon thought himself far in advance of this woman; but now that Christ had explained their true positions, I should think he began to see that the woman was far ahead of him.

[Luke 7:45](#). *Thou gavest me no kiss:*

Yet that was the Eastern custom in welcoming an honoured guest.

[Luke 7:45](#). *But this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet.*

“At best, thou wouldst only have kissed me once, but this woman, since I came in, has never left off kissing my feet. With a sacred audacity of love, she has lifted my feet to her lips, and kissed them again and again.” So, see here again how the first is last, and the last first.

[Luke 7:46](#). *My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment.*

“That is a common custom in the case of a guest of honourable estate, but thou didst not observe it; yet this woman has poured upon my feet the most precious form of perfume that could be procured anywhere.”

[Luke 7:47-48](#). *Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven.*

There I see the clear run of the argument, — that she is a woman who has had much forgiven by Christ, and that is the reason why she loves him

so much. But, often, when an inference is very natural and plain, the Saviour leaves men to draw that one for themselves, while he draws another. He puts the same truth in another shape: “Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.” I am afraid that there are many professed Christians, who must have had very little forgiven them, for they love Christ very little. This seems to be the age of little love to Christ. There are some few who love the Master intensely, but, oh, how few they are! Some persons think they are only very little sincere; and we are told, nowadays, what a little thing sin is, and what a little place hell is, and what a very short time the punishment of sin will last. Everything is according to scale, and it must be so in religion; as you diminish the guilt of sin, and the punishment of sin, you also diminish the sense of obligation in being saved from sin. Consequently, you diminish our love to Christ, and we shall gradually get less and less, I fear, unto the old scale, the old balance, the old shekel of the sanctuary, shall once again be used by us.

[Luke 7:49](#). *And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also?*

“Who is this who can thus absolve from guilt?”

[Luke 7:50](#). *And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.*

“Go home, good woman, do not stop here and be bothered by these people.” And oftentimes, that is the best advice that we can give to new converts. There is a theological controversy raging, and the jargon of the different schools of thought is being used by one and another; but, do you go home, good soul. You need not trouble about controversial matters. Your sins are forgiven you; your faith has saved you; if you know that, you know as much as you need to know just now. Go home, and be quiet and happy: “Go in peace.”

[LUKE CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 8

Verses 1-3

[Luke 8:1-3](#). *And it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the*

kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him, And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, and Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance.

The previous chapter tells how the woman in Simon's house manifested her love to the Saviour. She showed her love in one way, and in a very special way; but there were others, who had similar affection for him, who showed it in other ways. What is right for one person to do might not be a wise or right thing for everybody to do. Christ did not want his feet washed with tears every minute in the day, nor to have them anointed with even precious ointment very often. There are some Christians who ought to do, and I trust will do, some extraordinary thing for Christ, ³/₄ something which shall need no apology from them, because they are extraordinary persons, who used to be extraordinary sinners; and it would not be right for them to run in the ruts made by others, but they ought to strike out a distinct pathway for themselves. Happy is the church that has any such members; happier still if it has many such. But there are others, who love Christ just as truly, yet who must be content to show their love to him in some other, and apparently more common, but, perhaps, in the long run, more useful way. These gracious women ministered to Christ of their substance. He was only a poor itinerant preacher who needed daily sustenance. Some people say that every preacher ought to earn his own bread by trade or profession, and preach freely, yet the Lord Jesus Christ, the Prince of preachers, did not do this. "Oh, but Paul did!" Yes, Paul attained to a very high honour; but we may be perfectly satisfied, as the servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, to attain to as high a degree of honour as our Master did; and, inasmuch as he never did any carpentering after he began to preach, but gave his whole soul and being up to the work of preaching, he was fed and cared for by the kindness of these godly women who were glad to minister unto him of their substance. "The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord." So, as ministers of Christ, we need not be ashamed to minister spiritual things to the people, and to receive of their carnal things in return. These women, though they did not wash Christ's feet with their tears, nor anoint them with precious ointment, did well, for they "ministered unto him of their substance." Let us all do for him all that we can.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Mark 15:1-41](#), and [Luke 8:1-3](#).

Verses 1-21

[Luke 8:1](#). *And it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him,*

Our Lord's display of forgiving grace to the woman who was a sinner seemed to whet his appetite for soul-saving, so that "he went throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God." Dear friends, whenever we win a soul for God, let it spur us on to a greater diligence in his service, let it make us insatiable for more of this best wine of the kingdom of heaven. It was so with our Divine Master. He went about preaching; and, as he preached, he was training others also to preach: "the twelve were with him." I think that, whenever there is a successful ministry, there should be those round about who are being trained to continue it. Among the Waldensians, the pastors were always accompanied by young men who learnt to preach from their example, and who shared their toils when they went from valley to valley proclaiming the gospel.

[Luke 8:2-3](#). *And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirit and infirmities, Mary, called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils and Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance.*

If they could not be apostles, they could, at any rate, being women of property, contribute both to the sustenance of Christ and of the apostles who were with him. There is a place for everyone who is willing to be used by the great Master-builder who leaves no stone out of the wall if it is fit to be built into it. There is something for the twelve to do, and there is something for the holy women to do, and we cannot do without either of them, and in that last great day when the rewards are distributed, there will be as much for Joanna as for John, and as much for Mary Magdalene as for Simon Peter. Did they not each, according to their utility, serve the Lord Jesus Christ?

[Luke 8:4](#); [Luke 8:6](#). *And when much people were gathered together, and were come to him out of every city, he spake by a parable: a sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. And some fell upon a*

rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture.

Or, as Mark records it, “because it had no depth of earth.” There was just a little coating of earth, sufficient for the fructification and the early sprouting of the seed; it came up all the more quickly because it was so near the surface, and because the heat could get at it so easily, the hard pan of the rock speedily sending up the heat to it. But, for that very reason, “as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture.”

[Luke 8:7-8](#). *And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it. And other fell on good ground, and sprang up and bare fruit an hundredfold. And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

There are many, who have ears, who do not hear to any real purpose. There is the physical act of hearing, but they do not hear in the heart and the mind. It is a very different thing to have an impression on the drum of the ear and to have an impression on the tablet of the heart. “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.”

[Luke 8:9-10](#). *And his disciples asked him, saying, What might this parable be? And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand.*

It was a time of judicial visitations. These people had for centuries refused to hear the voice of God and now they were to pay the penalty for that refusal. The reward of virtue is capacity for higher virtue, just as the effect of vice is a tendency to yet greater vice. When men will not hear the voice of God, it is a just judgment upon them that they cannot hear, their impotence being the result of their impudence. Since they would not hear, they shall not; who shall say that this is not a very just and natural way of allowing sin to punish itself? So these people heard the words of our Saviour’s parable. It was like a clock, a covering to the truth; but, to them, it hid the truth, they did not see it. To the disciples of Christ, it set forth truth in all its beauty; but, to the unbelieving people, it hid the truth, so that they did not discern it. Brethren and sisters, if you and I understand heavenly mysteries let us not be proud that it is so, but let us hear our Saviour saying to us, “Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God.” This is the gift of the free grace of God. Be very thankful for it, but give God all the glory of it. For if thou beginest to say to thyself, “I am a man of

great understanding,” and if thou shalt take to thyself a high place, God may leave thee to thy natural blindness; and, then, where wilt thou be?

[Luke 8:11](#). *Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God.*

Not the word of man. Have we a word of God at all? Brethren, that is a question which we have to answer nowadays. Our fathers never questioned it, they believed in the infallibility of the Bible, as we do. But, now, all our wise men do not think so. They set to work to mend the Scriptures, to pick out of the Bible that which they imagine to be inspired. Let us not do so, my brethren.

[Luke 8:12](#). *Those by the way side are they that hear, then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.*

He does not mind their merely hearing. What he is afraid of is their believing, for he knows that in believing lies the secret of their salvation.

[Luke 8:13](#). *They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy;*

They are very hasty converts, like men who hurriedly take a bath. They are no sooner in than they are out; it is so speedy that there is more haste than real speed with some of them.

[Luke 8:13](#). *And these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.*

“These have no root,” and they never had any root. If you give your child a little garden for himself, perhaps he will go and pluck the heads for some of your flowers, and put them in the ground, and say, “There, father, see what a nice garden of flowers I have got.” But they have no root, and so they very soon wither away. These are like men’s converts, of whom we read that so many scores came forward the whole of the people in the parish were said to be converted, but in six weeks you cannot find one of them. How often is this the case! We begin to be afraid of those statistics, because there is so little truth in them; and yet, if there were but one saved out of a hundred, how grateful we should be!

[Luke 8:14](#). *And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.*

How many we have of that sort! They do continue somewhat longer than the others, yet they get choked after all.

[Luke 8:15](#). *But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.*

Or, “with perseverance, with continuance.” “He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved.” He is not converted at all who is not converted eternally. The work of man is temporary; the work of God is everlasting.

[Luke 8:16](#). *No man, when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed; but setteth it on a candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light.*

A candlestick, or lamp-stand. True religion and true doctrine are not intended to be concealed, they are meant to be seen, and if any of you are hiding these blessed things away, I pray you to do so no longer. Bring out your candle, and put it on the candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light.

[Luke 8:17](#). *For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest; neither any thing hid, that shall not be known and come abroad.*

You cannot conceal anything from the eye of God, so do not try to do so. You are like bees in a glass hive, watched while you are working, and your every movement observed. God can read the secret emotions of our hidden nature. “All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.”

[Luke 8:18](#). *Take heed therefore how ye hear:*

You think, and think very properly, that we ought to take heed how we preach. Yes, that is true; but you must take heed how you hear. There are a great many criticisms upon preaching, will you kindly make a few criticisms upon your own hearing? I like what a woman said to me some time ago, about a certain preacher. She said, “I heard him well last Sunday.” Ay, that is the thing, she did not tell me how he preached, she told me how she heard, and that is the main point. Good hearers will make good preachers, in due time, I do not doubt. God grant that we may be all good hearers! “Take heed therefore how ye hear.”

[Luke 8:18](#). *For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have.*

Preaching will enrich you or impoverish you according to how you hear. There are some hearers, who have nothing, and the preacher gives them nothing. Hens like to lay where there is a nest-egg, and preachers of the gospel like to preach to hearers who have received some truth, and want

more. Where there is some love to God, and love to souls, there more will come. May all of you be among those who have, to whom more shall be given! But the gospel is also “a savor of death unto death” to some who hear it. It takes away from some men what they never had. You call that a paradox; so it is, but it is true. They think they have it, but the gospel reveals to them their mistake; and so it taketh from them that which they seem to have.

[Luke 8:19](#). *Then came to him his mother and his brethren, and could not come at him for the press.*

I think that his mother and his brethren were under the delusion that he was mad, and they came to seize him, to restrain him, so little did even they understand him.

[Luke 8:20-21](#). *And it was told him by certain which said, Thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to see thee. And he answered and said unto them, my mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it.*

The spiritual relationship overtops the natural. But what a sweet and condescending word this is? Dear brothers and sisters, do you hear the Word of God, and do it? If so, Christ is at home with you. Christ calls you “Brother.” He knows that you will take care of his cause. He calls you “Brother.” He has deep sympathy with you. O blessed One, thou who callest us mother and brother, how he welcome those loving and familiar titles!

Verses 26-56

[Luke 8:26-27](#). *And they arrived at the country of the Gadarenes, which is over against Galilee. And when he went forth to land, there met him out of the city a certain man, which had devils long time, and ware no clothes, neither abode in any house, but in the tombs.*

To what a frightful state of wretchedness this poor creature was reduced by Satanic power! Yet he is only a picture of the state of mind into which many are brought through sin. They seem as if they could not live with their fellowmen; they have grown so mad through sin, so utterly beyond restraint, that they can scarcely be endured in ordinary society. Yet, as Christ healed this man, so he is equal to the cure of the worst case of spiritual and moral disease that may be brought before him.

[Luke 8:28](#). *When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of*

God most high? I beseech thee, torment me not.

See the devil can make men pray against themselves; and this is what they do in common profane swearing when they imprecate all manner of curses upon their eyes and limbs. Ah, me! To what mischief and folly and misery can Satan drive his willing dupes!

[Luke 8:29](#). *(For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For oftentimes it had caught him: and he was kept bound with chains and in fetters; and he brake the bonds, and was driven of the devil into the wilderness.)*

Such cases have we often seen, — young men who have been rescued from a course of vice, and who have been for a season helped towards virtue; but they have broken loose again. There was no holding them in; they had not learned self-restraint, and no one else could restrain them

[Luke 8:30-31](#). *And Jesus asked him, saying, What is thy name? And he said, Legion: because many devils were entered into him. And they besought him that he would not command them to go out into the deep.*

So, you see, dear friends, that devils can pray: “They besought him that he would not command them to go out into the deep;” that is, to their place of torment in hell. They would sooner go to the bottom of the sea than go to their own dreadful home; and, if we are half as wise as devils are, we shall dread beyond all things to be driven there. May God grant that no soul among us may ever lift up his eyes in torment, and find himself in that awful deep!

[Luke 8:32-33](#). *And there was there an herd of many swine feeding on the mountain: and they besought him that he would suffer them to enter into them. And he suffered them. Then went the devils out of the man, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake, and were choked.*

Our proverb says, “They run hard whom the devil drives;” and when once he begins to drive men or swine, there is no end to their running till they are choked in the deep. Woe unto that man, then, who yields himself up to the tyrant master! Oh, seek the grace that will enable you to fling him off, never to come under his dread sway again! Better still, pray the blessed Prince of Peace to cast out the black prince of hell, and himself to rule over your spirit, soul, and body.

[Luke 8:34](#). *When they that fed them saw what was done, they fled, and went and told it in the city and in the country.*

Sometimes, Christ wrought cures which were scarcely mentioned; but here, — and I only remember a second miracle at all like to it, — that of the withering of the barren fig-tree, — he wrought a miracle of judgment, and it caused a great stir and much talk. I have heard of bells at sea that only ring out in the roughest storms. Here is one that was heard when softer tones would not have been heeded: “They fled, and went and told it in the city and in the country.”

[Luke 8:35](#). *Then they went out to see what was done and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.*

There was some clothing work done that day. I know not who provided the garments; but here was some real practical Christianity exhibited, not only by the Master in healing the demoniac, but by the friends who found clothing for this poor man. You do well, my sisters, who set yourselves to help to clothe the poor. God grant that all of them may not only be clothed, but also be led to sit at the feet of Jesus!

[Luke 8:36-37](#). *They also which saw it told them by what means he that was possessed of the devils was healed. Then the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about besought him to depart from them;*

Surely, this legion of demons must have had the same effect on them as on the poor man when Christ first came to him. These foolish people took up the same cry as the poor demoniac: “The whole multitude besought him to depart from them? Christ sometimes hears this kind of prayer. There is many a man who has entreated that his conscience might not be troubled any more, and it never has been troubled again. But what an awful prayer for any people to pray! “The whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about besought him to depart from them.”

[Luke 8:37-39](#). *For they were taken with great fear: and he went up into the ship, and returned back again. Now the man out of whom the devils were departed besought him that he might be with him: but Jesus sent him away, saying, Return to thine own house, and shew how great things God hath done unto thee. And he went his way, and published throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done unto him.*

Sometimes, it is better to be spreading the good news of the gospel than to be sitting at Jesus’ feet. It is best when we can do both; but, sometimes, the practical duty of serving our fellowmen must take the first place. Happy

are they who give themselves to this work, telling to others what God has done for them!

[Luke 8:40-46](#). *And it came to pass, that, when Jesus was returned, the people gladly received him: for they were all waiting for him. And, behold, there came a man named Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue: and he fell down at Jesus' feet, and besought him that he would come into his house: for he had one only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she lay a dying. But as he went the people thronged him. And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any, came behind him, and touched the border of his garment: and immediately her issue of blood stanch'd. And Jesus said, Who touched me? When all denied, Peter and they that were with him said, Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me? And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched me; for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me.*

Here are we tonight, dear friends, a great crowd; and what multitudes of professed worshippers of God there are in many places! They seem to throng the Saviour; but of all, how few do really touch him so as to derive healing virtue from him! This humble, simple touch of faith is something above and beyond all the pressure of professed zeal and ardor. This touch Christ recognizes at once, but all the pressing and the squeezing of the crowd goes for nothing.

[Luke 8:47](#). *And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before him, she declared unto him before all the people for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately.*

Here is a second confessor. First, there was a man healed; now, here is a woman healed. Both sexes may now hear from them what Christ can do. If they will not believe, oh, then, their unbelief is sad indeed!

[Luke 8:48-49](#). *And he said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace. While he yet spoke, there cometh one from the ruler of the synagogue's house, saying to him, Thy daughter is dead; trouble not the Master.*

As if such a suppliant really did trouble him! Still, if you have been praying long, and your case appears to be hopeless, despair will whisper, "Trouble not the Master." But Christ is never troubled by our prayer; it is our want of prayer that troubles him. Even after the worst has come to the

worst, we shall never trouble him if we continue our prayers. But if, on any account, we cease from them, then indeed is his heart grieved.

[Luke 8:50](#). *But when Jesus heard it, he answered him, saying, Fear not: believe only, and she shall be made whole.*

“If she is actually dead, she shall be raised to life again.”

[Luke 8:51](#). *And when he came into the house, he suffered no man to go in, save Peter, and James, and John, and the father and the mother of the maiden.*

For Christ does not make a parade of his miracles. He loves to do his work quietly; and they that make a great noise must mind that they do not get put out when Christ is about to work a cure.

[Luke 8:52-55](#). *And all wept, and bewailed her: but he said, Weep not, she is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn, knowing that she was dead. And he put them all out, and took her by the hand, and called, saying, Maid, arise. And her spirit came again, and she arose straightway: and he commanded to give her meat.*

Young saints want feeding as soon as they are converted. The conversion may be by miracle, but they will need to be fed by ordinary means. Be ready, dear people of God, with your milk for those who are but newly born: “He commanded to give her meat.”

[Luke 8:56](#). *And her parents were astonished.’ but he charged them that they should tell no man what was done.*

For Jesus did not wish, at least at that time, to have the story of his miracles blazed abroad. Of him the prophet had long before written: “He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench.”

Verses 41-56

[Luke 8:41-42](#). *And, behold, there came a man named Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue: and he fell down at Jesus’ feet, and besought him that he would come into his house: For he had one only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she lay a dying. But as he went the people thronged him.*

Notice the word “behold,” for this was a wonder that a man so high in position to come to Christ at all, especially one who was in an ecclesiastical position, for he “was a ruler of the synagogue.” Usually those who had to do with the synagogue were great despisers of our Lord Jesus; God works great wonders, however, and sometimes the camel does go through the eye

of the needle. This man's name was Jairus, a common Jewish name, and you will find it was the name of one of the judges recorded in the book of Judges. Note this man's humility, "He fell down at Jesus' feet." The greatest of men must humble themselves before they can obtain mercy. Jesus Christ is always ready to receive, to accept, and bless all those who fall down at his feet, but those who lift up themselves shall find him to be their sure and swift, enemy, and the day shall come when he shall abase them to the dust. "He besought him that he would come into his house, for he had one only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she lay a-dying." She seems to have been not only the darling of the house, but of all the neighbors too for we find that all the neighbors came together to weep and to lament her. You find Matthew says that this daughter was already dead. It seems that some delay arose, so that the child died, but the father, with triumphant faith, still besought him to come and raise her, even from the very jaws of death.

[Luke 8:43-44](#). *And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any, Came behind him, and touched the border of his garment: and immediately her issue of blood stanchèd.*

This disease laughs at the physicians, and whenever a cure has been effected it has always been a slow one. Hence the supernatural character of this cure, "Immediately her issue of blood stanchèd." This is the glory of our blessed religion, that it heals sin-sick souls at once and upon the spot. The moment a man believes in Jesus, his nature is changed; he becomes a new creature: in that moment all his sins are gone: in that same hour he becomes heir of God, and joint-heir with Christ. "Immediately."

[Luke 8:45](#). *And Jesus said, Who touched me? When all denied, Peter and they that were with him said, Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?*

What impudence on their part! Doubtless there are many things we say of our Lord, and even to him in prayer, that are very far from such words as he should have from his disciples. There were many who touched him out of curiosity, and doubtless some out of want of respect to his person came too close to him, but there was only one who touched him with the finger of faith, which was the only true touch.

[Luke 8:46-48](#). *And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me. And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling and falling down before him, she declared*

unto him before all the people for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately. And he said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace.

Faith crowns Christ, and, therefore, Christ takes the crown off his own head and puts it upon the head of faith. "Thy faith hath saved thee." Christ's virtue would not have saved her without her faith, and certainly her faith could not have saved her without Christ's virtue. We ought to note how vital faith is to true salvation, and what a high degree of importance is attached to it. Let us, therefore, if we have some degree of faith, pray for more, "Lord, increase our faith, for if a little of it may heal, what may not a great faith do?"

[Luke 8:49](#). *While he yet spake, there cometh one from the ruler of the synagogues, house, saying to him, Thy daughter is dead; trouble not the Master.*

Be resigned, and say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away," and expect not the blessing back again. Do as David did, who, while the child was yet alive, fasted and played, saying, "Peradventure, God will spare him, but when he was dead, fasted no more. Thy daughter is dead; trouble not the Master." Ah! but this man knew that he who can stay the soul at the gates of death can also bring it back from the gates of death if he wills. He that can get it from the paw of the lion can get it from the jaw of the bear. He can deliver his people at all times and at all seasons, and even Death is a conquered foe.

[Luke 8:50](#). *But when Jesus heard it, he answered him, saying, Fear not: believe only, and she shall be made whole.*

"Believe only." What a depth lies in those two words! Believe only! Ah! Lord, it ought to be the easiest thing in the world to believe thee, for thou art so truthful; thou keepest every promise to us, and yet sometimes when we are in the dark, and when circumstances go contrary to us, it is hard to believe; but is not the hardness in our own hearts? Believe only! Christian, what is your trouble this morning, what is your trial? Believe only, and let your humble faith cast your burdens upon your God. "Believe only, and she shall be made whole."

[Luke 8:51-52](#). *And when he came into the house, he suffered no man to go in, save Peter, and James, and John, and the father and the mother of the maiden. And all wept, and bewailed her: but he said, Weep not; she is not dead, but sleepeth.*

They were so sure she was dead that they had actually hired the minstrels for her funeral — so Mark tells us — and the pipers, and the women that made those strange, Oriental lamentations were there, ready to inter her.

[Luke 8:53-54](#). *And they laughed him to scorn, knowing that she was dead. And he put them out, and took her by the hand, and called saying, Maid, arise.*

But Christ put them all out. They laughed him to scorn, and, therefore, he would not work the miracle in their presence. It is not meet to cast pearls before swine.

[Luke 8:55](#). *And her spirit came again, and she arose straightway: and he commanded to give her meat.*

Do note here the word “straightway.” Just now we had the word immediately, and now we have straightway. It is one of the distinguishing features of the gospel, both of Mark and of Luke, that both evangelists use the word “eutheos,” “straightway.” Christ’s miracles do not take a long time to do; they are done straightway. If there is a distressed soul here now, your salvation need not take months and years; it may be done today, and in a moment thou mayest be able to rejoice that thy sins are forgiven, and that thou art a child of God. “She arose straightway, and he commanded to give her meat.” There are no unnecessary miracles. It wanted a miracle to give her life, but meat could sustain it, and, therefore, there is no further miracle performed.

[Luke 8:56](#). *And her parents were astonished: but he charged them that they should tell no man what was done.*

But we know from another evangelist that the fame thereof went abroad everywhere, and, indeed, the healing of a soul is not a thing to be kept secret, but when any are raised from the dead the world must know it.

[LUKE CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 9

Verses 37-62

Our Lord had been on the mountain, and had been transfigured; and when he came down, the first person that he met was the devil, with whom he had to come in contact. Whenever you or I get up on the mountain-top,

and have a very happy and delightful experience, we may expect to be in a battle before long. Our joy is, however, a preparation for the conflict; it nerves our spirit, and makes us strong to meet the great enemy of our souls.

[Luke 9:37-40](#). *And it came to pass, that on the next day, when they were come down from the hill, much people met him. And, behold, a man of the company cried out saying, Master, I beseech thee, look upon my son: for he is mine only child. And, lo, a spirit taketh him, and he suddenly crieth out; and it teareth him that he foameth again, and bruising him hardly departeth from him. And I besought thy disciples to cast him out; and they could not.*

There they were, all baffled and defeated; and their enemies were looking at them with many a grin of contempt and scorn. Now comes the conquering Captain. He will turn the tide of battle when his troops are flying before the enemy. He comes, and with a word he gathers them together again.

[Luke 9:41](#). *And Jesus answering said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you, and suffer you. Bring thy son hither.*

If you have been praying for some dear one, and the devil is not cast out, but the one for whom you have pleaded seems to be worse rather than better, notwithstanding all your prayers and all your efforts, hear the Master himself saying to you tonight, as he said to the father of this child, "Bring thy son hither."

[Luke 9:42](#). *And as he was yet a coming, the devil threw him down, and tare him.*

This is Satan's usual way. Whenever he is about to be cast out of anyone, he grows angry; and if he cannot destroy, he will worry, just as a bad tenant will do injury to the house if he cannot any longer keep possession of it. "As he was yet a-coming, the devil threw him down, and tare him." Perhaps I speak to some tonight who are coming to Christ, and yet have worse fears than ever. They are more troubled than ever they were before. Well, you are like this poor child: "As he was yet a coming, the devil threw him down, and tare him." It was, however, the devil's last throw.

[Luke 9:42](#). *And Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the child, and delivered him again to his father.*

How well it is done, how perfectly it is done, how easily it is done, how quickly it is done when Christ comes on the scene! Let us pray distinctly

tonight for those who have been our failures hitherto. They will not be Christ's failures if in prayer and by faith we bring them to him.

[Luke 9:43](#). *And they were all amazed at the mighty power of God.*

But while they were amazed, many of them did not believe. It is one thing to be astonished, it is another thing to be humbled, and to be led to simple faith in Christ. Never be content with any emotion but that which leads you to believe in Jesus for yourself.

[Luke 9:43-44](#). *But while they wondered every one at all things which Jesus did, he said unto his disciples, Let these sayings sink down into your ears: for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men.*

Just after the transfiguration, just after he had cast out the devil, he tells his disciples that "the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men." The shadow of the cross fell upon Christ long before the substance of the cross was on his shoulder. He never forgot that the day would come when he must lay down his life as a ransom for many, and he never started back from it, either.

"This was compassion like a God,
That when the Saviour knew
The price of pardon was his blood,
His pity ne'er withdrew."

45. *But they understood not this saying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not: and they feared to ask him of that saying.*

They were not as yet spiritual enough to spy out his meaning; and when they had even a faint glimmering of it, it made them feel so sad, so cast down, that they did not dare to go and ask him fully to explain it. Do not you think that you and I may have tonight, something pressing upon us that would all vanish if we but took it to Jesus? And yet we fear to ask him. Let us drive away that fear, and be familiar with our Lord, and tell him everything that vexes our spirit.

[Luke 9:46](#). *Then there arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest.*

Sad, sad, sad, a hundred times sad! When he was talking of his death, and of his being delivered into the hands of wicked men, his disciples were disputing as to who should be the greatest. Ah, brethren, but we may be guilty of quite as great an inconsistency. If, after Christ's death for us on the cross, and after he has given up everything for us, and has washed us in his hearts blood, if we begin to want to be great and famous in the eyes of men,

what wretches we are! May God deliver us from all ambition, from every kind of self-seeking, and from any measure of pride! Otherwise, we are inconsistent in pretending to follow such a Master as the Lord Jesus.

[Luke 9:47-48](#). *And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a child, and set him by him, and said unto them, Whosoever shall receive this child in my name receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me receiveth him that sent me: for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great.*

The way to rise in the ranks of Christ is to go down. Be willing to do the meanest thing, and you are growing in Christ's esteem. When you are great, you are little. When you are nothing, then are you great. The Lord take away from us the black drops of pride that make us stand up on our dignity, and think we must be somebody! Somebody? God will not use you as long as you are somebody; but when you are nobody, then will God greatly magnify you, and use you in his Church.

[Luke 9:49](#). *And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbad him, because he followeth not with us.*

This man who was casting out demons was a dissenter, he was not with the regular church. He was doing good; but still, what right had he to do it? John said, "He followeth not with us." He was outside the pale; and even John, with all his loving disposition, felt that he must blow that candle out. He had no right to shine in anything but the regular, orthodox candlestick. "We forbad him, because he followeth not with us."

[Luke 9:50](#). *And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us.*

Jesus also said that no man could do a miracle in his name, and then lightly go and speak evil of him; so that it was for the good of the cause to let the irregular practitioner go on with this business. Besides, if anybody can cast a devil out, by all means let him do it; for there is none too much of the power of casting out devils; and, remember, that these gentlemen who found fault, could not cast the devil out themselves. They had been beaten in this very task; and yet, when somebody else did it in the power of God, they began to complain, and forbid them. That is surely being like the dog in the manger. God save us from falling into that spirit!

[Luke 9:51](#). *And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up,*

Is not that a wonderful expression? Christ is to die, and to be buried. Ah! but this word comprehends everything, "that he should be received up."

Think not of the gloom of death, specially concerning your dear friends who have lately fallen asleep. Think of their being received up. They did seem to go down; they went as low as the grave; but they could not go any lower. Thank God for his abounding mercy in receiving them up.

[Luke 9:51](#). *He steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem,*

To go where he must he scourged, and spit upon, and crucified: “He steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem.”

[Luke 9:52-53](#). *And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem.*

He used to be welcomed in Samaria; but now the evil spirit has come to the front again: “They did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem,” and they wished nobody to go up to the feast at Jerusalem, but desired all to stop and worship God with them on Mount Gerizim. So they would not receive him.

[Luke 9:54-55](#). *And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.*

When you read the Old Testament, you will remember that the spirit of the Old Testament was in accordance with the law of Moses; but you are not under the law but under grace, and the spirit of Christ is another spirit, not the spirit of judgment, bringing down fire from heaven, but the spirit of mercy, bringing life and blessing from above.

[Luke 9:56](#). *For the Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them. And they went to another village.*

That was all Christ did by way of punishment of these Samaritans: he “went to another village.” Yet, gentle as was this treatment, it was really a very severe punishment, such a punishment as will fall on all of you who reject Christ. If you will not receive him, he will go to somebody else. If you will not hear him, somebody else will; and if, when you hear him, you will not accept him, it may be that you will not hear him many times more, the word may never again be spoken with any power to you, but Christ will go to somebody else.

[Luke 9:57-62](#). *And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou*

goest. And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.

Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

Verses 51-56

[Luke 9:51](#). *And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem,*

It is a very remarkable expression that is here used: “when the time was come that he should be received up.” It does not say “that he should depart,” or “that he should die.” It overleaps that, and speaks only of his glorious ascension into heaven. When that time was drawing near,—and, of course, his death would come before it,—Christ “stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem,” where he knew that he should die upon the cross.

[Luke 9:52-53](#). *And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem.*

And, of course, Jerusalem was a sort of rival of Samaria; and if he was going there to worship, they did not want him to stay with them. Yet the Samaritans were believers in the first five Books of the Bible; they accepted the Pentateuch, and they ought therefore to have practiced hospitality, imitating Abraham’s noble example. They erred both against their own Scriptures and against the dictates of humanity when they refused to receive Christ because he was on his way to Jerusalem.

[Luke 9:54](#). *And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?*

James and John, two of the most loving of Christ’s disciples, John the most loving of all, startle us all by failing in the matter of love, and so being as bad as the Samaritans themselves. I have often noticed that very “liberal minded” people, who denounce bigotry in general, do it with about seven times as much bigotry as those who are out-and-out bigots. In fact, it is a

wonderfully easy thing to be a bigot against all bigotry, and to be illiberal towards everybody except fellow-liberals. Well, that is a pity; it is better far to have the spirit of Christ, even when the Samaritans refuse to exercise hospitality. At any rate, let them live. You notice that John quotes the example of Elijah; and this should teach us that the best men mentioned in Scripture did things which we may not copy, and that they did some things rightly which it would be wrong for us to do. Under special inspiration of God, Elijah, the prophet of fire, may call down fire from heaven; but you and I must not do so; we are not sent for any such purpose. Let us, therefore, be cautious how we make even prophets our exemplars in everything,

[Luke 9:55-56](#). *But he turned and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.*

If that principle had been always remembered, and followed, there would have been no persecution. To cause a man to suffer in his person, or in his estate, because of his religious opinions, be they what they may, is a violation of Christianity. Consciences belong to God alone; and it is not for us to be calling for fire, the stake, the rack or imprisonment, for men because they do not believe as we do. "The Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them."

[Luke 9:56](#). *And they went to another village.*

That was the easiest thing for them to do, and a great deal better than calling for fire from heaven upon anybody. If one village would not receive them, another would; and if you cannot get on with one person, get on with somebody else. Do not grow angry with people. That is not the way to make them better. To fight God's battles with the devil's weapons is generally, in the end, to fight the devil's battles on his behalf; let none of us make such a mistake as that.

Verses 57-62

[Luke 9:57](#). *And it came to pass, that, as they went in, the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.*

He was a volunteer; but his zeal was too hot to hold out long. He had never fully known what following Christ meant, so he came forward without a thought.

[Luke 9:58](#). *And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man, hath not where to lay his head.*

He did not reckon on such hard fare as that, to lie hard, and live hard; so we hear no more of him. That is would-be follower number one.

[Luke 9:59](#). *And he said unto another, Follow me.*

Not a volunteer this time; but one actually called by Christ, and commanded to come, a conscript, as it were.

[Luke 9:59](#). *But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.*

We do not even know that his father was dead. He would like to stop at home till the old man was ready to be buried.

[Luke 9:60](#). *Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.*

When Christ wants men to go upon his errands, they must make no excuses. The King's business requireth haste. The King's commands are peremptory. Other people could bury the dead; let them do it. They were not alive unto this holy ministry; they would therefore be doing right in stopping to bury the dead. When Christ says to a man, "Follow me," he must not let even the tenderest relationship detain him, or the most proper duties stand in the way of the highest duty. That is would-be follower number two. We hear no more of him.

[Luke 9:61](#). *And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house.*

"Lord, I will follow thee; but I must have time. I want a little allowance, and a permit to leave home. I will follow thee; but let me first go and bid them farewell, which are at home at my house." It might be a long distance; and as it was now Christ's time to send out the seventy, they must go at once, or not at all. This man intends to wait till he has gone, perhaps, fifty miles home, and back again.

[Luke 9:62](#). *And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.*

You must go at once when you have orders to go, and not even the courtesies of life, or the fondnesses of affection, may make you disobey the command of the Captain. It would be a pretty thing, in the day of battle, if the soldiers came to the general, and one said, "I must go back to bury my father," and another said, "I cannot fight, for I want to go and bid farewell to my mother." The country would soon be in a desperate state for want of soldiers; and the great King, whose war is more important than any other, will not have for soldiers those who talk in this fashion. So, you see, there are three would-be followers gone; but there are at least seventy faithful

followers left, as the next chapter shows. Our third reading will be at the end of the Gospel according to Matthew.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Luke 4:16-30](#); [Luke 9:57-62](#); and [Matthew 28:16-20](#).

LUKE CONTENTS

CHAPTER 10

Verses 1-22

Our Lord was about to send out seventy disciples to preach the gospel. He had already chosen his twelve apostles; now there must be seventy disciples, something like Moses had seventy elders to serve under him. Some have fancifully likened these two sets of men to the twelve wells of water and seventy palm trees at Elim; and certainly they were for the refreshment of the people.

[Luke 10:1](#). *After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come.*

They were to go before Christ, and be his heralds. What a mercy it is when the preacher knows that his Master is coming after him, when he can hear the sound of his Master's feet behind him! What courage it gives him! He knows that, though it is very little that he can do, he is the thin end of the wedge preparing the way for One who can do everything.

[Luke 10:2](#). *Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest.*

The seventy were very few compared with the many that were needed. There were many loiterers about then as there are now; but the labourers were few. There were preachers of the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and they were not worth a penny a hundred; but the true labourers, who watched for souls, and preached Christ with all their hearts, were very few. It is the same today; and therefore we are to pray for more labourers. A good minister always desires to see more good ministers. In a trade, every tradesman would be glad if those of the same trade as himself would move to another parish; but in the profession of a Christian minister, the more the

merrier. “Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest.”

[Luke 10:3](#). *Go your ways: behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves.*

“Defenseless, harmless, into the midst of those who would devour you if I did not send you. It would be foolhardiness to go on your own account; but I send you; and he who sends his lambs among wolves will take care of them.” As I have often reminded you, the lambs and the sheep are very defenseless; and yet, after all, there are more sheep in the world than there are wolves; and although it looked as if the wolves would soon devour the sheep, the wolves are extirpated in many a country, and the sheep are still prized; and it will be so till the end.

[Luke 10:4](#). *Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes:*

This time, when Christ sent out the seventy, he bade them take no provision, for they might depend upon the kindness of the people. Afterwards, when he was about to leave his disciples, he bade them take both purse and scrip, for they were going among an unfriendly people; but on this first mission he knew that there was a kindly feeling towards them, so he said, “Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes.”

[Luke 10:4](#). *And salute no man by the way.*

Eastern salutations by the way took up a very long time, the people saying a lot of fine nothings to one another. Christian ministers ought to be excused from many of the lengthy courtesies of life; and if they are not excused, if they are faithful, they will take French leave to be excused. We have not time for all those pretty things that some people attend to. If we are to win souls, we must go to work like the king’s couriers, who turn not aside to attend to anything else, but devote all their energies to the mission on which they are sent.

[Luke 10:5-6](#). *And into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house. And if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it: if not, it shall turn to you again.*

So that it will not be wasted. Wish well, and your well-wishing will do you good, even if it does nobody else good. Our chickens come home to roost. If they be curses, they will come upon ourselves; if they be blessings, they will bless ourselves as well as others.

[Luke 10:7-8](#). *And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the labourer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house*

to house. And into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you, cut such things as are set before you:

The Jewish Rabbis, in their perambulations, were very particular about food; it is said to have been very difficult to find a dish to their taste. This might be unclean in one way, and that not up to the mark in another; but here the Master exempts his ambassadors from attention to these minor matters. They had something better to do than to be always careful about what they should eat or what they should drink, so he said to them, “Eat such things as are set before you.”

[Luke 10:9-11](#). *And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you. But into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same, and say, Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you: notwithstanding be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.*

We are not to stop and argue; that is no business of ours. We have to tell our message. If men will receive it, we are glad; if they will not hear it, with a heavy heart we turn aside, and go elsewhere. Our work is to proclaim the glorious message of mercy through a dying Saviour, salvation through the great atonement; it is our business to proclaim it and leave it, the responsibility of receiving or rejecting it rests with our hearers.

[Luke 10:12-14](#). *But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city. Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment, than for you.*

Hearing and rejecting the gospel is the crowning sin of all. Whatever else men are guilty of, if they have not rejected Christ, they have not yet reached the summit of iniquity.

[Luke 10:15-16](#). *And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell. He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me.*

If the messenger delivers his message correctly, and as his Master would have him deliver it, the rejection of it, when brought by him, has the same

guilt in it as the rejection of Christ himself, and the rejection of Christ is the rejection of God; so Jesus tells us here.

[Luke 10:17](#). *And the seventy returned again with joy, Not one of the lambs had been eaten by the wolves.*

[Luke 10:17](#). *Saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.*

Christ had not mentioned that in the commission. He sent them to heal the sick. The casting out of devils was included, no doubt, but it was not specifically mentioned; and this being an extra beyond the words of their commission, they were especially delighted with it Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.”

[Luke 10:18-20](#). *And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.*

That is a higher privilege than to be master over demons, or to be able to tread on serpents. That day of miracles is past; but the power of the gospel is a spiritual power the same as before. We still cast out devils; still are men delivered from the dominion of Satan.

[Luke 10:21-22](#). *In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered to me of my Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father;*

You know that he is the Son of God; you know that he is Jesus of Nazareth; but you do not know him, you cannot know him, as his Father knows him. He is known in his fullness only to the Father.

[Luke 10:22](#). *And who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him.*

“Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?” No, thou canst not. The Son of God must reveal his Father to thee, or thou wilt never know him.

Verses 25-37

[Luke 10:25-26](#). *And, behold a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him,*

What is written in the law? how readest thou?

That was a most appropriate answer to a lawyer. “ You ask me what you should do; well, you profess to be a teacher of the law, you ought, therefore, to know what is written in the law.”

[Luke 10:27-28](#). *And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.*

This lawyer was one of those people who know the law, yet do it not. No doubt Jesus struck the nail on the head when he gave him that very pertinent answer, “This do, and thou shalt live.” This lawyer was trying to live by teaching the law, by his knowledge of it, but Christ insists that nothing will do but a practical carrying out of its precepts.

[Luke 10:29](#). *But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?*

He probably meant to say, “I have not any neighbours; I have no near relations; my father and mother are dead and gone, I have no brothers and sisters, and therefore I may be excused from the duty of loving anyone else as I love myself.” Jesus did not answer the lawyer’s question, “ Who is my neighbour?” He did not turn the eyes of the man to the poor mendicants who needed charity, but he made him look at himself.

[Luke 10:30-31](#). *And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.*

This priest had been up to the temple to perform his part of the service; he was much too good, in his own opinion, to go and touch a man who was wounded, “he passed by on the other side.”

[Luke 10:32](#). *And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, He did a little more than the priest, who would not even cross the road.*

[Luke 10:32-34](#). *And passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, ³⁴Denying himself, therefore, because of course he had to walk-*

[Luke 10:34-35](#). *And brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence,^{3/4}*

A much more valuable sum than two pence of our money^{3/4}

[Luke 10:35-36](#). *And gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?*

He might have said, “The Samaritan,” but he would not, for the Jews hated them.

[Luke 10:37](#). *And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.*

Here was a dismissal, and here was a commission too. Jesus dismissed him. “I have nothing more to say to you; ‘Go.’” Here was the commission:

“Do thou likewise.” Alas! I am afraid that, after most sermons people get the dismissal: “Go;” but they forget the commission: “Go, and do thou likewise.” It is your privilege as well as your duty, O Christians, to assist the needy; and whenever you discover distress, as far as lieth in you, to minister practically to its relief.

Verses 25-42

[Luke 10:25-28](#). *And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all they strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.*

Do any of you want to live by the law? There is the law. Does any man here pretend that he has kept it? Let me ask any man here who would justify himself by his own works, have you thought of God today? How much time have you spent with God? or yesterday, how much of your time did you give him ^{3/4}how many minutes? Would you venture to say that you spent a quarter of an hour in prayer? No, perhaps, if it comes to the truth, you did not spend five minutes. Now, if you loved God with all your heart, and all your soul, and all your strength, and all your mind, do you think that five minutes would satisfy such a love as that? Oh, no, sirs, you that are unconverted give God no love at all, and how can you think therefore, that you are keeping his law which puts it so strongly, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart? and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength,

and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself”? Have you ever done that? Neither the first nor the second table have you kept intact.

[Luke 10:29](#). *But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbor?*

The Saviour then related this incident, which I have no doubt was really a fact.

[Luke 10:30](#). *And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.*

It was a very dangerous road, a very lonely part, and robberies were very frequent there.

[Luke 10:31](#). *And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.*

He did not like the look of wounds and blood. It is a very convenient thing not to recollect the miseries of your fellow-men. Do not think about their poverty: it might spoil your digestion. Do not think about their drunkenness: you might have to become a teetotaler. Do not think about their sin: you might have to go and preach in the street to them. You can live so easily and pleasantly, and even be a priest and be called “His Reverence,” if you are very careful which side of the road you take. “He passed by on the other side.”

[Luke 10:32](#). *And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him and passed by on the other side.*

There are some whose looks are evidently esteemed by themselves to be so very precious, that, when they have given them, they give nothing more. He may have meant, “I will see into it.” There are a great many who are very diligent in their promises to see into a case, but we do not see much come of what they say. They also pass by on the other side. Neither the priest nor the Levite acted as a neighbor to the man who fell among thieves.

[Luke 10:33](#). *But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was:*

He looked, approached, drew near, “came where he was.”

[Luke 10:33](#). *And when he saw him, he had compassion on him,*

He did not ask him how he got there, or say to him, “Why, man, you must have been very foolish to travel alone. My dear friend, next time you come this way, you must come armed. Did you not know this was a very ugly part of the road? And I think you are ill-advised to have been traveling

quite so late.” Oh, we have many dear friends who always favor us with their rebukes when our wounds are bleeding! “He had compassion on him.”

[Luke 10:34](#). *And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.*

Oil and wine—two very good things for external application, and he used them for that. Wondrous healers these were known to be. They were expensive things too. He had brought them for his own comfort, and he freely used them for this poor man. Then he set him on his own beast; so he had to walk himself. He took the inconvenience. He relinquished his own comfort for the sake of doing good. “And he brought him to an inn and took care of him,” perhaps sat up at night with him, he took care of him after he had got him into the inn. He did not immediately commend him to the care of some paid person, but at first he took care of him. But this good Samaritan had urgent business, and was obliged to go about it.

[Luke 10:35](#). *And on the morrow when he departed he took out two pence and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.*

“This is my piece of work. I want to finish it, and as I cannot stop will you kindly supply the ready money, and when I come again, I will repay you?”

[Luke 10:36-37](#). *Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him.*

Oh, you lawyer, why did you not say “The Samaritan”? Of course, he did not like to use that word. Oh, no, we never mention them—the “Samaritans.” “The Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans;” so he would not honestly say “The Samaritan”; but he made a roundabout of it and said, “He that shewed mercy on him.”

[Luke 10:37](#). *Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.*

May we all be enabled to do so by exercising constant love to those who are in need!

[Luke 10:38](#). *Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house.*

There were not so very many that kept open house for Christ. But Martha did. It was her house.

[Luke 10:39](#). *And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word.*

She was free to do so. It was not her house. She need not attend to the hospitalities of it. Her sister was quite equal to it, and so Mary did well to avail herself of the opportunity of sitting at Jesus' feet, and hearing his word.

[Luke 10:40](#). *But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me.*

She wanted to get so much ready ^¾to have everything nice. So she came almost scolding the Master. She was out of temper, surely, that day. She had got to be troubled. Dear friends, it is not wrong to labour and to work and do all we can, but it is wrong to grow cumbered with it, ^¾to get fretful, anxious, worried about this thing and that. You will not do it any better. You will probably do less, and you will do it worse. She was “cumbered about much serving.”

[Luke 10:41-42](#). *And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful:*

“Thou hast forgotten much. Looking after many things, thou hast failed to remember the chief, the only needful thing.”

[Luke 10:42](#). *And Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.*

And so he let her still sit there, and hear his blessed words. “Oh, that I could for ever sit With Mary at the Master's feet. Be this my happy choice!”

Verses 38-42

[Luke 10:38-40](#). *Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me.*

Agitated, distressed Martha was afraid that something would go wrong with the dinner. She had too much on her hands — too much on her brain. That led her to blame her sister Mary, and to try to get the Lord to blame her too. There is a strong tincture of self-righteousness in Martha's speech.

[Luke 10:41-42](#). *And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful:*

and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

I shall not tell her to leave my instruction said our Lord or to get up from the position which she occupies. No, you may go about your work, she is honouring me as much as you are, if not more. This did not mean that Mary was perfect, or that Martha was wholly to be condemned. Both needed to learn much from Jesus, and Mary was more in the way of it. Still Martha was doing good service. But you will see that Mary could do something for Christ too when the time came.

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 63.; [Luke 10:38-42](#); and [John 12:1-8](#).

[LUKE CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 11

Verses 1-26

[Luke 11:1](#). *And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.*

It seemed to this disciple as if he did not know how to pray after he had heard Christ pray. The prayer of Jesus was so infinitely above anything that he had ever reached that he said, "Lord, teach us to pray;" and, as if he felt that he needed a precedent for asking such hallowed instruction, he said, "Teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples." We must all feel that if we are to pray aright, we must be taught of God, by his Holy Spirit. We are full of infirmities, and if there is any time when our infirmities are felt most, it is when we engage in prayer, but "the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as are ought." Let us, then, breathe this prayer to our great Teacher, "Lord, teach us to pray."

[Luke 11:2](#). *And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.*

When we come to God in prayer, we are apt to think first of our own necessities, but if we came aright, in the spirit of sonship, truly saying, "Our Father who art in heaven," we should begin our prayer like this, "'Hallowed be thy name.' May all men honour, reverence, and adore thy holy name.

‘Thy kingdom come.’ We are not satisfied that thou shouldst be anything less than king; our heart’s desire is, ‘Reign, gracious God over us and over all men.’ ‘Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.’ ‘Thy will be done,’ rather than ours.” Now comes a prayer for ourselves: —

[Luke 11:3](#). *Give us day by day our daily bread.*

“Give us, O Lord, what we really need; not that which would be a luxury, but that which is a necessity. ‘Give us,’ according as we shall need it day by day, what we shall then actually need, ‘our daily bread.’” We are not warranted in asking much more than this in temporal matters. They are all comprehended in this petition as far as they are necessary, but God has not given us *carte blanche* to ask for wealth, or honour, or any such dangerous things. There is no harm in asking for bread, and he will give us that.

[Luke 11:4](#). *And forgive us our sins;*

We also need to pray this prayer; I do not think that our Saviour ever anticipated a time when his disciples on earth would not need to pray, “Forgive us our sins.”

[Luke 11:4](#). *For we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation;*

“Lord, do not try us and test us more than is absolutely necessary, for we are so apt to fall: ‘Lead us not into temptation;’ but, if we must be tempted,”

—

[Luke 11:4](#). *Deliver us from evil.*

“If some good end is to be answered by our being thus tested, then let it be so, but, O Lord, ‘deliver us from evil,’ and especially from the evil one; suffer us not to fall into his hands in the hour of temptation.”

[Luke 11:5-6](#). *And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him;*

This man was in a sad plight; his friend was faint and hungry, and he himself was willing enough to entertain him, but he had “nothing to set before him.” So he acts very wisely; he goes to a friend, and asks him to lend him three loaves.

[Luke 11:7](#). *And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee.*

If the man outside keeps on knocking, if he will not go away without the bread he wants for his friend, what will happen?

[Luke 11:8](#). *I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.*

See the power of importunate prayer; and you, beloved, can have all that you really need for yourselves or others if you will only ask for it in the right way. If, summoning every faculty of your being, you resolve to plead, and plead, and plead yet again and again, and never take “No” for an answer, your heart’s desire shall be granted.

[Luke 11:9](#). *And I say unto you, ask, and it shall be given you;*

But if asking does not seem to prevail with God, —

[Luke 11:9](#). *Seek, and ye shall find;*

And if, for a while, you do not find, come closer in; —

[Luke 11:9](#). *Knock, and it shall be opened unto you.*

There are different methods of praying, and each one has its special adaptation to the state in which you may be; so use that method to which the Holy Spirit guides you, so use all methods until you prevail.

[Luke 11:10-11](#). *For every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone?*

There were many stones in those days that were in appearance wonderfully like the bread which they used in the East; but would any father mock his son by giving him one of those stones to break his teeth on, instead of bread that he could eat? Never.

[Luke 11:11-13](#). *Or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?*

If you have the Holy Spirit, you virtually have all good gifts, for the Spirit is the earnest of God’s love, the pledge of joys to come; and he brings with him all things that are necessary and good for you.

[Luke 11:14](#). *And he was casting out a devil, and it was dumb.*

So that this poor man could not obey the Saviour’s teaching. He could not pray, for he was under the influence of a dumb devil. How many of that sort there are still in the world! They cannot speak with God, they have never learned to pray, for they are possessed by a dumb devil.

[Luke 11:14](#). *And it came to pass, when the devil was gone out, the dumb spake; and the people wondered.*

When the devil is driven out of men by Christ, they soon begin to pray. The little sentence, "Behold, he prayeth," was the indication of a new birth in Saul of Tarsus. The Lord grant that some here, who have been possessed by a dumb spirit, may be graciously led to pray! Remember, dear friend, that God will hear your prayer the first time you call upon him; and there is a text which says, "Before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear."

[Luke 11:15](#). *But some of them said, He casteth out devils through Beelzebub the chief of the devils.*

They could not have uttered a fouler falsehood than this; and if people thus slandered the Lord Jesus Christ, we need not be surprised if they speak ill of us.

[Luke 11:16](#). *And others, tempting him, sought of him a sign from heaven.*

Yet they had a very striking one in the dumb devil being cast out of the man; what clearer sign than that could they have?

[Luke 11:17-18](#). *But he, knowing their thoughts, said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house divided against a house falleth. If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? because ye say that I cast out devils through Beelzebub.*

If Satan cast out Satan, his kingdom would soon come to an end. Note how calmly the Saviour met these mockers and cavillers. There is no trace of anger in his words; they said the worst thing they could say about him and his work, and yet, in the coolest manner possible, he closes their mouths in the silence of shame. God grant us grace to be calm and strong even when we are most furiously assailed! It is when we are in a hurry and fret that we grow weak.

[Luke 11:19-23](#). *And, if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons, cast them out? therefore shall they be your judges. But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you. When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armor wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils. He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me scattereth.*

Christ had made no compact with the powers of darkness. He was not casting the demons out with the devil's aid, it was absurd to think that he was. He was fighting them and casting them out by his own divine, omnipotent energy. Now comes a very striking parable: —

[Luke 11:24](#). *When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, —*

Satan does sometimes go out of men entirely of his own accord without being turned out. He goes out for a walk, meaning to go back again. Many a man has left off being a drunkard, or left off being lascivious, — for a time: “when the unclean spirit is gone out of a man,” —

[Luke 11:24](#). *He walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house —*

You see that he still calls it his house. He has gone out for a walk, but he has taken the key of his house with him. Some people sign the pledge, and give up being drunkards for a time, but if the devil is still their master he has only gone away for a while, and he will come back again before long. If he goes out of his own accord, he will come back when he pleases: “I will return unto my house “ —

[Luke 11:24](#); [Luke 11:26](#). *Whence I came out. And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished.*

The man has become quite a decent sort of fellow. He has given up his bad ways, and is a respectable member of society. The house is swept and garnished, but it is the devil's house all the same.

[Luke 11:26](#). *Then goeth he, and taketh to him even other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first.*

There are, alas! many who have only a sham conversion, a conversion which lasts but a very little while. The devil was not cast out of them, but he went out of his own accord. But where Christ has come — the One who is far stronger than the devil, — to cast him out of his house, he will never be allowed to come back again, Christ will take care of that. Having won the victory, and taken the house, he will keep it by force of arms; but beware, I pray you, of a “conversion” without Christ. Beware of a “reformation” in which the devil himself is a co-worker with you, for it will come to something worse in the end. Let me read the verse again: “Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in, and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first.” He becomes a worse man than ever because once he

promised to be better, but only promised it in his own strength, which was utter weakness

Verses 14-54

[Luke 11:14-15](#). *And he was casting out a devil, and it was dumb. And it came to pass, when the devil was gone out, the dumb spake and the people wondered. But some of them said, He casteth out devils through Beelzebub the chief of the devils.*

One would hardly have thought that they could have gone to such a length as that; but when men hate Christ, there is nothing they will not say against him. It is no subject of surprise when great heresies arise, for they are the natural outcome of human enmity against Christ and his truth. People in such a state of heart will say anything; they will give utterance to thoughts that you could not have imagined would have entered any human brain; it is the enmity of the heart to Christ that produces this blasphemy of the tongue.

[Luke 11:16](#). *And others, tempting him, sought of him a sign from heaven.*

“You are working this work from beneath,” they said, “now do something that is really from above.” They must have known that the casting out of the devil was from heaven, for Satan would never cast out Satan.

[Luke 11:17-18](#). *But he, knowing their thought, said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house divided against a house falleth. If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? because ye say that I cast out devils through Beelzebub.*

That was a very good and sufficient answer to these cavillers. It is a comfort to us to know that error is very vulnerable; there is always a weak point about it. In this case, Christ permitted it to turn its sting upon itself: —

[Luke 11:19](#). *And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore shall they be your judges.*

For some of these men had sons, who either did really cast out devils, being disciples of Christ, or else professed to do so, being exorcists, pretending to a power they did not possess. In either case, the argument was good as against the objectors.

[Luke 11:20-22](#). *But if I with the finger of God cast out devil, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you. When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: but when a stronger than he shall come*

upon him, and overcome him. We asketh from him all his armor wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils.

This is how Christ drives out the devil, by sheer force of arms, he overcomes him, and drives him out. He does not cajole him, invite him, or persuade him to go; but he fights with him, puts forth his omnipotent power against him, overthrows him, takes away his armor, and divides the spoil. Were you ever conscious of Hugh's fight as that? If not, be afraid of your so-called reformation, for there is no true reformation, and no true conversion, in which there is no conflict between Christ and Satan.

[Luke 11:23-24](#). *He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me scattereth. When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, —*

This is the kind of "conversion" which is not genuine: "when the unclean spirit is gone out of a man," — "gone out" of his own accord, — and he may do that; he may leave a man, for a while, with the evil purpose of getting him more completely into his power afterwards: "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man," —

[Luke 11:24](#). *He walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out.*

It was his house all the while; he left it voluntarily, he was not driven out by force; he simply left it for a time in order that he might return to it, and retain it the more completely. Now he goes back to it.

[Luke 11:25](#). *And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished.*

There has been a reformation of a sort; the man has given up drunkenness, left off swearing, and become, in certain respects, a better man. The house is swept and garnished, but there is no new tenant of Mansoul, there is no Christ come to take possession of Heart Castle.

[Luke 11:26](#). *Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirit more wicked than himself, and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first.*

It often happens that, when men make a profession of reformation, and then relapse into their former state, they become far worse than they were before. The so-called "reformation" is all of their own doing; or rather, the greater part of it is the devil's doing. The demon within the man voluntarily went away, and now that he comes back, he brings with him "seven other spirits more wicked than himself;" and so the man is more than eight times worse than he was before the demon left him for a while.

[Luke 11:27-28](#). *And it came to pass, as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice and said unto him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked. But he said, Yea, rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.*

The enthusiastic woman was so carried away with admiration for Christ that she thought his mother was a highly-favored woman, and she called her “blessed.” “Yes,” said Christ, “she is blessed; but still more blessed are they who have the Word of God in their hearts, who regard it as their own, and keep it as a great prize.”

[Luke 11:29](#). *And when the people were gathered thick together, he began to say, There is an evil generation: they seek a sign;*

Look back to the 16th verse: “Others, tempting him, sought of him a sign from heaven.” Christ had answered those who imputed his miraculous works to Satanic agency, now he answers these others.

[Luke 11:29-30](#). *And there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet. For as Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation.*

Jonah rose, as it were, from the dead, for he was buried in the deep, in the belly of the whale; and Christ was buried in Joseph’s tomb, yet he came back from the grave on the third day.

[Luke 11:31-32](#). *The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and condemn them: for she came from the utmost part of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here. The men of Nineva shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.*

The resurrection would make Christ the most conspicuous sign of God’s presence among the people, it would be the testimony of God to his Son that he was indeed the Messiah.

[Luke 11:33-35](#). *No man, when he hath lighted a candle, putteth it in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they that come in may see the light. The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light, but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness. Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness.*

If thy religion be irreligion, if thy hope be a false one, if thy highest aspirations are untrue, what is thy position in the sight of God? Where art

thou?

[Luke 11:36-37](#). *May thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light. And as he spake, a certain Pharisee besought him to dine with him: and he went in, and sat down to meat.*

It was often a matter of marvel to the onlookers that Christ went among publicans and sinners; but is it not a greater wonder that he went among Pharisees? If they asked him to their houses, it was usually because they hoped to entangle him in his talk; yet the condescension of our Master is so great that, again and again, “he went in, and sat down to meat.”

[Luke 11:38](#). *And when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled that he had not just washed before dinner.*

Not because Christ’s hands needed washing, but because it was the custom of the Pharisees to wash before eating, and our Lord broke through the customs as he was wont to do, for he cared nothing for their inventions.

[Luke 11:39-40](#). *And the Lord said unto him, Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness. Ye fool, did not he that made that which is without make that which is within also?*

“One needs washing as much as the other. You are so careful of your hands; will you not be more careful of your hearts?”

[Luke 11:41](#). *But rather give alms of such things as ye have; and, behold, all things are clean unto you.*

“When you are full of love to your fellow-men, and make a practice of helping them, you have cleansed your heart from selfishness, and have really washed yourself then.”

[Luke 11:42](#). *But woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God; these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.*

How many, in these days, are very particular about very little things, but very careless about great things! They would not violate the law of their sect or party for the world, but the law of God is of small account to them.

[Luke 11:43](#). *Woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets.*

They loved to be called Rabbi, learned Doctors of the law. Any title that made them appear great was very sweet to them.

[Luke 11:44](#). *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them.*

Nobody but Christ knew how base they were. They were fair to look upon, but he knew that they were villainously hypocritical, and he therefore denounced them. Ah, dear friends, the great matter is to have grace in the heart, — to have the divine light within, in the soul; and if we have not this, vain is a fair profession, vain is everything that comes from man. If we are to be saved, we must have the grace that comes from God alone.

[Luke 11:45](#). *Then answered one of the lawyers, and said unto him, Master, thus saying thou reproachest us also.*

There was no great difference between the scribes and Pharisees and the lawyers, as this man evidently perceived, and as our Lord also soon confirmed by pronouncing upon them the same kind of “Woe” that he had pronounced upon the other false teachers.

[Luke 11:46](#). *And he said, Woe unto you also, ye lawyers! for ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers.*

Their regulations as to moral and ceremonial observances were like huge faggots or crushing burdens bound together, and made into a weight intolerable for any man to carry. Many of these rules by themselves were grievous enough; but altogether they formed a yoke that neither the people nor their fathers could bear. The scribes, and Pharisees, and lawyers piled the great load upon them; but neither helped them to sustain it, nor offered to relieve them of any portion of it. “Ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers.”

[Luke 11:47-48](#). *Woe unto you! for ye build the sepulchres of the prophet, and your fathers killed them. Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres.*

They pretended to have such regard for the holy men of the past that, being unable to honour them in person, they would set up monuments to their memory, and adorn their resting places with tokens of respect. Out of their own mouth our Lord condemned these hypocrites: “Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers.” In effect, Jesus said to them, “You confess that you are the sons of the murderers of the prophets. That admission carries with it far more than you imagine. You are their

sons, not only by birth, but also by resemblance; you are veritable children of those who killed the prophets. If you had lived in their day, you would have committed the crimes you pretend to condemn.”

[Luke 11:49-54](#). *Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shalt slay and persecute: that the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; from the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, it shall be required of this generation.*

The destruction of Jerusalem was more terrible than anything that the world has ever witnessed, either before or since. Even Titus seemed to see in his cruel work the hand of an avenging God. Truly, the blood of the martyrs was amply avenged when the whole city became a veritable Aceldama, or field of blood. It was before that generation had passed away that Jerusalem was besieged and destroyed. There was a sufficient interval for the full proclamation of the gospel by the apostles and evangelists of the early Christian Church, and for the gathering out of those who recognized the crucified Christ as their true Messiah. Then came the awful ending, which the Saviour foresaw and foretold.

[Luke 11:51](#). *Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered.*

This “Woe” is similar to that pronounced upon the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees, and it was a terrible charge to be brought against them by him who could read their hearts, and who could truthfully say to them, “Ye have taken away the key of knowledge; ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered.” They ought to have helped men into the kingdom; instead of doing so, they hindered those who were entering. Are there not false teachers, nowadays, who put stumbling stones instead of stepping-stones in the way of those who are entering the kingdom of heaven?

[Luke 11:53-54](#). *And as he said these tidings unto them, the scribe, and Pharisees began to urge him vehemently, and to provoke him to speak of many things: laying wait for him, and seeking to catch something out of his mouth, that they might accuse him.*

Thus they proved the truth of the accusations that he had brought against them; but all their plots and traps were in vain until the hour appointed for

his great sacrifice to be offered on Calvary.

LUKE CONTENTS

CHAPTER 12

Verses 1-32

The teaching of our Lord, in this chapter, has very much to do with Christianity in connection with this present life, and its cares and troubles. God has nowhere promised us exemption from affliction and trial. Indeed, it has been said, with much truth, that the Old Testament promise was one of prosperity, but that the New Testament promise is one of tribulation. You may rest assured that, if it had been best for us to be taken away to heaven directly we were converted, the Lord would have done it, and that, as he has not done so, there are wise reasons why he keeps his people here for a while. The gold must go through the fire ere it has its place in the king's crown, and the wheat must be exposed to the winnowing fan ere it can be taken into the heavenly garner.

Luke 12:1. *In the mean time, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another, he began to say unto his disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.*

Hypocrisy, however, of a kind that was calculated to spread, like leaven. If you know that a man is a hypocrite, you do not feel inclined to imitate him; but the Pharisees were such well-made hypocrites, — such excellent counterfeits, — that many people were tempted to imitate them. Our Lord teaches us, however, that it is no use being a hypocrite, —

Luke 12:2. *For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known.*

For many a day, the hypocrite's true character may not be discovered but there is a day coming that will reveal all secrets; and woe unto the man whose sin is laid bare in that day!

Luke 12:3. *Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops.*

It would be well if we all lived in such a fashion that we should not be ashamed to have everything we did placarded on the very sky. I have heard

of one who said that he would like to have a window in his heart, so that everybody might see what was going on. I think that, if I had such a window in my heart, I should like to have shutters to it; and I question whether any man really could wish to have his heart open to the gaze of all mankind. But, at least, let our lives be such that we should not be ashamed for the universal eye to be fixed upon them. If thou art ashamed to have any one of thine actions known, be ashamed to do it. If thou wouldst be ashamed to hear again what thou was about to say, do not say it. Check thy tongue; be cautious and careful. Live ever as one who realizes God's omniscience. While one of the ancient orators was speaking, on one occasion, all his hearers went away with the exception of Plato; but he continued to speak as eloquently as ever, for he said that Plato was a sufficient audience for any man. So, if there be no one but the eye of God looking upon thee, be just as careful as if thou were in the street, surrounded by thy fellow-creatures; nay, be more careful because thou art in the presence of thy Creator.

[Luke 12:4-5](#). *And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.*

And how brave we shall be if we fear God! It is well put in that psalm which we sometimes sing, — “Fear him, ye saints, and you will then Have nothing else to fear.” This great filial fear will chase out all the little, mean, graven fears, for he who, in the scriptural sense, fears God, can never be a coward in dealing with men.

[Luke 12:6-7](#). *Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows.*

God does not forget the sparrows, but he regards you with far greater interest and care, for he counts the very hairs of your head. He not only knows that there is such a person, but he knows the minutest details of your life and being. It is always a great comfort to remember that our Heavenly Father knows us. A dying man, who had been for many years a believer, had a minister at his bedside who said to him, “Don't you know Jesus?” “Yes, Sir,” he replied, “I do, but the ground of my comfort is that he knows me.” And, surely, there is a great force in that truth. Your Heavenly Father

knows you so completely that he has counted the hairs of your head: “Fear not therefore; ye are of more value than many sparrows.”

[Luke 12:8-9](#). *Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God: but he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God.*

What courage this ought to give us! In company where the very name of Christ is kicked about like a football, — where everything is respected except true religion, — it is not always an easy thing to come forward, and say, “I also am his disciple.” But if you will do this, you have Christ’s pledge that he will own you before the angels of God. If you do not do so, but practically deny him by a shameful silence, you may reasonably expect that he also will deny you before the angels.

[Luke 12:10](#). *And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven.*

This is one of the very difficult texts of Holy Scripture. We are told, in [1 John 5:16](#), that “there is a sin unto death,” and I would have you very chary of ever daring to trifle with the Spirit of God, since sin against him is guarded with such special warnings. The flaming sword of divine vengeance seems to hang before the very name of the Holy Ghost; so, whatever you do, never trench upon his royal dignity, or blaspheme him in heart or by lip.

[Luke 12:11](#). *And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, —*

That is to say, the persecutors, — “when they bring you there, to be tried for your lives, as many have been in past ages, and some still are,”

[Luke 12:11-12](#). *Take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: for the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.*

I have often been amazed and delighted with the remarkable answers which were given to bishops and priests by poor humble men and women who were on trial for their lives. Perhaps you remember that Anne Askew was asked, in order to entangle her in her speech, “What would become of a mouse if it ate the bread of the holy sacrament?” “She said that was too deep a question for a poor woman like her to answer, and she begged the learned bishop on the bench to tell her what would become of the mouse; to which his lordship answered that it would be damned. Now, what reply could be

given to that but the one Anne Askew gave, “Alack, poor mouse!” I do not know that anything better could have been said; and, on other occasions, there have been answers which have been deeply theological, and there have been some which have been wisely evasive and, also some full of weight, and others full of grace and truth, for the Holy Ghost has helped his saints, in time of persecution, to answer well those who have accused them.

[Luke 12:13-17](#). *And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? And he said unto them, Take heed, beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth. And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?*

There were empty cupboards in the houses of the poor, and there were hungry children to be filled; so this man need not have lacked room where he could bestow his fruits.

[Luke 12:18-20](#). *And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I, will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, —*

Which was the last thing he thought, he imagined that he was a very wise man: “But God said unto him, Thou fool,” —

[Luke 12:20-21](#). *This night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.*

Here our Saviour shows us the frail nature of the tenure upon which we hold all earthly goods, and how it is not worth while to make these the chief things of our life; for, while they may leave us, we are quite sure by-and-by, to have to leave them.

[Luke 12:22](#). *And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought —*

No undue, anxious thought, for such is the meaning of the word used here:

“Take no thought” —

[Luke 12:22-30](#). *For your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body is more than*

raiment. Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn, and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls? And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit? If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest? Consider the like how they grow: they toil not, they spin not, and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothe the grass, which is today in the field, and tomorrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith? And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things.”

So that, with the knowledge of his guarantees to you that you shall always have enough, what need have you to be careworn and anxious? I have often looked at birds in a cage, and thought of the happiness and carelessness of heart which they seem to exhibit; and yet, if you were to forget to give them water, or if you were to fail to give them seed, how soon they would die! Perhaps the little creature has not enough to last it more than one day, but it goes on singing its tune, and leaves; all anxiety about the morrow to those whose business it is to care for it. You would be ashamed to let your bird starve; and will your Heavenly Father let you, who are not his birds, but his children, starve? Oh, no! “Your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things.”

[Luke 12:31-32](#). *But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*

He does not give you all that you would like to have, but he is going “to give you the kingdom.” He gives the lesser gifts to others, but he is saving up the kingdom for you. Luther once said, “All the empires of the earth are only so much meal for God’s swine; but the treasure is for his children. They may have less meal, but they shall have the eternal kingdom.” Oh, how blessed are we if, by faith, we know that this is true concerning us: “It is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom”!

Verses 1-44

In this chapter, our Saviour dispels the fears of his disciples concerning temporal things, and especially their fear of persecution and their fear of want.

[Luke 12:1-2](#). *In the mean time, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another, he began to say unto his disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid; that shall not be known.*

What, therefore, can be the use of hypocrisy? Hypocrisy leads a man to pretend to be what he is not. His only hope lies in not being discovered; but, as Christ declares that “there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known;” hypocrisy becomes insanity as well as iniquity. Therefore, keep clear of it in every shape and form.

[Luke 12:3-5](#). *Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops. And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.*

There is nothing, comparatively, to fear in death considered by itself. If that were the end of man, he need have little or no fear even of God himself. But inasmuch as after death, there is another state which is everlasting and unchangeable, there is grave cause for the ungodly to fear him who, “after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell.”

[Luke 12:6-7](#). *Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered.*

So particular is the care of divine providence.

[Luke 12:7](#). *Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows.*

And if he counts the sparrows, and cares for them, he certainly will not forget you.

[Luke 12:8-9](#). *Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God: but he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God.*

Mind what you are at, then, you who never confess Christ before men; because, according to the connection of this passage, you are set down as having denied him. Christ first speaks of those who confess him, and then of those who do not confess him, and he describes them as virtually denying him. On another occasion, Christ said, “he that is not with me is

against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.” Examine that attitude of yours, which you suppose to be neutral, and see how Christ regards it, and then ask yourself whether you can be satisfied to remain in it any longer.

[Luke 12:10](#). *And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven.*

What is the sin against the Holy Ghost? We do not know, and I think it is a great mercy that we do not know. I will tell you one reason why I think it is a great mercy, and that is, because the devil is continually tempting poor distracted souls to commit that sin. I have, within the past week, seen several persons who have been frequently tempted to commit it; only, happily, they did not know what the sin against the Holy Ghost was; and, therefore, they could not persuade themselves into the belief that they had committed it. I have seen many people who have told me that they have committed the unpardonable sin, and I have asked them to sit down, and tell me what that sin was; for if they could do so, I should find out something that I did not know. In every instance, I have very soon been able to say to them, “Though I do not know what the unpardonable sin is, I am quite certain that what you mention is not that sin, for such sin as yours has frequently been forgiven.” It is a blessing that we are left in the dark concerning that matter; only as I have often said to you, do not presume upon your ignorance. This warning is something like the notice you see put up on certain great men’s estates, “Man-traps and spring guns set here.” If you go round the mansion, and say to the owner, “If you please, sir, will you tell me where the man-traps and spring guns are?” he will say, “No; why should you want to know where they are? You keep from trespassing, and then it will not matter to you where they are.” That very indistinctness about the warning is a part of the preventive power which surrounds it. You have no right to go trespassing there at all, so keep away from the place; and you are not told what the unpardonable sin is, though there is a sin which is unto death; and there is a blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, which shall not be forgiven.

[Luke 12:11-12](#). *And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: for the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.*

He has often done this. If you will read, in Foxe's Book of Martyrs, the answers given even by unlearned, illiterate men and women, who were taken quite at unawares, and assailed by subtle questions, you will see that they often answered in a remarkably wise way. They could not have answered better if the questions had been before them for months. They frequently burned their cunning adversaries by their wisdom and sometimes by their wit, for the Holy Ghost taught them in the same hour what they ought to speak.

[Luke 12:13](#). *And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me.*

He rudely broke in upon Christ's discourse when he was preaching upon these important matters, because he wanted the Saviour to act the part of a judge in his dispute with his brother.

[Luke 12:14](#). *And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you.*

Some present-day minister, if this request had been made to him, would probably have said, "Well, I may save some litigation, perhaps, if I attend to this matter." As a general rule, brother, you had better mind your own business. Your Master, who was far wiser than you are, would not entangle himself with the affairs of this life; and, usually, true wisdom suggests that we also should keep ourselves apart from them.

[Luke 12:15-17](#). *And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?*

This was his dialogue within himself. He might have answered at once, "As I have more than I can use, I will give some away to the poor; why should I want to lay up my fruits, to let them get moldy and corrupt? There are many poor people starving at my very gates; I will let them share in what God has so bountifully given to me." This might have been his answer to the question, "What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?" His reply, however, was a very different one.

[Luke 12:18-19](#). *And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, —*

It is “my” all through, — my fruits, my barns, my goods. The man was eaten up with selfishness, and did not recognize the fact of his stewardship. He did not know that even his own soul did not belong to him; he thought it did: “I will say to my soul,” —

[Luke 12:19-20](#). *Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?*

“Thou fool.” That is God’s opinion of the man who means to build bigger barns in order that he may himself enjoy what is about to be taken away from him. He was a fool to be laying up in store for others to scatter. Many a miser’s heirs have lived to ridicule him. He was the rake that gathered up a heap of gold, and they are the shovel and fork that scatter it. They drink the old man’s health, and are much obliged to him for stinting himself that they may drink so deeply.

[Luke 12:21-22](#). *So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God. And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought —*

It really means, “Make it not a matter of anxious care. Take no inordinate thought” —

[Luke 12:22-23](#). *For your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment.*

Everybody admits the truth of this saying of the Saviour, though all do not see everything that is involved in it. Therefore, as the soul is more important than all else, look well to your soul, look more to your life than to your meat.

[Luke 12:24](#). *Consider the ravens:*

It is quite possible that some of them were flying overhead just at that time, and that Christ pointed to them, and said, “Consider the ravens;” —

[Luke 12:24-25](#). *For they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls? And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit?*

“You cannot lengthen your body;” or perhaps the Saviour meant, “You cannot lengthen out your life.”

[Luke 12:26](#). *If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least,*

It really is a matter of very slight consequence whether you are a little shorter or taller.

[Luke 12:26-29](#). *Why take ye thought for the rest? Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothe the grass, which is today in the field, and tomorrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith? And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind.*

Full of carking care and wearing anxiety about little things; or, indeed, about anything.

[Luke 12:30](#). *For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things.*

Therefore he would have you so live — industriously, prudently, thriftily, — that you shall get these things, and shall not waste them when you have them; but he would not have you live in an anxious, worrying, depressed spirit, as if you had no God, no Heavenly Father, no all-sufficient Friend; and as if there were no all-wise providence, and you were left to drift about uncared for and alone. It is not so. O thou God of the lilies and God of the ravens, thou wilt be the God of thy people too!

[Luke 12:31-32](#). *But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*

He may not give you much here; but, in due time, he will give you the kingdom. He may give to worldlings more of these secondary things — these husks, these mere illusions, these mirages of the desert — than he gives to you; but for you there is prepared a city that hath foundations, and a kingdom that shall never pass away. Therefore patiently wait until the appointed time; and fear not; “for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”

[Luke 12:33-34](#). *Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which was not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*

It is not only important to lay up that which can truly be called treasure, but also to lay it up in the right place: “a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth.” Such treasure as

that will not harm us if we set our heart upon it, and, by-and-by, in God's good time, we and our treasure shall both be in heaven.

[Luke 12:35-37](#). *Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.*

This always seems to me to be one of the most remarkable of our Lord's utterances while he was here upon the earth. His whole life was one of condescension, which was never more clearly manifested than it was when he, the Lord and Master of all, took the position of servant of all, and washed his disciples' feet; yet he here tells us that, if he finds us watching when he comes again, he will once more take his place as our servitor.

[Luke 12:38-44](#). *And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not. Then Peter said unto him, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all! And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath.*

Verses 13-44

[Luke 12:13-14](#). *And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me, And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?*

Our Lord was a Judge and a Divider, but his sphere of action was spiritual; he did not interfere in the personal disputes of those who gathered round him.

[Luke 12:15](#). *And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.*

Christ took advantage of this man's request, and made it the text for a sermon against covetousness.

[Luke 12:16-19](#). *And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.*

Notice how fond the rich man was of the little pronouns "I" and "my." He lived only for himself, and was an embodiment of that covetousness which our Lord abhorred and denounced. What a vivid contrast there is between what the man said to himself and the Lord's message to him!

[Luke 12:20](#). *But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?*

This may also be said to any one of you; where would you be if the Lord did say to you, "This night thy soul shall he required of thee"?

[Luke 12:21-23](#). *So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God. And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment.*

Do not spend your care on the lower things; care most for that which is most worth caring for $\frac{3}{4}$ more for the body than for raiment, more for life than for meat, and consequently, more for the immortal spirit than for aught besides, and more for God even than for your own soul. Let your cares be rated according to their objects; to set a caring, anxious care upon the lesser things, will be folly indeed.

[Luke 12:24](#). *Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls?*

It seems, then, that those that are fed by God are much better fed than those that are fed by men. The ravens know no care whatever, for God cares for them; and, if we could ever bring our hearts into such a condition that we felt that everything to do with us was in God's hand, we should enter

into a blessed, hallowed freedom from care in which we should find a sweet repose of spirit.

“Beneath the spreading heavens,
No creature but is fed;
And He who feeds the ravens,
Will give his children bread.”

[Luke 12:25-26](#). *And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit? If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest?*

It would be a very small matter to you if you were a foot taller, or if you were a foot shorter. It is not that the making of yourself a cubit taller or shorter would be a small thing to do, but it is a small thing in its result; it is an inconsiderable matter whether a man is tall or short. If ye, then, be not able even to reduce your stature, or to increase it, take no anxious thought about other things.

[Luke 12:27](#). *Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.*

So that God cares not only for things that have necessities, as ravens have, but for things that have luxuries, as lilies have. When God does anything, he does it well. He is a grand Housekeeper; he does not measure out so many ounces of bread per diem, as if we were in a workhouse, but “they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.” “No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.” The lilies might do as well without their golden hues, they might ripen their seed without the lengthened stems that lift them where they can be observed; but God takes more care of them even than Solomon did of himself, for “Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.” Now, dear children of God, if you trust your Heavenly Father, he will see that you have no cause for care. If you trust him with your souls, he will not give you a bare salvation, but a rich robe of righteousness to cover all your nakedness. When he does any work, he does it after a better fashion than the wisest of men could do it; and nature herself, working as she does for the lilies, is only God working in another way. But when God himself, without the intervention of the laws of nature, works in the kingdom of his grace, he does it perfectly; he does it gloriously.

[Luke 12:28](#). *If then God so clothe the grass, which is today in the field, and tomorrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith?*

Your life is not like that of the grass, or the flower of the field, that fades on a summer's day. God will take care of you, and the everlasting things shall have from him a care even greater than he gives to the temporal. Yet how much God really does for flowers ³/₄flowers that only open their cups in the morning, and shut them in death at night! How much of skill and wisdom there is even about them! Shall there not be greater skill and wisdom employed upon you who, when you have once begun to bloom in the light of God, shall go on blooming, and flowering, and shedding your perfume throughout the endless ages?

[Luke 12:29-30](#). *And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things in the nations of the world seek after and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things.*

For you, the immortal, the twice-born, the very body-guard of Christ, to live for such things as the men of the world live for, is to degrade the peerage of heaven, to bring those who are of the blood royal of the skies down to a gross pursuit. No; let your whole thought, and heart, and life, be spent for something higher and better than these things; and leave the lower cares with your Father.

[Luke 12:31-32](#). *But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear not little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*

When Abraham had many sons, he gave to each one of them a portion and sent them away; but Isaac had the family heritage. It is the same with you. The Lord may give to others more than he bestows upon you in this life, but for you he reserves the kingdom. Are you not content with that, whatever else your Father gives you or withholds from you?

[Luke 12:33](#). *Sell that ye have, and give alms;*

That is to say, do not merely give a little, which you can readily spare; but sometimes even pinch yourselves to relieve the poor.

[Luke 12:33-34](#). *Provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*

You are sure to live for that which is the choicest object of your love. Whatever you think to be first, will be first; and what you love in your heart, you will be sure to follow in your life.

[Luke 12:35-36](#). *Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately.*

Many people are thinking just now of Christ's first advent, but this passage bids us watch for his glorious second coming.

[Luke 12:37](#). *Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.*

I never read this verse without wondering at the marvelous condescension of our Lord. Even in the day of his appearing in glory, his thoughts will be more about his people than about himself: "He shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them."

[Luke 12:33](#). *And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants.*

We cannot tell when he will come, but "Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching."

[Luke 12:39-44](#). *And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broke through. Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not. Then Peter said unto him, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all? And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath.*

Wonderful words! We cannot at present tell all that they mean; but, by God's grace, may they be fulfilled to us when our Lord comes to take us to himself!

Verses 13-48

[Luke 12:13-14](#). *And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. And he said unto him,*

Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?

Our Lord kept to his proper business, which was the preaching of the gospel and the healing of the sick. We find, in these days, that the minister of the gospel is asked to do almost everything. He must be a politician; he must be a social reformer; he must be I know not what. For my part, I often feel as if I could answer, “Who made me to do anything of the kind? If I can preach the gospel, I shall have done well if I do that to the glory of God, and to the salvation of men. Surely there are enough people to be judges and dividers, there are quite sufficient politicians to attend to politics, and plenty of men who feel themselves qualified to direct social reforms. Some of us may be spared to attend to spiritual affairs.”

[Luke 12:15](#). *And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.*

Jesus gave his hearers a good moral and spiritual lesson from the occurrence which they had witnessed, and then passed on to speak of the matter which always occupied his thoughts.

[Luke 12:16-17](#). *And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth, plentifully: and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?*

He did not enquire, “Where can I find a needy case in which I may use my superfluity for charity?” Oh, no! “How can I hoard it? How can I keep it all to myself?” This was a selfish, worldly man.

[Luke 12:18-20](#). *And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool,*

Other men said of him, “This is a wise man; he minds the main chance; he is a fellow plentifully endowed with good sense and prudence;” but God said unto him, “Thou fool, “

[Luke 12:20](#). *This night thy soul shall be required of thee:*

I should like you to set that up as the counter picture to the one that we had this morning, “Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise.” That was said by Christ to the penitent thief, but to this impenitent rich man, God said, “This night thy soul shall be required of thee.”

[Luke 12:20-21](#). *Then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.*

“He that layeth up treasure for himself.” That was the chief point of this man’s wrong-doing, his selfishness. His charity began at home, and ended there; he lived only for himself.

[Luke 12:22-23](#). *And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment.*

Have no anxious, carking care. Do not be looking after the inferior things, and neglecting your soul. Take care of your soul; your body will take care of itself better than your soul can. The raiment for the body will come in due time; but the clothing for the soul is the all-important matter. Therefore, see to that.

[Luke 12:24-27](#). *Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls? And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit? If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest? Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.*

The lilies simply stand still in the sunlight, and silently say to us, “See how beautiful are the thoughts of God.” If we could just drink in God’s love, and then, almost without speech, show it in our lives, how we should glorify his name!

[Luke 12:28](#). *If then God so clothe the grass, which is today in the field, and tomorrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith!*

But you have some faith, else the Saviour would not have said to you, “O ye of little faith!” The man who has no faith may well go on fretting, toiling, spinning; but he that hath faith, as he goes forth to his daily labour, looks beyond that to the God of providence, and thus God keeps him without care, and provides for him.

[Luke 12:29-30](#). *And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of*

the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things.

He knows that you must go and work for these things; but he would not have you fret and fume about them. "Your Father knows." He will provide. It is enough for him to know his children's wants, and he will be sure to provide for them.

[Luke 12:31](#). *But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you.*

Thrown in as a kind of make-weight. You get the spiritual, and then the common blessings of life shall be added unto you.

[Luke 12:32](#). *Fear not, little flock; for it is your Fathers good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*

That is your share. Others may have inferior joys; but you are to have the kingdom. The Lord could not give you more than that; and he will not give you less.

[Luke 12:33](#). *Sell that ye have, and give alms;*

Do not merely give away what you can spare; but even pinch yourself sometimes, and sell what you can that you may have the more to give.

[Luke 12:33](#). *Provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth.*

Put some of your estate where it cannot be lost. Take care that you invest some of it for God's poor, and God's work, where the interest will be sure, and the investment will be safe.

[Luke 12:34](#). *For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*

Make sure of that. Your heart will go after your treasure; and if none of your treasure has gone to heaven, none of your heart will go there.

[Luke 12:35-36](#). *Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Our Lord constantly reminded his disciples that the time would come when he must leave them for a season; but he always kept before them the thought of his return, and bade them watch for him as those that wait for their lord.*

[Luke 12:37-39](#). *Blessed are those Servants, whom the lord when he cometh, shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.*

And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. And this know, that if the good man of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through.

As he does not know when the thief will come, he is always watching.

[Luke 12:40-41](#). *Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not. Then Peter said unto him, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all?*

And the Lord told him that, while it was spoken to all, it had a very special bearing upon apostolic men, upon preachers of the gospel, ministers of Christ.

[Luke 12:42-44](#). *And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath.*

Just as Pharaoh made Joseph ruler over all Egypt, so, when men have done well in the ministry of Christ, he will promote them, and they shall do still more for him.

[Luke 12:45-46](#). *But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming, and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; the lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder.*

This is a truly terrible expression. We are sometimes charged with using too strong expressions with regard to the wrath to come. It is quite impossible that we should do so, even if we tried, for the expressions of the Lord Jesus are more profoundly terrible than any which even mediaeval writers have ever been known to invent.

[Luke 12:46](#). *And will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.*

The worst portion that any man can get is with the unbelievers. Are there not some here who may, in this verse, see what a dark doom theirs will be if they are among those who are described as being out in sunder, and having their portion with the unbelievers?

[Luke 12:47](#). *And that servant, which knew his lords will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.*

So that there are different measures of responsibility; there are degrees in guilt, and degrees in punishment.

[Luke 12:48](#). *But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall he beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.*

O my brethren! Let those of us who are privileged with the possession of the gospel, and privileged with any amount of ability to spread it, enquire whether we could give in a good account if the Lord were to come tonight, and summon us, as stewards, to give an account of our stewardship. God bless to us all the reading of his Word! Amen.

Verses 22-48

[Luke 12:22-23](#). *And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment.*

If you are God's servants, he will clothe you. There is no servitor of the Lord of hosts who will have to go without his livery, and not one who belongs to his vast household, even though he is but a menial in God's kitchen, who will ever be permitted to starve.

[Luke 12:24-26](#). *Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls? And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit? If ye then be able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest?*

How little you can do for yourself after all! Therefore, leave the whole with God.

“Make you his service your delight,
He'll make your wants his care.”

The best cure for the cares of this life is to care much to please God. If we loved him better, we should love the world far less, and be less troubled about our portion in it.

[Luke 12:27-28](#). *Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of those. If then God so clothe the grass, which is today in the field, and tomorrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith?*

What a title to address to us, — “O ye of little faith!” — but, depend upon it, we deserve it when we are full of anxious care. Much care argues little faith. When faith is strong, she casts all her care on him who careth for us. Oh, that we could but be rid of that which, after all, is not our business, and give our whole mind, and heart, and soul, to what is our business, namely, to please our Creator, our Redeemer, our Friend!

[Luke 12:29-30](#). *And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all those things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things.*

Is not that a sweet word? “Your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things.” There used to be a hymn which was sung a good deal at revival meetings, it had a very sweet refrain, “This my Father knows.” If you cannot yourselves understand your ease, your Father knows all about it. If you cannot make other people comprehend it, yet your Father knows all that needs to be known. Whatever you really require, even for the present life, need not be any cause of anxiety to you, believers, for “your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things.” There is no need, therefore, for you to seek “what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink.”

[Luke 12:31-32](#). *But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all those things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*

He gives others a good many things, but he will give you the kingdom. Just as Abraham gave portions to the sons of Keturah, and sent them away; but Isaac had the covenant blessing; so, “it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”

[Luke 12:33](#). *Sell that ye have, and give alms;*

Not only give to the poor till you pinch yourself, but even pinch yourself to do it.

[Luke 12:33-35](#). *Provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning;*

Never be undressed, as it were, in a moral or spiritual sense: “Let your loins be girded about.” Never be in the dark spiritually. Keep in the light; let your lamp be ever burning. Not only walk in the light of God but let your light shine before men.

[Luke 12:36](#). *And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately.*

Brethren, whatever theory we hold about the future, may God grant that it may never prevent our looking for the coming of Christ as an event which may happen at any moment, and being on the watch for it as a matter the date of which we do not know! The practical essence of all Scriptural teaching upon that subject is just this, “Ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he will return from the wedding.”

[Luke 12:37](#). *Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.*

I will not attempt fully to explain this passage of Scripture in the few moments which I can give to it, but it is very wonderful. Our Lord has been here once, and girded himself to serve us; but is it not extraordinary that here is an intimation of a second girding of himself that he may serve us? Oh, how fond is Christ of being the servant of servants, ministering unto those who delight to minister unto him! What an honour does the Captain of our salvation put upon the meanest soldiers in this war when he declares that, if we be found faithful, he will gird himself, and come forth and serve us!

[Luke 12:38-40](#). *And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. And this know, that if the good-man of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.*

Peradventure he will not come when the modern prophetic say that he will appear, but he will come when least of all he is expected. Therefore, expect the unexpected; look for your Lord to come when the many go to sleep. Perhaps, while yet I am speaking, ere this gathered assembly shall disperse, there may be heard the cry, “Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.” Are our loins girded? Are our lamps burning? God bless his own truth to the effecting of both those ends!

[Luke 12:41-43](#). *Then Peter said unto him, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all? And the lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to*

give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.

Distributing the bread of life, giving milk to babes and meat to strong men; not behaving as if he were master, but acting only as a steward who serves out, not his own, but his master's stores. Oh, that we who are ministers of Christ may be always doing this! So shall we obtain the blessing promised to "that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing."

[Luke 12:44-45](#). *Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all the he hath. But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken;*

First, he becomes lordly, he acts as if he were master, beats his fellowservants, he is harsh and ungenerous, and assumes great dignity and gives himself airs. Let him mind what he is at, for his Master will come, and catch him usurping his place. The next danger is that he begins to enjoy himself, to be voluptuous, self-indulgent: "To eat and drink, and to be drunken." He becomes intoxicated with pride, he is carried away with divers errors; in making much of himself he loses his head, and acts like a fool.

[Luke 12:46](#). *The Lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.*

Truly, our Lord uses very strong words; the Saviour is not one of your effeminate preachers like those of modern times, who seem as if the very word "hell" would burn their lips, and who will not warn men to flee from the wrath to come. It is an unkind and heartless want of humanity which prevents their being faithful to the souls of men. The great Lord, who is full of tenderness, does not hesitate to use the sternest figure, and the most terrible language, simply because he does not consult his own feelings but aims at the highest good of those with whom he deals. This is a terrible word for us if we are unfaithful at the last: "He will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers." It is an awful thing that the unfaithful servant gets his portion with those who do not believe in Christ. The Lord preserve all of us from such a doom!

[Luke 12:47-48](#). *And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with*

many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with a few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.

Under the shadow of such solemn texts as these, let us draw near to God in earnest prayer.

Verses 35-48

[Luke 12:35-37](#). *Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.*

This is a wonderful passage. Christ has already had one turn as a servitor. He was Master and Lord, yet he washed his disciples' feet; but he says that, if we are watchful and faithful, if we truly serve him, the day shall come when, in all his robes of glory, he shall gird himself, and serve us.

[Luke 12:38-40](#). *And if he shalt come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.*

This is a warning to Christ's own people; but it is still more a warning to those who do not know him. Suppose he were to come tonight; where would you be, you who have hitherto lived as if you were your own masters, and were by no means the servants of Christ? Take heed unto yourselves, for ye know not when your Lord shall come.

[Luke 12:41-44](#). *Then Peter said unto him Lord, speakest then this parable unto us, or even to all. And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his Lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath.*

What rewards Christ has in store for his people. If we will but be his servants now, and the servants of our brethren, he will make us rulers over

all that he has. I cannot attempt to explain all that these words mean, but I bless the Lord that they are absolutely true.

[Luke 12:45-46](#). *But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shalt begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; the lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.*

Again let me say that I cannot attempt to explain all that these words mean; but, oh! what will be the horror, the terror, of the punishment which will fall upon the unfaithful steward, the minister who is untrue to his holy calling, the professor who says that he is a child of God, and a steward of Christ, and yet is unfaithful to his trust? I will read our Lord's words again. You know how we are sometimes accused of saying things too dreadful about the wrath of God in the world to come; but, beloved, we never say anything dreadful enough. If you will carefully examine the Word of God, you will find there expressions such as even Dante or the mediaeval preachers, with all the horrors they depicted, never; surpassed. We cannot exaggerate the awful depth of meaning which we find in the words of the loving Christ himself; let me read this verse again: "The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers."

[Luke 12:47-48](#). *And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.*

Judge ye, then, brethren and sisters, how much of ability and talent your lord has entrusted to you, and be not content to have rendered him some service; but look for proportionate service, and humble yourselves in his presence if your service is not in proportion to the opportunities entrusted to you. Who among us can refrain from humbling himself before God when he thinks of this?

[LUKE CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 13

Verses 1-13

[Luke 13:1](#). *There were present at that season some that told him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.*

This was a matter of common town talk, so of course they brought the news to Jesus. Notice how wisely he used this shameful incident. You and I too often hear the news of what is happening, but we learn nothing from it; our Saviour's gracious mind turned everything to good account; he was like the bee that gathers honey from every flower.

[Luke 13:2](#). *And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things?*

“Do you imagine that there was some extraordinary guilt which brought this judgment upon them, and that those who were spared may be supposed to have been more innocent than they were?”

[Luke 13:3](#). *I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish.*

There would come upon them also, because of their sin, a sudden and overwhelming calamity. When we read of the most dreadful things happening to you we may conclude that something similar will happen to us if we are impenitent; if not in this world, yet in that which is to come.

[Luke 13:4-5](#). *Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay; but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*

This was a foreshadowing of the overthrow of Jerusalem, and the razing of its walls and towers to the ground, which happened not long after; and even that overthrow of Jerusalem was but a rehearsal of the tremendous doom that shall come upon all who remain impenitent.

[Luke 13:6](#). *He spake also this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none.*

He had a right to seek fruit upon the tree, for it was planted where fruit-bearing trees were growing, and where it shared in the general culture that was bestowed upon all the trees in the vineyard.

[Luke 13:7](#). *Then he said unto the dresser of the vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?*

This was sound reasoning. “It yields nothing, though it draws the goodness out of the ground, and so injures those trees that are producing fruit; ‘cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?’”

[Luke 13:8-9](#). *And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: and if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.*

He asks a respite, but only a limited one. “After that, thou shalt cut it down.” If, after the trial of another year, it shall still be fruitless, then even the pleader will not ask for any further respite.

[Luke 13:10-11](#). *And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath. And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself.*

If she was there when Christ was speaking about the fruitless fig tree I feel pretty certain that she said “That must mean me; I am the fruitless fig tree,” but the Master did not mean her, he had other words and more cheering tidings for her.

[Luke 13:12](#). *And when Jesus saw her, he called her to him, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity.*

Oh, what glad news this must have been to her! How it must have thrilled her whole body! As she learned that she was to be restored to an upright position, what delight must have filled her heart!

[Luke 13:13](#). *And he laid his hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.*

What expressions of fervent gratitude, what notes of glad exultation came from that woman’s joyful lips! Surely, even cherubim and seraphim could not more heartily and earnestly praise God than she did when “she was made straight and glorified God.”

Verses 6-9

[Luke 13:6](#). *He spake also this parable, A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none.*

Let us, every one, read this parable as if our Lord Jesus Christ were now speaking it for the first time to each of us. There is a lesson here which we

shall do well to heed.

[Luke 13:7-9](#). *Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: and if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.*

“In that case, I will plead for it no longer, for it will have had its full time of testing, and every opportunity of bearing fruit: ‘After that thou shalt cut it down.’” The parable is so simple that it needs no explanation, and therefore our Lord Jesus has not given any. May we all make a personal application of its solemn teaching! Amen.

This exposition consisted of readings from SOLOMON’S [Song of Solomon 8:11-14](#); [Isaiah 5:1-7](#); and [Luke 13:6-9](#).

Verses 6-30

[Luke 13:6](#). *He spake also this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none.*

It was a fig tree, a fruit-bearing tree by profession, so it ought to have borne fruit. It was planted; it was not a wild tree, it was planted in a vineyard, in the proper place for fig trees to grow, in good soil; and therefore the owner of it had a right to come and look for fruit on it; but he found none. Have we not here, tonight, some who are planted in the Church of God who ought, by their profession, to be bearing fruit, but they are not? Christ has come, and he has looked for fruit; but he has found none.

[Luke 13:7](#). *Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?*

The owner seems to say, “If I had not found fruit the first year, I should have thought that the season was unfavourable; if I had found no fruit the second year, I might have thought that peradventure the tree was a little out of condition, and would come round again; but when I come for three years, and three years consecutively I find no fruit, then it is clear that the fig tree is a barren one. Why should it stay here, and spoil the soil, occupy the place that a good fig tree might have occupied, and take away the nutriment from other trees?” So if, after many years, some of you have brought forth no fruit, God may well complain about you. You are eating the bread that might have nourished a saint. You are occupying a place in which your

influence is injurious to others. Others do less because you do nothing. I pray the Holy Spirit to bring this home to the conscience of any barren professor whom it may concern, lest the command should go forth, "Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?"

[Luke 13:8-9](#). *And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: and if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.*

Even the vinedresser's pleading has a limit: "Give it one more year." He admits that the time must come for the axe to cut down the tree that is fruitless. The cumber-ground tree cannot stand for ever; it is unreasonable that it should. And you cannot be permitted to live for ever in sin; you cannot be allowed to taint the air with blasphemy for another fifty years. There must come an end to such a life as yours, and that end may come very soon. The edge of the axe is sharp, and the hand that wields it is strong. Beware, O barren tree!

[Luke 13:10](#). *And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath.*

When there happened a very remarkable miracle. The parable that preceded it was a parable of judgment; the miracle that followed was a miracle of mercy and grace.

[Luke 13:11-12](#). *And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself. And when Jesus saw her, he called her to him,*

You can see her slowly moving along, bent double. Hers was a painful walk, but she came at Christ's call.

[Luke 13:12-13](#). *And said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity. And he laid his hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.*

See what Christ can do. After I had preached this morning, I had to speak with just such a woman as this, one who has been, for many years, the victim of deep despondency. How I wished that I could lay my hands on her, and say, "Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity"! But we cannot work such a miracle as that. It is Christ who must do it all; and blessed be his name, he is always great at a pinch! Christ loves to come in at a dead lift. When we are all beaten, and we have reached man's extremity, then it is Christ's opportunity. Oh, you poor despairing woman, bent double by your sadness, the Lord's hand can restore you: and we pray for you tonight, even

the thousands of Israel pray for you at this moment! Lord, lay thine hand upon that poor child of infirmity!

[Luke 13:14](#). *And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, Wretched creature, to be indignant at Christ's doing good! There is no reckoning with self-righteous people. They are mad themselves, and they think others so.*

[Luke 13:14-15](#). *Because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men, ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day. The Lord then answered him, and said, Thou hypocrite, —*

It served him right. This is just the word that would naturally come to the lips of the Saviour. Because he was loving and tender, he could not endure this hypocritical indignation: "The Lord then answered him, and said, Thou hypocrite,"

[Luke 13:15-16](#). *Doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?*

A very conclusive argument. You may do deeds like this on the Sabbath; and you may come and be healed on the Sabbath, even though it should involve you in a journey. It is so needful that you should get the bread of heaven, so needful that you should get the blessing of Christ, that on this day you may come and be healed.

[Luke 13:17-19](#). *And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him. Then said he, Unto what is the kingdom of God like? and whereunto shall I resemble it.? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden; and it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it.*

You get a little grace tonight; let that Divine Man take but a grain of the mustard seed of his grace, and drop it into your heart, which he will have prepared like a garden, and there is no telling what will come of it. That sigh, that tear, that wish, will grow into holiness of life and zeal of conduct. It may be but very little in its beginning, but it will grow. Both good and evil begin with very small eggs, but they grow into great things.

[Luke 13:20](#). *And again he said, Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God?*

Now take the bad side, and see how the kingdom of God may be perverted and injured by evil influences.

[Luke 13:21](#). *It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.*

That woman of Rome has hidden her leaven in the church, and it has leavened the whole; and now the woman of intellect has put her leaven into the church. Conceited self-invention of new doctrines, perversion of the simplicity of the gospel, that kind of leaven has been hidden in the meal of the church, and it is leavening the whole. God help us to keep out the leaven both of Romanism and of Rationalism!

[Luke 13:22](#). *And he went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem.*

His face was toward the cross, he was working his passage to his sacrifice, and preaching his way to that place where he should complete our redemption. This is a wonderful picture of Christ: “teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem.”

[Luke 13:23](#). *Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved?*

What business is that of ours? Our business is far more practical, to be saved ourselves, and to endeavor to be the means of saving others. Jesus did not answer the question; but he did what was better.

[Luke 13:23-24](#). *And he said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.*

You can get into the broad road without striving; but you must “strive to enter in at the strait gate.” Strive for that which requires self-denial, that which humbles you, that which goes against the grain, that which is not according to human nature. Do not imagine that grace is to be had while you are half asleep, and that heaven is to be gained on a feather bed. Strive, strive, for many will seek in vain to enter. Seeking is not enough; it must come to a holy violence: “Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.” When will that be? That will be when you are in another state.

[Luke 13:25](#). *When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us;*

They will be very respectful; they will call him, “Lord.” They will be very earnest; they will pray, “Lord, Lord.” They will be very simple and very honest in their request: “Open unto us.” They will be very personal:

“Open unto us.” Such will the prayers of the ungodly be when they wake up to the fact that they are shut out of heaven.

[Luke 13:25-26](#). *And he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets.*

They came to the communion-table. They used to hear sermons indoors and out of doors. “Thou hast taught in our streets.”

[Luke 13:27](#). *But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.*

They shall be judged by their works. If they were workers of iniquity, it proved that they were unrenewed and unsaved. Christ will not endure their company, but will say to them, “Depart from me.”

[Luke 13:28](#). *There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out.*

You who thought that you had a share in the kingdom of God, and were, by birth, the natural heirs of it: “You yourselves thrust out.”

[Luke 13:29-30](#). *And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.*

The least likely to be saved shall be saved; the blackest sinners, the vilest outcasts, the grossest unbelievers, shall be brought to repentance and faith, and shall be saved; while those who were first in privileges, children of godly parents, professors of religion, those who appeared in every way likely to be saved first, will be left to the last, and be shut out of the kingdom of God, never to enter. God grant, in his infinite mercy, that nobody in the Tabernacle tonight may be of that unhappy number! Amen.

Verses 10-17

[Luke 13:10-17](#). *And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath. And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself. And when Jesus saw her, he called her to him, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity. And he laid his hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men*

ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day. The Lord then answered him, and said, Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day? And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him.

His adversaries might well be ashamed, and the people might well rejoice at such a display of his power and mercy; but the point I want you to notice is that the poor woman was set at liberty by the Lord Jesus on the Sabbath-day. There is another Sabbath miracle recorded in the next chapter. (See [Luke 14:1-6](#))

This exposition consisted of readings from [Luke 4:33-36](#); [Luke 6:6-11](#); [Luke 13:10-17](#); [Luke 14:1-6](#); [John 5:1-9](#); ND 9:1-14.

Verses 10-23

[Luke 13:10-12](#). *And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath, And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself. And when Jesus saw her,*

With that quick eye of his which was always in sympathy with his audience.

[Luke 13:12-14](#). *He called her to him, and said unto her, Woman thou art loosed from thine infirmity. And he laid his hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath day, and said unto the people,*

In what a cold-blooded, heartless manner he must have said it, you may well imagine. For a man not to rejoice when he saw his poor fellow-creature thus healed, shows that he must have been destitute of much milk of human kindness, and that bigotry had dried up his soul.

[Luke 13:14](#). *There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day.*

He did not dare to speak to Christ. I suppose the majesty of Christ's manner overawed him, so he struck at the people directly, and at Christ through them. Now our Lord did not go sideways to work when he replied to him.

[Luke 13:15-17](#). *The Lord then answered him, and said, Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day? And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him.*

The Jews had reduced the Sabbath to a day of idleness and luxury. The only thing they forbade themselves was the doing of anything. Now the Sabbath was never intended to be spent in idleness and luxury. It should be spent in the worship of God; and works of mercy and works of piety make the Sabbath Day holy, instead of being contrary to its demands. And our Saviour, by giving rest to that poor burdened woman, was in truth, making Sabbath in her body and in her soul.

[Luke 13:18-19](#). *Then said he Unto what is the kingdom of God like? and whereunto shall I resemble it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden; and it grew, and waxed a great tree: and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it.*

A little grace grows and becomes great grace. If thou hast at present but little faith, be thankful for that little. Bring it to Christ; let it feed upon him; and thy mustard seed will grow till it becomes a tree. The same is true of the gospel throughout the world. We need never be afraid because we happen to be few in number. If we have got the truth, the truth will live; and if the truth be small as the mustard seed, there is life in it — vitality in it, and it is sure to grow ere long. We must not be afraid to be in the minority. Majorities are not always right. Are they ever? Perhaps sometimes.

[Luke 13:20-21](#). *And again he said, Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God? It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.*

Some read this as a parable to set forth the power of evil, and I do not doubt that it does set it forth. At the same time it sets forth the power of good, too, for it is put side by side with the other as the likeness of the kingdom of God. And truth in the soul does work, and ferment, and permeate the entire nature, if it be placed there.

[Luke 13:22-23](#). *And he went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem. Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved?*

That is a question that I have heard a great many times. What is the fascination that makes men so fond of asking it? I do think that some ask it as if they almost hoped that there would be few. If they do not go to our Ebenezer or Rehoboth, what can become of them? Surely you cannot expect that there should be any good come to those that do not frequent Salem and Enod. What must they hope? In that spirit the question is often asked; but, brethren, may God lift us up above that spirit, and make us desire that there should be multitudes saved. I suppose that one of the surprises of heaven will be to see vastly many more there than we ever dreamt would reach that place. Jesus Christ gave a very practical answer. It was no answer, and yet was the best of answers.

[Luke 13:23](#). *And he said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, wilt seek to enter in, and shall not be able.*

Make a push for it; agonize for it; for many will seek — not strive, but merely seek. Or, to put another meaning into it, strive now to enter in at the strait gate, for many will be unable, when it is too late; and that, doubtless, is the sense of the passage.

Verses 11-35

[Luke 13:11-12](#). *And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself. And when Jesus saw her, he called her to him, and said unto her, woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity.*

Observe the word “Behold” here. Sometimes, in old books, they used to put a hand in the margin to call attention to something special in the text, so, this word seems as though nobody in the synagogue was worthy of such special notice as the most forlorn and desolate individual there: “a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and who bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself.” It was to be a happy sabbath for her, though she did not know it. She used to go to the synagogue, though it must have been painful for her to be present; possibly, she could not even see the minister, she was so “bowed together.” It must have been a great surprise to her when the Saviour called her to him, and said to her, “Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity.”

[Luke 13:13](#). *And he laid his hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.*

I should think she did. We have no record of what she said; she may have merely cried out, “Hallelujah”; but the very look of her, her streaming

eyes filled with gratitude, her face beaming with delight, all tended to glorify God. Even if she had said nothing, her being made straight would of itself have glorified God; and, just as that once crooked woman could glorify God, so can a guilty sinner, crushed and helpless, glorify God. It was when Christ's hands were laid upon her that she was made straight. Oh, that he would lay his hands on some of you! May this be to you the saving Sabbath of the year, that God may be glorified in you.

[Luke 13:14](#). *And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, Poor soul! Surely he was more crooked than the infirm woman was: but, alas! he did not get healed.*

[Luke 13:14](#). *Because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day.*

The Lord then answered him; and what an answer it was!

[Luke 13:15-17](#). *The Lord thou answered him, and said, Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering. And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day! And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed; and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him.*

His reply was unanswerable.

[Luke 13:18](#). *Then said he,*

They were in a right frame for hearing, having been rendered attentive by their admiration for his miraculous work and his wondrous word.

[Luke 13:18-22](#). *Unto what is the kingdom of God like, and whereunto shall I resemble it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden; and it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it, and again he said, Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God? It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened. And he went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem.*

Practically, that is what he was always doing, "journeying toward Jerusalem," toward that great climax of his life, his substitutionary death upon the cross of Calvary.

[Luke 13:23](#). *Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved?*

That is a question that many have asked, and some have vainly tried to answer. What did Jesus reply?

[Luke 13:23-24](#). *And he said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate:*

Instead of gratifying idle curiosity, he excites to diligence in seeking entrance into the narrow way.

[Luke 13:24](#). *For many, say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.*

They will only seek, not strive, to enter in. There will also come, in the future, a time when they may seek as they will, and strive as they will, to enter in but it will be too late then. Once having passed into another world, there will be no hope for any seeker or striver.

[Luke 13:25](#). *When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, —*

They do not like to go away, they are reluctant to meet their final doom. Oh, that they had been wise enough to cry for mercy when it was to be had! Now they stand, and begin to knock; and more than that, they begin to plead.

[Luke 13:25](#). *Saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us;*

All this earnestness, all this deference, all this reverence have come too late.

[Luke 13:25-26](#). *And he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets.*

“We were regular hearers of the Word; we observed all the usual forms of religion, we even went to the communion table.”

[Luke 13:27-28](#). *But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out.*

Driven away, yet they could see the saintly ones there, and see their own kith and kin there, for they were Jews, and they could see. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets” there, but they themselves were cast out; and what was worse for them:

[Luke 13:29](#). *And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God.*

Rank outsiders, far off heathen, outrageous sinners, harlots; “they shall come,” and repent, and “sit down in the kingdom of God,” and this shall cut to the quick those who were hearers of the Word, but who perished because they were workers of iniquity.

[Luke 13:30](#). *And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.*

Many who, today, seem to be unlikely to be converted, those who are “last” in character, will yet be “first” in repentance; and there who are “first” in privileges, and even in hopefulness, who will be “last” in the great day of account. May we take home to our hearts this solemn warning!

[Luke 13:31](#). *The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him, get thee out, and depart hence: for Herod will kill thee.*

Think of the Pharisees being concerned about Christ’s life! What an affectation of regard! Yet it was only affectation. We must always be on our guard against the foes of God even when they speak most fairly; indeed, it is their agreeable, affectionate words that we have most cause to dread.

[Luke 13:32](#). *And he said unto them, Go ye, and tell that fox,*

Jesus called Herod a fox because he wanted to get Christ out of his territory without having the opprobrium of driving him away. So he sent this roundabout message to try to make a coward of the Lord, and to get him to go off on his own account.

[Luke 13:32](#). *Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.*

That is, “I shall stay my full time here, while I have work to do, I shall do it, and I am not going away until it is finished. I am not afraid of Herod threatening to kill me, for I am immortal till my work is done.” He is not even flurried, or put about by such a message as that. Besides when men mean to bite, they do not usually bark; and if Herod had meant to kill Christ just then, he would not have told him what he was going to do.

[Luke 13:33](#). *Nevertheless I must walk today, and tomorrow, and the day following for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.*

What a sad thing for Christ to have to say! So many holy men had been murdered in Jerusalem that he roughly put it as being true, in the main, that all the prophets were martyred there, the exceptions only proving the rule.

[Luke 13:34](#). *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killed the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy*

children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!

There was their weakness, they were like a brood of chickens; there was his power to protect them, like a hen gathers her brood under her wings; yet there was their infatuation, that they would rather perish than come and be sheltered beneath his almighty wings: “and ye would not.”

[Luke 13:35](#). *Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.*

There will be no true glory for Jerusalem until the Jews are converted; there will be no return of Christ to that royal city until they shall welcome him with louder hosannas than they gave when he rode in triumph through the streets, and entered into the temple. The Lord grant that we may never reject Christ! Let us run, even now, like little chicks, and hide beneath the wings of the Eternal.

Verses 18-34

[Luke 13:18](#). *Then said he, Unto what is the kingdom of God like? and whereunto shall I resemble it?*

For men learn much by resemblances, and the things which are seen are frequently helpful to us in seeking to set forth the things which are not seen. Knowing that God is one in all that he has done, we are often able to learn from one part of his works to understand another. What, then, is God’s kingdom like? Is it like a mighty army marching with banners and trumpets? No. Is it like the raging sea, rolling onwards and sweeping everything before it? Not so; at all events, it is not so visibly.

[Luke 13:19](#). *It is like a grain of mustard seed,—*

You can hardly see it; you can, however, taste it. Try it, and you shall find it pungent enough; but it is so small that you may easily pass it by: “It is like a grain of mustard seed,”

[Luke 13:19](#). *Which a man took, and cast into his garden;*

It must be sown in prepared soil; and there is “a man” who knows how to cast it so that it shall fall where it will live, and where it will grow.

[Luke 13:19](#). *And it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it.*

“The fowls of the air,” that might once have eaten it, “lodged in the branches of it.” See, in this emblem, an illustration of the growth of the kingdom of God, the vitality of the truth of God, the energy with which,

from a small beginning, God's kingdom advances to a great ending. Have you this mustard seed in your heart? It may seem a very little thing even to yourself; others may scarcely perceive it yet; but let it alone, and it will grow. Yet it will not grow without watering. Seeds may lie long in the ground, but they will not sprout until the rain has fallen to moisten the earth. Pray God to send showers of blessing upon your soul tonight, so that, even if you have no more than a grain of mustard seed in your heart, it may begin to grow. Is the grain of mustard seed sending up its shoot above the ground? Then pray God that it may grow yet more till it shall not only be just visible, but shall be so prominent that it must be seen, that those who once hated it will be compelled to see it, and to wonder at it as they behold the birds of the air coming and lodging in its branches. I pray that, in many hearts here, the grace of God may not long continue to be a small thing, but that it may advance to tree-like stature, till you shall yield comfort to fifties and hundreds, and many of you shall be like some of the trees in this great city and its suburbs. Did you ever notice them, at nightfall, when all the sparrows of the street come and lodge in the branches, and merrily twitter ere they go to their rest? There are some Christians like those trees; they have hearts so big, and they do for Christ's service so much, that they harbour hundreds of poor little birds of the air that else would hardly know where to go for shelter. God make us such Christians that we shall be a blessing to multitudes all around us!

[Luke 13:20-21](#). *And again he said, Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God? It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.*

Some expositors think that this is a picture of the kingdom of the devil, but it does not say so. If our Lord had meant to represent the power of evil, he would have given us some intimation of that kind, but he has given us none. He means to describe exactly what he had described before, for he says, "Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God?" The leaven is buried, as it were: "hid in three measures of meal;" it is lost, covered up. Let it alone; by the force that is within itself it begins to work its way in the meal, and it leavens all around it until, at last, the whole three measures of meal are permeated by it, and made to feel and own its power. So is it with the grace of God where it is placed within a human heart, and so is it with the kingdom of God wherever its influence is exerted among the sons of men.

[Luke 13:22-23](#). *And he went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem. Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved?*

Oh, that question! Have you never asked it yourself? Have you never heard it asked? And there are some people who are very pleased when the answer is, “Yes, very few indeed will be saved; and they all go to Salem, or Zoar, or Rehoboth, or little Bethel.” There are some who are not quite certain whether all who go even there will be saved; they seem to delight to cut and pare down to the very lowest the number of those who will be saved. With such a spirit as that, I trust we do not sympathize for a moment. Certainly, our Lord does not; listen to his reply to the question, “Lord, are there few that be saved?”

23; 24. *And he said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.*

For your own part, take it for granted that there will be so few that ever will enter at all that you will have to push for it to get through the gate: “Strive to enter in at the narrow gate.” If you are not narrow in your own mind,— and it is a pity that you should be,— yet still recollect that the gate into heaven is narrow, and make up your mind that there is no getting through it except with many a push and many a squeeze.

[Luke 13:25-26](#). *When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets.*

See; there are some men who will not think of going to heaven till it is too late; and then, when they get to heaven’s gate, and find it shut, they will begin to plead for admittance though they pleaded not for it before. When they might have had the blessing, they would not have it; and when they cannot have it, then they grow earnest in crying for it.

[Luke 13:27-28](#). *But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out.*

Ejected, violently driven away, as those who are abhorrent in God’s sight because you despised his mercy.

[Luke 13:29-34](#). *And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last. The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him, Get thee out, and depart hence: for Herod will kill thee. And he said unto them, Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected. Nevertheless I must walk today, and tomorrow, and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!*

What a terrible contrast! "I would,.... and ye would not." May the Lord Jesus never have to say that to any of us!

[LUKE CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 14

Verses 1-6

14:1-6. *And it came to pass, as he went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the sabbath day, that they watched him. And, behold, there was a certain man before him which had the dropsy. And Jesus answering spake unto the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day? And they held their peace. And he took him, and healed him, and let him go; and answered them, saying, Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath day? And they could not answer him again to these things.*

Christ's question was unanswerable unless they wished to condemn themselves. Now I want you kindly to turn to the next evangelist, in whose Gospel you will find the record of the fifth miracle which our Saviour wrought on the Sabbath-day. (See John 5:1-9)

This exposition consisted of readings from Luke 4:33-36; Luke 6:6-11; Luke 13:10-17; Luke 14:1-6; John 5:1-9; ND 9:1-14.

Verses 7-24

Luke 14:7. *And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms; —*

This parable was by far the best part of the entertainment of the day: —

Luke 14:7-9. *Saying unto them, When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honourable man than thou be hidden of him; and he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room.*

For, of course, the next room is full, and the next, and the only vacant seat, when the feast has begun, will probably be in the very lowest room of the house.

Luke 14:10. *But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room, that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee.*

Note that our Saviour was not just then talking to his disciples, or else he would have given more spiritual reasons for his advice; but, speaking to the people who were gathered as guests at the Pharisee's house, he appealed to them with an argument suitable to themselves. We may, however, extract the marrow from this bone. Let us not covet the highest place; let us not desire honour among men. In the Church of God the way upward is downward. He that will do the lowest work shall have the highest honour. Our Master washed his disciples' feet, and we are never more honoured than when we are permitted to imitate his example.

Luke 14:11. *For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.*

There is a conspiracy of heaven and earth and hell to put down proud men, neither good nor bad, the highest nor the lowest, can endure those who are self-exalted; but if you are willing to take your right place, which is probably the lowest, you shall soon find honour in the midst of your brethren.

Luke 14:12. *Then said he also to him that bade him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbor; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompence be made thee.*

Our Saviour, you see, keeps to one line of instruction. It was a feast, so he used the feast to teach another lesson. It is always well, when men's

minds are running in a certain direction, to make use of that particular current. When a feast is uppermost in the minds of men, it is no use starting another subject. So the Saviour rides upon the back of the banquet, making it to be his steed. Note his advice to his host: "Try to avoid doing that for which you will be recompensed. If you are rewarded for it the transaction is over; but if not, then it stands recorded in the book of God, and it will be recompensed to you in the great day of account."

Luke 14:13-14. *But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.*

It should be your ambition to have something set down to your credit "at the resurrection of the just." If you do someone a kindness with a view to gaining gratitude, you will probably be disappointed; and even if you should succeed, what is the gratitude worth? You have burned your firework, you have seen the brief blaze, and there is an end of it. But if you get no present return for your holy charity, so much the better for you.

Luke 14:15-16. *And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God. Then said he unto him, —*

As if to prove what a privilege it is to be permitted to "eat bread" there, and that the persons who appear most likely to do so will never taste of it and that the most unlikely persons will be brought into it, Jesus "said unto him," —

Luke 14:16-17. *A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: and sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready.*

They had accepted the invitation, so they were pledged to be present but, in the meantime, they had changed their minds with regard to their intended host, and they were unwilling to grace his feast.

Luke 14:18. *And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused.*

Yet it was supper time, and people do not generally go to see pieces of ground at night; and if the man had bought the land he ought to have seen it before he bought it. People do not generally buy land without looking at it. A bad excuse is worse than none; and this is one of those excuses which will not hold water for a minute.

Luke 14:19. *And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused.*

He pretended that he had bought five yoke of oxen without proving them, and that he wanted to prove them after he had bought them, when, of course, he could not cancel the bargain: a likely story! But, when men want to make an excuse, and they have no truth to raw as the raw material, they can always make one out of a lie.

Luke 14:20. *And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.*

This man did not ask to be excused; he had married a wife, so that settled the matter, of course he could not go to the feast.

Luke 14:21. *So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things.*

Every true servant of Christ should go to his Lord, and tell him what reception his Master's message has had. After service, we sometimes have an enquirers' meeting; but after every sermon there ought to be a meeting of the servant with his Lord to tell the result of the errand on which he has been sent. Sometimes, as in this case, it will be a very painful meeting, as the servant tells how his Master's message has been despised, and his invitation rejected.

Luke 14:21. *When the master of the house being angry —*

Notice what the Lord does even when he is angry, he just invents some new way of showing mercy to men: "The master of the house being angry"

Luke 14:21. *Said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.*

Happy anger that explodes in blessing! The justly angry master turns away from the bidden ones who had insulted him, and sends for those who had not hitherto been bidden, that they might come to the feast.

Luke 14:22. *And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room.*

They fetched in all the poor people, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind whom they could find, it was a great gathering, and a strange gathering, yet there was still room for more guests at the banquet.

Luke 14:23. *And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.*

“Bring in highway-men and hedge-birds, those that have no place whereon to lay their heads; fetch them in by force if necessary, ‘that my house may be filled.’”

Luke 14:24. *For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.*

They were invited, yet they would not come; but others shall come, and fill the tables, and the great feast shall be furnished with guests. No provisions of mercy will ever be wasted. If you who are the sons and daughters of godly parents, or you who are the regular hearers of the Word, will not have Christ, then others shall. If you hear, but hear in vain, then the rank outsiders shall be brought in, and they shall feed upon the blessed provisions of the infinite mercy of God, and God shall be glorified; but terrible will be your doom when the great Giver of the gospel feast says concerning you and those like you, “None of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.”

Verses 25-35

Luke 14:25. *And there went great multitudes with him:*

During at least a part of his earthly ministry, Christ was very popular. The people crowded to his feet, and they were willing to make him a king; but you must have observed that he was always faithful in speaking to the populace, he did not flatter them. He dealt in the same fashion also with those who professed to be his followers. He winnowed the heap that was laid upon the floor, and drove away the chaff from the midst of the wheat.

Luke 14:25-26. *And he turned, and said unto them, If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.*

Do not misunderstand this passage. Our Lord does not use the word “hate” in our common acceptation of the term, for no man would hate his own life; but he means that the love of all these must be secondary to the love we bear to him. Compared with our love to our Lord, all lower love must be more like hate. We must be willing to give up everything — to give up even ourselves — our entire selves — to him, for Christ will have all or nothing. He will never divide the human heart with any rival. If we profess to serve him, we must have him for our only Master, and not attempt to serve two masters. I fear that this truth greatly needs to be enforced nowadays, for we have numbers of so-called Christians, who are worldlings first, and then Christians afterwards. We have a great many professors who

might be accurately described by the words of a little girl concerning her father. When someone asked her, "Is your father a Christian?" she replied, "Yes, but he has not worked much at it lately." There are plenty of that sort. Christianity is their trade, their business, their profession; but they have not worked much at it lately, they carry it on very slightly indeed. Let it not be so with us; if we would be followers of Christ, our whole hearts must be his.

Luke 14:27. *And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.*

If there is any cross-bearing involved in Christianity, — such as the cross of holy living, or the cross of believing old-fashioned doctrines, and not being "abreast of the times," — if there is any sort of cross which is involved in the conscientious discharge of our duty as followers of Christ, we must bear it, or else we cannot be his disciples. Our Lord's words are very clear and explicit: " 'And whosoever doth not bear his cross,' — be he who he may, whatever pretensions or professions he may make, — if he does not bear his cross, 'and come after me, cannot be my disciple.' "

Luke 14:28-30. *For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish.*

Do you not think that there are a great many towers of that kind about in our day? I mean, unfinished Christian characters, persons who profess to be followers of Christ, but are not. They just exhibit to you their own shortcomings; they are people with good intentions, who did make some attempt to follow Jesus; but, since it involved too much self-denial, they were not able to go that length, so they turned back, and walked no more with him. They began to build a tower, but never finished it. May God, in his mercy, prevent you and me becoming a laughing-stock to all eternity! I believe that, in the last great day, and forever, those persons, who knew enough about the gospel to wish to be Christians, and who were somewhat actuated by right motives, but yet who never went so far as to give up their hearts to Christ, will stand forth as monuments of their own folly and even the demons in hell will point at them, and say, "These men began to build, and were not able to finish." Such persons will be unable to answer that contemptuous sneer. If you have conscience enough to begin to follow

Christ, even reason itself requires you to go the whole length. If you know that it is right for you to do so, why do you not go through with it? If you are sufficiently convinced of its rightness to go as far as you do, why not go still farther? God grant that you may! Better never begin to build than to commence without having counted the cost, and then to find that you have not sufficient to finish.

Luke 14:31-32. *Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace.*

If you cannot fight the world, the flesh, and the devil, — if there is no power that can help you to do it, or if you are not willing to be helped by the only power that can help you, — if you will not surrender yourself to Christ that he may baffle all the hosts of the adversary, then it is of no use for you to begin the war.

Luke 14:33. *So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.*

In Christ's days, and afterwards, discipleship usually involved the absolute giving up of everything that his followers had, for those were times of persecution; and if such seasons should come to us, we must have such love to Christ that, for his sake, we could forsake all that we have; otherwise we cannot be his disciples.

Luke 14:34. *Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be seasoned?*

Christianity is good; but if the very life has gone out of it, what can you do with it? A dead professor is the most corrupt thing under heaven. Some there are who think that God's salt can lose its savor, and yet get it back again. I remember one who told me that he knew a person who had been born again four times. That doctrine of re-re-re-regeneration is one that I have never found in the Word of God. I believe that true regeneration never fails to take effect, and that it never loses that effect. It begets within the soul a life that cannot die; but, if that life could die, it could never be brought back again. The apostle Paul puts this matter beyond dispute in Hebrews 6:4-6 : "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world

to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.”

Luke 14:35. *It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out.*

A dead profession of religion is utterly useless; and if it could be possible that a man should be really quickened by the Spirit of God, and yet that the new life should depart from him, he would be in a hopeless case indeed.

Luke 14:35. *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

Let all of us give good heed to this injunction, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

[LUKE CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 15

Verses 1-32

We have read this chapter together many times; possibly some of us have read it hundreds of times; yet whenever we read it, we always find something fresh in it. It is ever bright and sparkling, full of diamonds and other precious gems of truth.

[Luke 15:1-3](#). *Then drew near unto him and the publicans and sinner, for to hear him, and the Pharisees, and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them. And he spake this parable unto them,*

The deepest feelings of our Saviour's heart seem to have been brought out by the two classes of persons here mentioned, his pity and compassion towards the sinful, and his righteous anger at the perpetual objections of the hypocritical Pharisees and scribes. The one class caused his heart to overflow with love, the other excited his burning indignation, yet, even then, his soul was moved with pity and tenderness toward the wandering and erring. We ought to be grateful to the Pharisees for having led our Lord to utter the three wondering parables which we are about to read. Luke says, “He spake this parable unto them,” implying that the three are really one, a picture in three panels. The whole plan of salvation is not to be found in either of the parables by itself, but in all three combined. Some points

omitted in any one of them will be found in one of the others. “He spake this parable unto them, saying,” —

[Luke 15:3-7](#). *Saying, what man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing: And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friend and neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for have found my sheep which was lost. I say into you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.*

The shepherd had an extraordinary joy in his flock through the wandering and recovery of that one sheep. If they had all kept in the fold, and none of them had strayed away, he would have been glad, but there would have been a sort of tameness and sameness about his constant satisfaction with them; but that wandering sheep stirred up other emotions in his heart, and when he had found it, he experienced a new joy, a higher joy than he would otherwise have known. So, though sin is a great evil, yet it has been overruled by God in such a way as to introduce a new joy into the universe. Songs of praise, that would never have made the angels’ harps to ring, are now heard in Paradise. There would never have been any repentance if there had never been any sin, and the love of the great and good Shepherd towards wandering sheep would never have been revealed if no sheep had ever wandered from the fold. I suppose it was some such feeling as this that caused Augustine somewhat rashly to exclaim, concerning the fall, “O beata culpa!” — O happy fault, which has thus made manifest the abounding mercy of God! Looked at in one aspect all sin is an unutterable calamity; but as it has had the effect of displaying still more of the matchless mercy of God in the person of Jesus Christ, we see how God brings forth good out of evil. The chief point of the parable is the shepherd’s joy derived from the finding of the lost sheep. Our Saviour needed no other reason for looking after publicans and sinners than the fact that he would get far more joy out of them than he would out of the Pharisees and scribes, even if they were what they professed to be, “just persons, which need no repentance.” This first panel of the picture specially sets forth the work of the Son of God. Why was not the Father’s work put first, as the Trinity is “the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost”? Why is it also that, in the Benediction, Paul writes, “The grace of the Lord Jesus

Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all.” Why, because the love of Christ is the first thing that the sinner apprehends. Our first Christian experience is not, as a rule, a knowledge of the Holy Spirit or the Father; but, to our consciousness, it is Jesus Christ who is first revealed to us. I think it is for this reason that the work of the Son of God is here first set forth.

[Luke 15:8-10](#). *Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbors together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost. Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.*

As I have already said concerning the lost sheep, there was a new joy over the recovery of the lost silver. The woman always rejoiced over the pieces of silver, but that one particular piece had been the cause of new joy, the joy which is experienced whenever the sorrow of loss is outweighed by the joy of finding again that which was lost. Is this woman intended to represent the Church of Christ, and is she thus set before us because the Church is the great agent under the control of the Divine Spirit, in seeking the lost, carrying the lighted candle of the Word, sweeping with the besom of earnest, faithful preaching, applying the law of the Lord to the conscience of man, and turning everything upside down until, at last, the lost piece of silver is found? If so, this second panel of the picture sets forth the work of the Holy Spirit as wrought through the Church of Christ.

[Luke 15:11-13](#). *And he said, A certain man had two sons and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after*

—

For sin is very rapid in its development, and sinners are often in great haste to get away from God. The young man’s heart was wrong already, or he would not have wanted to be his own master. He was already away in the far country so far as his heart was concerned, and it was not long before his body followed: “Not many days after” —

[Luke 15:13-15](#). *The younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land;*

and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

Probably, that was the best thing he could do for him; and, usually, when the world does the best it can for a sinner, it sets him feeding swine. It was the most degrading employment to which a Hebrew could be put; and, in like manner, sin, before it is finished, bringeth forth degradation on the way to bringing forth death.

[Luke 15:16](#). *And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.*

“He would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat,” but he could not, for he was a man, and not one of the swine. Worldlings are happy in their own poor way, and I, for one, never grudge them their husks. One never craves the wash that is given to the pigs, we let them have their trough as full as they please, and never want so much as a taste of it; so, when sinners are full of worldly joys, we may not envy them, and we may scarcely blame them. Let the swine have their husks. Once, we too would fain have filled our belly with them; and if we did not, it was not because we would not, but because we could not.

[Luke 15:17](#). *And when he came to himself, —*

For sin is insanity. He was out of his mind while he was acting so foolishly:

“When he came to himself,”

[Luke 15:17-19](#). *He said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.*

It was the knowledge that there was plenty in his father's house that led him back; and you may depend upon it that the preaching of full salvation rich in blessing, is a strong inducement to a sinner to cry, “I will arise and go to my Father.” This prodigal son might never have gone back if his father had kept a miserly house with a scanty table; but he knew that even the servants in the kitchen had “bread enough and to spare,” his father never stinted them, they had what they needed, and there was always more than they could eat, so there was no need for his son to “perish with hunger.” In like manner, the extraordinary bounty of God in Christ Jesus the richness of his free redemption is, I doubt not, the means of bringing many a starving

soul to Christ. The prodigal said that the servants had “bread enough and to spare.” There are some who seem to think that, in Christ, there is only just bread enough, but we believe that the largest possible idea of the value of his redemption may be indulged, and, oftentimes, the thought that first enters the sinner’s ear and heart is that there is “bread enough and to spare, so why should not he have some of the spare bread, at any rate? That was the way that the prodigal argued; he felt sure that his father could feed another hired servant, so he resolved that he would ask to be engaged in that capacity; yet you know that he never did ask that, his father stopped him before he could make that request.

[Luke 15:20](#). *And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him,*

Perhaps, before he saw his father: “his father saw him,”

[Luke 15:20](#). *And had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.*

Matthew Henry’s comment on this verse is excellent: “His father saw him.’ Here were eyes of mercy. ‘And had compassion.’ Here were bowels of mercy. ‘And ran.’ Here were feet of mercy. ‘And fell on his neck.’ Here were arms of mercy. ‘And kissed him.’ Here were lips of mercy.” It was all mercy from first to last.

[Luke 15:21](#). *And the son said unto him,*

The father kissed his son before he had time to say anything; and divine compassion is swifter even than our prayers.

[Luke 15:21-22](#). *Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him;*

He did not let him finish his prayer with the request that he might be taken on as a hired servant; that part which was legal he stopped with a kiss on his mouth, and then he said to his servants, “Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him;”

[Luke 15:22-24](#). *And put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.*

This, again, was a new joy in that family circle. There was joy when the elder brother was born, and joy when the younger son came into the household; but this joy over his return was one that they never would have

known if he had not gone away. So, there is joy to be got even out of sinners. Christ's object was to show that, bad as the publicans and other gross sinners were, and despised as they were by the Pharisees and scribes, yet there was joy to be got out of them. By their salvation, the very heart of the great Father is rejoiced.

[Luke 15:25](#). *Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing.*

The elder brother in our day says, "I do not believe in these revival services. I like regular, orderly proceedings, and I do not approve of these crowds of people coming to hear the Word under such undue excitement as is sure to result." That elder brother thought he knew a great many things. He did not get carried away by excitement, as other people did, he was too old for that, he was a man of very proper habits, and he liked everything done in a cold orthodox style.

[Luke 15:26](#). *And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant.*

"What are you all at? Have you gone out of your minds? Why are you all dancing? Who is to pay for that music? You had better have been along with me out in the fields at work. What is the meaning of all this merriment?"

[Luke 15:27](#). *And he said unto him, Thy brother is come: and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound.*

These servants spoke as some of us have told to others what the Lord has done when souls have been saved, the unregenerate quickened, and those that were far off from God, by wicked works, have come back to him. We have told it all out, in the simplicity of our hearts, and have been so glad to tell the good tidings that we felt as if we could keep on dancing to the music while we were telling the story.

[Luke 15:28](#). *And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and entreated him.*

I never know which to admire the more, — the love of the father in going to meet the returning prodigal, or in going out to talk with this coldhearted elder brother. He was a son, but he had not the true spirit of his father, he had fallen into a very wrong state of mind, just like certain Christians that I know, who have always been very proper, and who have little sympathy with those who have been great sinners. They seem as if they do not want to see such people as these brought to the Saviour. "Why!"

they exclaim, “there are girls from the street, and men that have been burglars, and all sorts of rabble being brought into the church.” I have heard such remarks, and I have seen the same sort of spirit displayed in the looks of others who have not liked to say what they thought. Yet they themselves were no better than others by nature, though grace has done much in restraining them from the sin into which others have fallen; and it was wrong for them to talk as if they were sheer legalists, as this Pharisaic elder brother did.

[Luke 15:29](#). *And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends:*

A Christian of this stamp seems to say to the Lord, “I have been thy child all these years, yet I am still full of doubts and fears. I have none of the high joys that I see these other people have. ‘Thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends.’ I am chastened every morning, and I go sighing all the day long. I seem to get but little comfort; yet here are these young folk, who have not been saved a week, and they seem to be full of assurance, and they are as happy as ever they can be. Surely, they cannot belong to the tried family of God; how can they be sincere with all that music and dancing? I cannot endure it, for I never had such an experience.”

[Luke 15:30-31](#). *But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.*

Think of that, you who are the Lord’s people, but who have fallen into a grumbling state of heart. Are you not ever with your Lord, and is not all that he has yours? If you have never had a kid to make merry with your friends, whose fault is that? Your Father never denied it to you. All in his house is yours, so take the good that he provides for you, and rejoice over it, for then you will be in a fit state to go to meet your poor returning prodigal brother, and to welcome him with a smiling face and a gladsome heart.

[Luke 15:32](#). *It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost and is found.*

After that reply, there was nothing more that could be said, even by the grumbling elder brother.

Verses 11-32

[Luke 15:11-13](#). *And he said, A certain man had two sons: And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.*

It was an act of ingratitude to leave his father at all, an act of extreme folly to turn his father's goods to ill-account.

[Luke 15:14](#). *And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.*

And the sinner's greatest all will be spent one day; the pleasures of sin are but for a season; the strongest sinew in an arm of flesh will one day crack; the flowers that grow in man's garden will one day fade; man may think he has an eternity of pleasure before him, but if he is looking to the flesh for it, it shall be but for an hour.

[Luke 15:15](#). *And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; And he sent him into his fields to feed swine.*

At the very best the comforts of this world are ignominious to a man; they degrade him; as it was a very degrading employment for a Jew to feed swine so the comfort the world can give to a man does but degrade his noble spirit.

[Luke 15:16](#). *And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat and no man gave unto him.*

The prodigal cannot be brought any lower; he is made to herd with the swine, and he envies even them, because they are satisfied with the husks; he cannot eat of the same, and, therefore, he envies even the brutes. Surely, when a sinner becomes fully convinced of sin, he may well envy even the sparrows or the serpents because they have not sinned.

[Luke 15:17-20](#). *And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him.*

Remember Matthew Henry's paraphrase — here were eyes of mercy.

[Luke 15:20](#). *And had compassion,*

Here was a heart of mercy

[Luke 15:20](#). *And ran,*

Here were legs of mercy.

[Luke 15:20](#). *And fell on his neck,*

Here were deeds of mercy.

[Luke 15:20](#). *And kissed him.*

And here were lips of mercy.

[Luke 15:21-22](#). *And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants,*

Here were words of mercy, wonders of mercy, and, indeed, it is all mercy throughout.

[Luke 15:22-25](#). *Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. Now his elder son was in the field:*

That is where these over-good elder sons always are; they are out at work, they are not at home in communion with God; they are in the field. Do not ask who the elder brother was; he is here tonight there is many an envious moralist ay, and an envious professor, too, who feels it hard that profligate offenders should be pardoned.

[Luke 15:25-27](#). *And as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. And he was angry,*

He did not want the fatted calf killed, if this reprobate brother were allowed to come in at the back door, and to eat with the servants, he thought that quite good enough, but for this rebel to be put upon an equality with himself — he could not bear that!

[Luke 15:28](#). *And would not go in: therefore came his father out, and entreated him.*

See the tenderness of this father; the same arms which embraced the sinning one were also ready to clasp the self-righteous one. I always feel great pity and great admiration for this dear, dear father. What with a bad son and a good son he had two bad sons, for this good son, you see, had got in a pet just as I have seen some real Christians get into a very un-Christian frame of mind. Well, they do not like somehow receiving into their

company the women that have gone astray — the men that have lost their reputation. He was angry, and would not go in, and now his father crowned his love. He ran to meet one son and now he comes out to reason with another who is unnaturally and ungraciously angry with his father.

[Luke 15:29](#). *And he answering said, to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends:*

I know the brother. He says, “I have been a consistent Christian: I have been diligent in the service of God: I have abounded in prayer, and yet all the day long have I been plagued and chastened every morning. I do not get much joy: I have such a sight and sense of temptation and sin that I am generally low spirited. I seldom get a drop of full assurance. I never get a kid given me, that I might make merry with my friends. Those who are under the law never do make merry. You never knew a man yet that was trying to save himself by keeping the commandments of God that could dare to make merry. No, they have to draw long faces, and well they may, for they have a long task before them; they put on a garb of sadness, being of a sad countenance, as the hypocrites are.

[Luke 15:30-32](#) *But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.*

And so, dear friends, there is more joy over the prodigal when he returns than over the man who thinks he never has been astray.

Verses 25-32

Most of us recognize the beauty of this parable as it concerns the prodigal, and his boundless forgiveness by the father, but few of us probably have seen how the elder brother has his portrait painted also by our Lord, and how he sets forth the self-righteous professor who hates to have prodigals made much of.

[Luke 15:25](#). *Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing.*

This was the better one of the two. I have heard him often greatly blamed, and so he deserves to be; but, for all that, he was a true son. He was not at home. He was out at work. There are some Christians that are all for

work, and never seem to have any fellowship and communion. They are always active, but they are not always contemplative. He was in the field.

[Luke 15:26](#). *And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant.*

He was a gloomy spirit, good, solid, regular, constant, but not very joyful. He took things rather severely, so he did not understand what this amusement could mean. "Some of the Salvation Army got in here," he said, "some of those boisterous Methodist people got her, and I do not like it. I am more regular than that. I do not like these rows and uproars. He asked of the servant what these things meant.

[Luke 15:27-28](#). *And he said unto him, Thy brother is come: and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound, And he was angry, and would not go in:*

No, I dare say he was glad his brother was back, but he did not like such a fuss made over him, glad to see a wandering one restored, but why, why, why should there be all this extravagance of joy concerning this wandering young fellow, who had been no better than he should be? Why all this delight? And there are some kinds of Christians who always feel that when there is a sinner introduced into the church, "Well, I hope that it will turn out a genuine case," and always that is the first thought. They are afraid that it cannot be. They have never sinned in that way, They have been kept, by the grace of God, from outward transgression, and they are half afraid to hear of these outrageous sinners being brought in, and so much joy made over them. "He was angry, and would not go in."

[Luke 15:28](#). *Therefore came his father out, and intreated him.*

He was worth fetching in. There was a good deal of solid worth in his character, and his father kindly came to ask him to come in and share the joy.

[Luke 15:29](#). *And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee*

You may read it "slave for thee."

[Luke 15:29](#). *neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends:*

Here have I been constant in the house of prayer, regular at my Sunday School class, and yet I get little or no joy of it. I go on just in the regular path of duty but I have no music and dancing. I have a great many doubts and fears, very little exhilaration, very little delight.

[Luke 15:30](#). *But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.*

He has been a great sinner, and he is newly converted, and he has got all the joy. He has been running anyhow, and yet he is full of assurance full of delight, full of confidence. How can this be? I am a staid Christian having but slight joy, and he is but newly converted, and confident and full of delight. Thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. Even one of the little kid goats thou hast not give me. Thou has given him the fatted calf.

[Luke 15:31](#). *And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.*

Why did not this son wake up to his privileges? Instead of not having a kid, he might have had whatever he liked. “All that I have is thine.” He had been put into such a position as that, instead of being badly treated, as he, perhaps, would half accuse his father of treating him. “Son, thou art ever with me; thou livest at my table. My house is thy house. I love thee and delight in thee. All that I have is thine.”

[Luke 15:32](#). *It was meet*

It was right, it was proper, it Was fitting —

[Luke 15:32](#). *That we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother.*

“You call him my son, but he is your brother, and I remind you of it — this thy brother.”

[Luke 15:32](#). *Was dead, and is alive again: and was lost, and is found.*

So if there be any here that do not take the joy which they ought in the conversion of great sinners, let them hear the gentle persuasive voice of God. You, as believers, have everything. Christ is yours. Heaven is yours. You are always with God, and all that he has belongs to you. But it is proper and fit that, when a sinner returns from the error of his ways, they should ring the bells of heaven and make a fuss over him, for he was dead and is alive again. I hope that you and I will never catch the spirit of the elder brother. Yet I remember that Krummacher says that he found that same spirit in himself sometimes. There was a man in the village where Krummacher lived, who was a great drunkard and everything that was bad; and on a sudden he came into a very large sum of money and became a wealthy man. Krummacher felt, “Well, this hardly looks like the right thing — so many good, honest, hard-working people in the parish still remaining poor, and this worthless man has suddenly become wealthy and well-to-do.”

It seemed a strange way in the order of providence. Oh! we ought to rejoice and be glad when another person prospers, and wish that his prosperity may be blessed to him. I remember a minister years ago, when first Mr. Moody came, saying that he did not believe that Mr. Moody was sent of God “because,” said he, “I find that many of the people who are converted under him never went to a place of worship before. It is only the riff-raff that are brought in.” There is a nasty elder brother spirit. The riff-raff were just the people that we wanted to bring in, and if they had never been to a place of worship before, it was time that they should go. It was a mercy that they were brought in. Oh! instead of ever sniffing at sinners as if we were better than they, let us welcome them with all our heart and praise the heavenly Father that he so lovingly takes them in.

[LUKE CONTENTS](#)

Luke Chapter 16

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER 17

Verses 1-10

[Luke 17:1](#). *Then said he unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come!*

Since the fall, we are so constituted that there are sure to be differences and disputes. It is a great mercy when men dwell together in unity. “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is.” It is a work of grace; but nature has its lustings, and lustings lead to strivings; And so, as long as the world is as it now is, “it is impossible but that offences will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come.” Let us not, therefore, be either offence givers or offence takers. When anyone offends us, let us say, “It is impossible but that offences will come,” and let us make light of it; and let us be very careful that we do not cause others to offend. As for him through whom the offence comes, —

[Luke 17:2](#). *It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend —*

Or cause to offend —

[Luke 17:2-4](#). *One of these little ones. Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent: thou shalt forgive him.*

Perhaps someone remarks, “It looks as if he would do nothing else but keep on sinning and repenting.” Well, suppose he does so, that is precisely what you are doing, except that you do not go often repent when you sin. So, possibly, the offender is rather better than you are, after all, and if God is gentle in his dealings with you, you may well be gentle in your dealings with your neighbor.

[Luke 17:5](#). *And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.*

They seemed so struck with the severity of this command that they asked for more faith that they might be able to obey it. And, dear friends, that is always the best thing to do. Do not refuse obedience to the Lord’s precept, but say, “Lord, increase my faith that I may be able to obey it. It can be done, or else thou wouldst not have given me the command. I cannot do it as I am without an increase of strength, therefore, as faith is the medium by which strength is received, Lord, increase my faith.”

[Luke 17:6](#). *And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you.*

Meaning that anything and everything should be possible to our faith; but we need much more of it than the most of us have. Remember how holy Bernard says, “If thou hast a hard task, ask God to give thee a hard resolution.” The diamond is difficult to cut, but it can be cut if you can find something harder. So, if there be a very difficult task set us, if we get faith that is more than equal to it, it will be accomplished. “With God all things are possible,” which means not only that God can do all things, but that we also can do all things when God is with us.

[Luke 17:7-8](#). *But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink?*

This world is the place of service; we are not to be expecting to have the festival here. The great supper comes at the end of the day. This is the time

for us to serve, even as Jesus did when he was here; and we are to serve right on till the close of the day, even as Jesus did.

[Luke 17:9](#). *Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not.*

When the serving-man has done his day's work, his master does not say, "I am very grateful to you, John, for what you have done for me." He will have his wages, they will be his master's thanks.

[Luke 17:10](#). *So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.*

"When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you." Ah! but we have not come anywhere near that yet; even if we had, we should still be "unprofitable servants." In our mind we should expect no thanks from our Master; but we should sorrow that we had not served him better.

Verses 11-19

[Luke 17:11](#). *And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee.*

There is but One of whom we will think tonight, our divine Lord, who was on his way to Jerusalem. Passing along the frontiers of Samaria and Galilee, he had the Jews on one side of him, and the Samaritans on the other. He took a middle course, as if to show how he was going up to the New Jerusalem, loaded with blessings for the Jews on one side, and Gentiles on the other.

[Luke 17:12](#). *And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers,*

Oh, the abundance of human misery that met the Saviour's eye: "ten men that were lepers"! I was reading only yesterday of what happened in Westminster, many years ago. When the king went along the highway, there were crowds of poor lepers on either side of the road, a shocking sight to see in this dear land of ours; and the king, in his tender mercy, simply passed a law that the lepers should not come near the road again to hook his gracious majesty with their misery. That is all he had to do for them; but our glorious King treated lepers very differently: "There met him ten men that were lepers."

[Luke 17:12](#). *Which stood afar off:*

The rule was that they should never come upon the public road, or near the highway, lest the disease should be taken by others who might come near them.

[Luke 17:13](#). *And they lifted up their voices,*

Not much of voices were they likely to have, for the leprosy dries the throat, and the voice is low and husky, and when lepers cry, “Unclean, unclean,” it is an awfully sad sound, but very weak. These ten lepers lifted up their poor voices.

[Luke 17:13](#). *And said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.*

They raised a plain cry, and the whole ten of them had to lift up their voices before they could be well heard.

[Luke 17:14](#). *And when he saw them,*

Even before he heard them, he saw their pitiable condition.

[Luke 17:14](#). *He said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests.*

That is all Jesus said to the lepers: “Go shew yourselves unto the priests.” They were not to go to the priests till they were clean, for the priests could not heal them. It was the healed man who went to the priests to get a certificate that he was healed, and so might mingle in society again. It was a strange message, then, that the Saviour gave to these lepers: “Go shew yourselves unto the priests.” And oh, the faith of these men! With only this shell of a promise, as it were, they cracked it, and found a promise inside it, for they said to themselves, “He would not send us to the priests for nothing; he would not mock our misery; he must mean to heal us:” and therefore away they went. A grand faith this! You are to come to Christ before you feel any grace in you; you are not to wait until you feel you are healed, and then come to him. Come just as you are, without any sense of grace, or any kind of feeling within you that is worth the having. Come just as you are.

[Luke 17:14](#). *And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed.*

As the sinner believes, he is saved. As a man begins to go towards the Saviour, the Saviour’s grace meets him.

[Luke 17:15](#). *And one of them, when he saw that he was healed,*

They all saw that they were healed, and they all must have felt extremely glad. Oh, the happiness of feeling the hot blood cooled, and full health taking the place of languor and disease!

[Luke 17:15](#). *Turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God.*

This was a sure sign that he was healed, that he had his voice back; the disease had so thoroughly gone that the sound, which seemed to hide away in his husky throat, now came out clear and loud, like the stroke of a bell.

[Luke 17:16](#). *And fell down, on his face at his feet, giving him thanks*

When I read these words just now, I thought, that is where I would like to be, and that is what I would like to do, all my life, to fall down, “at his feet, giving him thanks.”

[Luke 17:16](#). *And he was a Samaritan.*

Ah, me! nine of the seed of Israel were ungrateful, and only one poor outcast Gentile was grateful to the Lord for the miracle of healing that had been wrought.

[Luke 17:17-19](#). *And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There, are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith, hath made thee whole.*

May the Lord Jesus thus speak to many a poor, leprous sinner here tonight! “Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.”

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 113, and [Luke 17:11-19](#).

Verses 11-32

[Luke 17:11-12](#). *And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers which stood afar off:*

Leprosy was very common in Palestine in Christ’s day. How thankful we ought to be that, in this country, at any rate, it has almost entirely died out! There used to be, in almost every town, a leper-house provided for lepers, so common was leprosy in this country. Certain diseases seem to die out by degrees, and we should be very grateful that some of the worst forms of disease, by which men have been afflicted, have passed away. In this case, there were no less than ten in one village. They “stood afar off,” as was most proper, lest they should communicate the contagion to others. They had to cry out, and warn men not to come too near them, saying, with covered lip, “Unclean! unclean! unclean!” The muffled sound that they made, if the word could not be distinguished, helped to warn the passers-by to give them a wide berth.

[Luke 17:13-14](#). *And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew*

yourselves unto the priests.

For no man could be pronounced clean even if he were healed, until he had undergone the ceremony prescribed in the Mosaic law. These lepers were to go to the priests just as they were, so their going was an act of faith.

[Luke 17:14](#). *And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed.*

What a wonderful thing that must have been!

[Luke 17:15-16](#). *And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan.*

One of those off-casts and out-casts that the Jews would not own, — one of the men that they said were of a mongrel breed, — only half Israelite and half idolater. “O grace, it is thy want, Into unlikeliest hearts to come!”

[Luke 17:17-25](#). *And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole. And when he who demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you. And he said unto the disciples, The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it. And they shall say to you ‘See here; or, see there: go not after them, nor follow them. For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day. But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation.*

Though our Lord purposely left much with regard to his coming indefinite, he gave his disciples two instances, from the early history of the world, of the condition in which many would be found at his appearing.

[Luke 17:26-32](#). *And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed. In that day, he which shall be upon*

the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back.

Remember Lot's wife.

LUKE CONTENTS

CHAPTER 18

Verses 1-14

Luke 18:1-7. *And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: and there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?*

He hears their prayer a long time because it does not weary him. It pleases him, he loves to hear their sighs and cries, but will he not yield to their entreaties? What think you? Shall not the good, gracious, loving God yield at length?

Luke 18:8. *I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?*

Faith enough to make such prayers as this; faith enough to pray with importunity? Oh, if we had faith enough to resolve to have a blessing, and determined never to cease crying to God until we had it, we should have far more favors than we have hitherto gained from our God.

Luke 18:9-12. *And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.*

A fine peacock, truly! See how he spreads out his feathers, and struts before God, glorifying himself.

[Luke 18:13](#). *And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.*

“The sinner,” it should be; it is so emphatically in the Greek. There is a Pharisee, the righteous man according to his own estimate, and all the rest were sinners. Here is the publican, he is the sinner, and he thinks everybody else is righteous. These were two very conspicuous individuals, the self-righteous man and the sinner; and they are both here tonight. I will not ask them to stand up; but no doubt they are both of them present. Now what became of them?

[Luke 18:14](#). *I tell you, this man —*

The sinner —

[Luke 18:14](#). *Went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.*

It is God’s usual method to reverse what man does, and to turn things the other way upwards: “Everyone that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.” You remember how the Virgin Mary, in her song, praised the Lord for this very habit of his: “He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.” That is his regular way of working, and he will continue so to do.

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 122 and [Luke 18:1-14](#).

Verses 1-27

[Luke 18:1](#). *And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;*

Especially, not to faint in prayer, not to become disheartened, or weary, even if their prayers should, for a long time, remain unanswered.

[Luke 18:2-3](#). *Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: and there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary.*

He would not have interested himself in her case simply because she was a poor widow, he had no bowels of compassion for her; nor would it have concerned him at all that her adversary had wronged her. He did not trouble to discharge the duties appertaining to his office. No fear of God and no respect for public opinion, affected him at all.

[Luke 18:4](#). *And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man;*

He even boasted of the very thing of which he ought to have been ashamed: “I fear not God, nor regard man;’ I care for nobody, and defy everyone.”

[Luke 18:5](#). *Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.*

He cared for nobody but himself. He was concerned about his own peace of mind. The poor woman could win, through his selfishness, what she could not get from his sense of justice, since that had no weight with him. Her importunity won for her what nothing else could procure.

[Luke 18:6-8](#). *And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith, and shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth.*

God will hear the earnest, united, persistent cries of his people. His Church, today, is like a widow left forlorn. Her cries go up to God, pleading that he will vindicate her cause; and he will do so. He may wait a while; but the prayers of his people are not lost. By-and-by, he will avenge his own elect. So is it with regard to all true prayer. Though, for wise reasons, God may delay to reply, yet he files our petitions, they are registered in heaven. Their power is accumulating, it is all adding to the great pile of supplication which is the real strength of the Church of Christ. What a question that is, “When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?” He can find it if anybody can, for he knows what faith is, and where faith is, but will he find any? Well, he will find so little, even amongst the best of his people, that the question may well be put; and amongst a great many who profess to have faith, he will find none at all. Brethren, we pray so feebly, we expect so little, we ask with such diffidence, we have such slight courage in prayer, that, if the Son of man himself came among us to search us, how little faith he would discover!

[Luke 18:9-12](#). *And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.*

He could not even magnify his own excellencies without sneering at the poor publican who had said nothing against him, or about him. That is a poor kind of religion which has to look down upon all others before it can look up to itself. What, O Pharisee, if others are not, apparently, so good as thou art in some things. Yet, in other things, they probably excel thee; and if thou thinkest thyself worthy of praise, thou hast never really seen thyself as thou art in God's sight! A correct knowledge of thine own heart would have led thee to a very different conclusion. It is a good thing that the Pharisee appeared to be thankful for something; but, probably, that was merely a complimentary speech, which meant very little. He did not thank God half as much as he praised himself.

[Luke 18:13](#). *And the publican, standing afar off, —*

Away in some distant corner,

[Luke 18:13](#). *Would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.*

He makes no reflection upon others; but confesses his own sin, and appeals to the great Propitiation, for the word he used means, "God be propitious to me, a sinner."

[Luke 18:14-15](#). *I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. And they brought unto him also infants, that he would touch them: but when his disciples saw it, they rebuked them.*

Were not these children too little, and too unimportant for Christ to notice? Their understanding was not sufficiently developed to know anything that he might say; what was the use of bringing them for his blessing?

[Luke 18:16](#). *But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.*

The kingdom of God consists of child-like spirits, persons like these children. Instead of needing to grow bigger in order to be fit to be Christians, we need to grow smaller. It is not the supposed wisdom of manhood, but the simplicity of childhood, that will fit us for the reception of divine truth. Alas! we are often too much like men, if we were more like children, we should receive the kingdom of God far more readily.

[Luke 18:17-19](#). *Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein. And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none is good, save one, that is, God.*

Yet the ruler was right. He knew not that he was speaking to One who is, assuredly, God, and; in the highest sense, good; but, since he had asked, “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?” Christ answered his enquiry.

[Luke 18:20-21](#). *Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother, and he said, all these have I kept from my youth up.*

All which appears to be simple enough, if you only look on the surface but when you come to recollect that there is an inward, spiritual meaning to all this, that a licentious look breaks the command about adultery, that a covetous desire is stealing, that the utterance of a slander is bearing false witness, and so on, who is he that shall enter into life upon such terms as these? Yet they cannot be lowered, for they are, spiritually, just and right.

[Luke 18:22](#). *Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing:*

Christ gives him a test. If he is what he thinks he is, he will be ready to obey whatever command God lays upon him. Christ is about to lay one upon him; let us see whether he will obey that.

[Luke 18:22](#). *Sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me.*

Now, which will he love the more, the Son of God, or his wealth?

[Luke 18:23-27](#). *And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich. And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God, and they that heard it said, Who then can be saved? And he said, The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.*

Yet some men spend all their lives in the earnest endeavor to make it hard for them to be saved. They are trying, as much as ever they can, to block up the road to eternal life, hoarding up that which will be a grievous burden to them, even if God shall lead them in the way to heaven. How

much better is it to live wholly unto God, and then, be we rich or be we poor, consecrate all to him, and live to his praise and glory!

Verses 31-43

[Luke 18:31-33](#). *Then he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: and they shall scourge him, and put him to death: and the third day he shall rise again.*

Our Lord Jesus Christ often talked to his disciples about his death. Before the time for it came, he foresaw it, he thought and spoke much of it, he even dwelt upon the terrible details of it very minutely: “He shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: and they shall scourge him, and put him to death.” Ah! dear friends, when our Lord Jesus died for us, he knew what he was doing. There are some men who, without a moment’s consideration, could do a brave notion, but they could not sit down and coolly calculate all the consequences of doing it. They find themselves unexpectedly in the face of imminent danger, they see a person needing to be saved from peril and they make a rush for it, and the daring deed is done. But here our Saviour deliberately thinks and talks about his death, yet he never flinches, or looks back, but he prepares his heart for the solemn event, and sets his face like a flint to go through it all that he may save the souls of his people. We also ought to think and talk much of our Lord’s death, since he thought and spake so much of it.

[Luke 18:34](#). *And they understood none of these things:*

They could not make out what he meant, it was plain enough, but they could not believe that it should be so.

[Luke 18:34-36](#). *And this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken. And it came to pass, that as he was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the way side begging: and hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant.*

The blind man asked, as the familiar hymn puts it, —

“What means this eager, anxious throng,
Which moves with busy haste along?”

[Luke 18:37-38](#). *And they told him, that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by. And he cried, saying Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me.*

If he could not see, he could hear. So, dear friends, like this blind man, use what senses you have. “Faith cometh by hearing;” so it came to this man, and as soon as he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth who was passing by, he began to pray to him. Oh, that some of you would also pray to him as soon as you hear that he is nigh! Deep down, from your very soul, let this cry go up, “Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me.”

[Luke 18:39](#). *And they which went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace:*

I think I hear them saying, “Do not make such a disturbance. The Master is preaching, and we are losing his words through your noise. What is all that clamor about? Can you not have more respect to the Son of David than to cry in that fashion?”

[Luke 18:39](#). *But he cried so much the more, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me.*

That is a good thing for you also to do, not only to keep on crying to the Lord Jesus, but to grow more importunate when others rebuke you. If you are seeking the Saviour, do not be put back, and if others would hinder you, be the more resolute, the more determined, to be heard by him.

[Luke 18:40](#). *And Jesus stood, and commanded him to be brought unto him:*

Jesus had been walking along, the crowd making way for him, but he was arrested by the cry of a blind beggar: “Jesus stood, and commanded him to be brought unto him:” —

[Luke 18:40-41](#). *And when he was come near, he asked him, saying, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight.*

A plain question and a very distinct answer. What is it that you, dear friends, want of Jesus? Could you all tell if the question were put to you? What is it that you would have the Lord do for you? Do you know? This man did know; and when we know, as he did, what we want from Christ, we shall soon get it. The sad fact concerning many people is that, though they are not blind with their natural eyes, they are so blind in heart that they cannot see their own needs.

[Luke 18:42-43](#). *And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee. And immediately he received his sight, and followed him, glorifying God:*

Christ his only to speak, and the great work is done at once. The salvation of a soul from the power of sin is not the work of weeks; it can be done in a single moment. “Immediately he received his sight, and followed him.” That is beautiful; as soon as he could see, he looked for Christ, and then followed him, “glorifying God.” He clapped his hands, and followed Jesus, shouting and crying, “Blessed be God, I have found my sight! The darkness is over, and the light has broken in upon my soul.”

[Luke 18:43](#). *And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God.*

This exposition consisted of readings from [Luke 18:31-43](#); [Luke 19:1-10](#).

Verses 35-43

[Luke 18:35-39](#). *And it came to pass, that as he was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the way side begging: and hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant. And they told him, that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by. And he cried, saying, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me. And they which went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace:*

“Hush!” they cried; “how can you disturb the blessed Master’s discourse? Be quiet.”

[Luke 18:39-40](#). *But he cried so much the more, Thou son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus stood,—*

Prayer held him fast. Here is a stationary Saviour, held in his place by the cries of a blind man. Oh, the power of prayer! It stays the onward march of the Son of God: “Jesus stood,”

[Luke 18:40-41](#). *And commanded him to be brought unto him: and when he was come near, he asked him saying, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight.*

It is a great thing to know what you really do want. There are some persons who are so blind that they do not know that they are blind; and because they say, “We see,” therefore is their blindness the more intense. I fear that there is many a person, who professes to pray, yet who, if Christ should come into the room, and say, “What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?” would not know how to answer the question. This man did; and he said, very briefly, and very clearly, but in a very full way, “Lord, that I may receive my sight.”

[Luke 18:42](#). *And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight:*

Often, the blessing from Christ's lip is the echo of the prayer which fell from ours. The blind man said, "Lord, that I may receive my sight." Echo answered, "Receive thy sight."

[Luke 18:42-43](#). *Thy faith hath saved thee. And immediately he received his sight,—*

See, how the prayer, the word of Christ, and the immediate effect of it, all tally. "That I might receive my sight." "Receive thy sight." "He received his sight."

[Luke 18:43](#). *And followed him,—*

Christ likes not blind followers: "and followed him,"—

[Luke 18:43](#). *Glorifying God: and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God.*

They seemed to be greatly impressed, but we shall see that some of them soon spoke in another fashion.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Luke 18:35-43](#); and [Luke 19:1-10](#).

[LUKE CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 19

Verses 1-10

[Luke 19:1-2](#). *And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans and he was rich.*

Jesus Christ had just blessed a blind man who was poor, so poor that he was a common wayside beggar; will he bless the rich man, too? Oh, yes! he knows no distinction of persons, he is ready to bless all classes; whether they be rich or poor is nothing to him.

[Luke 19:3](#). *And he sought to see Jesus who he was;*

Possibly he had not much respect, but he had great curiosity; he would like to see the man about whom everybody was talking: "He sought to see Jesus who he was."

[Luke 19:3](#). *And could not for the press, because he was little of stature.*

The crowd round about him was so thick that the little short man could not see over the heads of the tall people. Though he pushed, and tried to get

in front, there was always some bigger body before him, so that he could not see the great Teacher.

[Luke 19:4](#). *And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree —*

Do you not see the little short man running in front of the throng, and climbing up a tree that stood in the way? Rich men do not generally climb trees, but here was a man whose curiosity overcame his dignity, so he “climbed up into a sycamore tree” —

[Luke 19:4-5](#). *To see him: for he was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him,*

Cannot you imagine that you see the blessed Master stopping, and looking up at that tree? Somehow, he always made himself one with those whom he meant to bless. When he spoke to the blind man, he stood as if he were himself blind, and asked him, “What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?” And now he stops under this sycamore, and looks up at curious Zacchaeus as if he, too, were taken with a fit of curiosity, and asks, “Who is that up in this tree?” “He looked up and saw him,”-spied him out, —

[Luke 19:5](#). *And said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at thy house.*

Oh, how astonished must the little Jew have been when he heard Christ’s words! Never was a man so taken with surprise before, but with the word there came a divine softness into the heart of the chief of the publicans, and he yielded to that singularly condescending invitation, that strangely unexpected command.

[Luke 19:6](#). *And he made haste, and came down; and received him joyfully.*

A great change had been suddenly wrought in him; the opening of the blind man’s eyes was not at all more remarkable than the renewing of the heart of Zacchaeus: “He made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.”

[Luke 19:7](#). *And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.*

I wonder where he could have gone and not been guest with a man that was a sinner; but Zacchaeus was thought to be a sinner beyond ordinary sinners. Our Lord still loves to be the guest of a man that is a sinner, he still wants a place where he can stay. O man, thou who art a sinner, ask him home with thee! O woman, thou who art in thy very trade a sinner, ask him

home with thee, and we will say again, not murmuringly, but joyfully, “He has gone to be guest with one who is a sinner.”

[Luke 19:8](#). *And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor;*

That was a grand proof that the conversion of Zacchaeus was genuine; I should like to see the same kind of proof in many professors whom I know: “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor.” I remember one who was converted in this place, and he at once gave £50 to some good object, and I said to his brother, “I think your brother I converted.” He answered, “I hope he is, but he is a dreadful skin-flint.” “But,” I replied, “only yesterday, he gave £50 to such-and-such a work.” “Ah, then!” said the brother, “I am sure he is converted, for nothing but the grace of God would make him do such a thing as that.” Now Zacchaeus was, no doubt, a man of that kind, one who loved his money, and kept it to himself as long as ever he could; but now that he is converted, he says, “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor;” —

[Luke 19:8](#). *And if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.*

He acts in charity and justice, for he is determined to do the right thing with his substance. You see, he was a rich man, so his money was a source of trouble. The blind beggar had no such difficulty, for he had not any money that he must distribute when he was converted; but this rich man — this camel, as our Saviour called such men, went through the eye of a needle by the grace of God, and thus the Lord proved the reality of his conversion.

[Luke 19:9](#). *And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham.*

“He does not look like it, he has become a tax-gatherer for the Romans, he has oppressed his own countrymen. But he is a son of Abraham, and salvation has come to him.”

[Luke 19:10](#). *For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.*

If, at this time, we ask our Lord Jesus, “Whither goest thou, Divine Master?” his answer still is, “I am come to seek and to save that which was lost.” “Art thou come after those who think themselves good enough without thee?” He shakes his head and says, “I am a Physician, and the whole have no need of a Physician, but they that are sick. I came not to call

the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” The gospel of the grace of God is for the guilty; if you are not guilty, there is no gospel for you; but if you are guilty, and confess it, to you is the word of this salvation sent.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Luke 18:31-43](#); [Luke 19:1-10](#).

Verses 1-27

[Luke 19:1-2](#). *And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich.*

Many of those tax-gatherers were rich; they usually farmed the taxes, and took care to extort all that they possibly could out of the poverty of the people.

[Luke 19:3](#). *And he sought to see Jesus who he was;*

He did not seek to hear him; his curiosity lay in another direction, — he desired to see him. Who could this man be who created such a stir? What kind of man was he?

[Luke 19:3-5](#). *And could not for the press, because he was little of stature. And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, —*

Zacchaeus went up into the sycamore tree that he might see Jesus, but he was himself seen there by Jesus; and that, dear friends, is the first act in the process of salvation. Jesus looks at us, and then we look at him. So, here, the Lord spied out Zacchaeus up among the branches of the tree; “he looked up, and saw him,” —

[Luke 19:5](#). *And said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at thy house.*

His surprise at receiving such a message must have been overwhelming, yet he did not suffer that surprise to delay his obedience to Christ’s command.

[Luke 19:6-7](#). *And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.*

“This professedly superior teacher, this purist, this teacher of the highest morality, has gone to be guest with this tax gatherer, — a man who is a sort of outlaw, a disreputable person altogether.” Ah! how does the legal spirit, in self-righteous men, cry out against the sweet benevolence of our blessed

Master, who comes into the world for this very purpose, — to be the Guest of sinners, that he may be the Physician of sinners!

[Luke 19:8](#). *And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor;*

There was not one among those self-righteous people who would have done a tenth as much as Zacchaeus declared that he would do.

[Luke 19:8](#). *And if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.*

There was not one among the murmurers who would have dared to say as much as that. There are a great many people who are quick to condemn those who are a hundred times better than themselves. I wonder whether there are any people of that sort here; I should not wonder if there are.

[Luke 19:9](#). *And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham.*

When our Lord was here, his personal mission as a soul-winner was to the Jews, to those who were of the house of Abraham; so he shows that however much despised this man might be, he came within the compass of the Christ's immediate mission: "forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham."

[Luke 19:10-11](#). *For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear.*

Some of them dreamt of a temporal sovereignty with Christ at its head, so he taught them that his kingdom was something very different from that.

[Luke 19:12-13](#). *He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.*

"Use these pounds on my account; be stewards of them for me until I return."

[Luke 19:14-16](#). *But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us. And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds.*

He was a modest man; he did not say, “I have gained ten pounds;” but, “Thy pound hath gained ten pounds.” And if God has blessed anyone so as to enable him to bring in a large result from the talent entrusted to him, he must ascribe it all to God, and not to himself: “Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds.”

[Luke 19:17-19](#). *And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities.*

Observe that, whatever the triumph of Christ is to be, his faithful servants are to share in it. He is to be the King of the many cities in the rich provinces of his Father’s domain; but he will give to one of his servants ten cities, and to another five cities. But what a vast dominion that must be out of which he can afford to give such rewards as this! Ten Cities, — can any earthly king give in this fashion? There are royal rewards at the last for those who are faithful now. No pitiful pence shall fall to the lot of those who diligently serve the Lord Christ; they shall have a rich reward, not of debt, but of grace; and, therefore, all the larger.

[Luke 19:20](#). *And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin:*

He had not lost it, he had not spent it, he had not even dug a hole in the earth and hidden it; but he had used a nice piece of linen to wrap it in, and had taken great care of it; and there it was just as when he received it. It had not diminished, neither had it grown at all.

[Luke 19:21](#). *For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow.*

So there is a slavish kind of fear, a dread, a horror of God, which will even keep men out of his service. It ought not legitimately to do so, but, undoubtedly, there are some persons who, out of an evil timidity, are afraid to attempt anything for God or man, and hence their life is useless. Their talent cankers and rusts in the napkin in which they have wrapped it.

[Luke 19:22](#). *And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, —*

“That was thine opinion; according to thine own confession, that was thine idea concerning me: ‘Thou knewest that I was an austere man,’ —

[Luke 19:22-23](#). *Taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my*

coming I might have required mine own with usury?

“With proper interest.” God does not trouble about clearing his character with ungodly men. You and I are very particular and punctilious in defending ourselves against false accusations; but God’s character needs no clearing. It is so transparent that, if ungodly men choose to besmear it, he argues with them on their own ground, and does not stay to answer their slanders. When I have heard people say of God that he is unjust or too severe, all I have felt inclined to say in reply was just this, “Whatever he may be, he is the God who will judge you at the last; and if you think thus of him, so much the more ought you to yield yourself to him, and submit to his infinite majesty, for he is King of kings, and Lord of lords. It is an ill day when we attempt to be the judge of our Judge, and pretend to be the god of God. He is infinitely glorious, so let us bow before him.’

[Luke 19:24-26](#). *And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds. (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.) For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him.*

They who have some already shall have more, especially in the matter of grace. If you serve God well, he will give you more to do. If you love him ardently, he will reward you by enabling you to have more love to him; and if you exercise great faith, he will give you yet more faith. The way to be truly enriched, spiritually, is to be faithful to God in what we have.

[Luke 19:27](#). *But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.*

Whatever these words mean, it is certain that there is a terrible doom in store for all who are God’s enemies, May none of us be found among them!

Verses 1-48

[Luke 19:1-5](#). *And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich. And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature. And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at thy house.*

Remember that the Lord Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem, to suffer and to die; and there he was the patient, suffering Lamb of God; but here he speaks in that commanding tone which well became the Prince of the House of David: “Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at thy house.”

[Luke 19:6](#). *And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.*

Solomon said, “Where the word of a king is, there is power;” omnipotence went with the word of this King of kings, so Zacchaeus was bound to obey it.

[Luke 19:7-11](#). *And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner. And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear.*

Their minds were full of thoughts concerning Christ’s coming as a King, and they had very mistaken notions concerning his kingdom, so he indicates to them that, for the present, the practical matter to be remembered was that he had come “to seek and to save that which was lost.” If they had not been so full of their idle dreams of a temporal sovereignty, they would have perceived that, in the calling of Zacchaeus, Christ had manifested his Kingship in the realm of mercy, and had there exercised the sovereignty of his grace. In order that they might be able the better to understand the meaning of his spiritual kingdom, and not have their eyes so dazzled by the illusions which had so long deceived the Jews, our Lord pointed out to them, in the parable of the pounds, the practical way of preparing for his second coming.

[Luke 19:12-15](#). *He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us. And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these*

servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.

It would have been well if our translators, instead of using that ugly Latin word, “occupy,” had kept to the expression, “trade with it,” for here we get the same words again: “that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.”

[Luke 19:16](#). *Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds.*

The genuine servant, with due humility, puts himself in the background. It is not he who has “gained ten pounds;” it is his Lord’s pound that has done it. He is pleased to bring the ten pounds; yet he claims no credit for himself, but says, “Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds.”

[Luke 19:17](#). *And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.*

There is no comparison between the servant’s work and the reward for its faithful performance. That ten pounds, if his Lord had given it all to him, would not have bought a house in a village, unless it had been a very tiny one, — “a cottage in a vineyard,” or “a lodge in a garden of cucumbers;” yet his Lord gives him “authority over ten cities.”

[Luke 19:18-19](#). *And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities.*

How he must have opened his eyes, when he received authority over five cities!

[Luke 19:20](#). *And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin:*

The napkin, with which he ought to have wiped away the sweat from his brow, he had used merely as a wrapper for the pound that his lord had entrusted to him for the purpose of trading with it. He had done nothing with the pound; he thought he was all right because he had not done any harm with his lord’s money. He had not joined the revolting citizens, who said, “We will not have this man to reign over us;” he had not spent the pound, nor embezzled his master’s money; in fact, he had been very careful to keep intact the treasure that had been entrusted to him, and he felt proud of his own prudence, and said, “Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin.”

[Luke 19:21](#). *For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow.*

This was impudence indeed; but his master took him on his own ground, and showed that, even if his statement had been true, he ought to have been the more diligent in obeying his lord's command.

[Luke 19:22-23](#). *And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury?*

“Thou mightest have done that, at any rate, even if thou wast afraid to trade with it, as I bade thee.” God often deals with men on their own ground, and condemns them out of their own mouth. They say that God is very severe in threatening them with “the wrath to come.” Well, if you so believe, and so speak, there is the more reason why you should fear to disobey him, and so to incur his just displeasure. If, in spite of such terrible threatenings, you still defy him, it only brings out the more clearly the greatness of your guilt.

[Luke 19:24-25](#). *And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds. (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.)*

They were quite astonished. “What! give more to the man who has so much already?” “Yes,” says the master, “that is my command.”

[Luke 19:26](#). *For I say unto you, That unto everyone which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him.*

Hear again the note of sovereignty. Christ will do as he wills; and his mode of action shall sometimes be so singular that even his own attendants will wonder at the strangeness of his procedure, and will begin to ask, “How is this?” But, as Elihu said to Job, “He giveth not account of any of his matters.”

[Luke 19:27-31](#). *But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me. And when he had thus spoken, he went before, ascending up to Jerusalem. And it came to pass, when he was come nigh to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount called the mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, Saying, Go ye into the village over against you; in the which at your entering ye shall find a*

colt tied, whereon yet never man sat: loose him, and bring him hither. And if any man ask you, Why do ye loose him? thus shall ye say unto him, Because the Lord hath need of him.

Here we see Christ's true royalty again flashing out from beneath the humiliation of his humanity. He lets us know that, although he is going up to Jerusalem to die, it is not because he is not Lord of all; but that, being Lord of all, he makes himself of no reputation, takes upon himself the form of a servant, is made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, he humbles himself, and becomes "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

[Luke 19:32-34](#). *And they that were sent went their way, and found even as he had said unto them. And as they were loosing the colt, the owners thereof said unto them, Why loose ye the colt? And they said, The Lord hath need of him.*

The word of the King was again with power, and the owners of the colt were willing to let the animal go since the King had "need of him." They may have been secret disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, but we have no information upon that point. Our King's warrant runs anywhere; and even when his personal presence is not consciously realized, his royal and divine word still rules the minds and hearts of men.

[Luke 19:35-38](#). *And they brought him to Jesus: and they cast their garments upon the colt, and they set Jesus thereon. And as he went, they spread their clothes in the way. And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen. Saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest.*

They were so jubilant that they seemed to have caught some notes from the song that the angels sang at the Saviour's birth: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." There had been war in heaven, but these disciples of Christ sang, "Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest."

[Luke 19:39-41](#). *And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto him, Master, rebuke thy disciples. And he answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out. And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it,*

What a contrast! The King's courtiers shouting for joy, and the King himself weeping over the guilty city where the greatest tragedy in the history of the whole universe was about to take place. The King saw, in the near and more remote future, what no one else could see, so, "when he was come near, and beheld the city, he wept over it."

[Luke 19:42-48](#). *Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.*

For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation. And he went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought; saying unto them, It is written, My house is the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves. And he taught daily in the temple. But the chief priests and the scribes and the chief of the people sought to destroy him, and could not find what they might do: for all the people were very attentive to hear him. There was a popular wave of enthusiasm in his favor; but, alas! it soon ebbed away, and then the multitudes that had cried, "Hosanna!" were just as loud in their shouts of "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

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CHAPTER 20

Verses 9-16

[Luke 20:9](#). *Then began he to speak to the people this parable, A certain man planted a vineyard, and let it forth to husbandmen, and went into a far country for a long time.*

It is a long time since Jesus left us, and he has not yet returned. Many say that he is coming back very soon; others say, "The Lord delayeth his coming."

[Luke 20:10-11](#). *And at the season he sent a servant to the husbandmen, that they should give him of the fruit of the vineyard but the husbandmen beat him, and sent him away empty. And again he sent another servant: and they beat him also, and entreated him shamefully, and sent him away empty.*

They grow bolder, and more wicked, you see; first beating, and then adding shameful treatment to their former cruelty. Men do not come to ridicule religion, and persecute its advocates, all at once; this is an art which Satan teaches by degrees.

[Luke 20:12](#). *And again he sent a third: and they wounded him also, and cast him out.*

They are more violent this time; it comes to actual wounding, and to casting out the servant.

[Luke 20:13](#). *Then said the lord of the vineyard, What shall I do?*

A strange thing happens when the Lord himself comes to pass, and says, “What shall I do?” Here is infinite wisdom, as it were, at a non-plus; and in that extremity this is the Lord’s last expedient: —

[Luke 20:13-15](#). *I will send my beloved son: it may be they will reverence him when they see him. But when the husbandmen saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, This is the heir: come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be our’s. So they cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him.*

You know the story how this beloved Son of the Highest was all love and pity; and yet, with cruel hands, men cast him out of God’s ancient vineyard, and crucified him, hoping that they should be allowed to remain lords of God’s heritage.

[Luke 20:15](#). *What therefore shall the lord of the vineyard do unto them?*

What punishment can be sufficient to expiate such a crime? What vengeance will be poured out upon those who have killed him who came to do them good?

[Luke 20:16](#). *He shall come and destroy these husbandmen, and shall give the vineyard to others.*

And he did so; he scattered abroad the Jews, and gave the kingdom, for a while at least, unto the Gentiles, and they hear the gospel which the Jesus refused.

[Luke 20:16](#). *And when they heard it, they said, God forbid.*

That is exactly what you and I would say, for we, too, have ill-treated the blessed Lord of the vineyard and his beloved Son. Lest we should have the heritage taken from us, let us yield up the fruit to him who has the best right to it all.

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CHAPTER 21

Verses 1-38

[Luke 21:1-6](#). *And he looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury. And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: for all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but like of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had. And as some spake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, he said, As for these things which ye behold, the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.*

This was literally true of the temple at Jerusalem; and today there remains nothing of it. It is also true of all earthly buildings and of all earthly things. However firm they appear to be, as though they might outlast the centuries themselves, yet the things which are seen are temporal, and like the baseless fabric of a vision, they shall all melt into thin air, and pass away. “The things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

[Luke 21:7](#). *And they asked him, saying, Master, but when shall these things be? and what sign will there be when these things shall come to pass?*

Those questions are always being asked, they are being asked at this very day about Christ’s second coming. They shall have no answer, for Christ himself assures us that, as the Son of man, he knew not the day nor the hour of his own coming. As the Son of God he knew all things; but as a man like ourselves, he was willing to be a know-nothing upon that point.

[Luke 21:8](#). *And he said, Take heed that ye be not deceived: for many shall come in my name, saying I am Christ; and the time draweth near: go ye not therefore after them.*

This passage refers, in the first place, to the siege of Jerusalem and in its second and yet fuller meaning, to the coming of the Lord. It looks to me that our Lord regarded the destruction of Jerusalem as “the beginning of the end,” the great type and anticipation of all that will take place when he himself shall stand in the latter day upon the earth. And, as before the destruction of Jerusalem there were many false christs, so will there be the

more of them the nearer the end of the world shall be. This shall be to us one of the tokens of our Lord's speedy appearing, but we shall not be deceived thereby. "Take heed that ye be not deceived: for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and the time draweth near: go ye not therefore after them."

[Luke 21:9](#). *But when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified; for these things must first come to pass; but the end is not by and by.*

Everywhere throughout the Scriptures there is this double message of our Lord, — "Watch, for I may come at any moment. Expect me to come, and to come soon; yet never be terrified as though the time were immediately at hand, for there are certain events which must occur before my advent." How to reconcile these two thoughts, I do not know, and I do not care to know. I would like to be found in that condition which consists in part of watching and in the other part of patiently waiting and working till Christ appears.

[Luke 21:10-11](#). *Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven.*

Someone says, perhaps, "All this we have had, times without number; yet Christ has not come." Just so, for these signs are not sent to minister to our curiosity, but to keep us always on the watch; and whenever we mark these earthquakes, and wars, and famines, and pestilences, then are we to think, "Behold, he cometh," and watch the more earnestly. You know how it is often with the man who is very sick. It is reported that he cannot last long; you call many times, yet he is still living, do you therefore conclude that he will not die? No, but you the more certainly expect that he will soon be gone. So is it with Christ's second advent. He bids us note the signs of his coming, and yet, when some of those signs appear, he does not come, all this is to keep us still on the alert watching for him. Even in his own day, when he so spoke that his servants expected him to come at once, yet he also added words from which they might fairly judge that he would not come directly.

[Luke 21:12-16](#). *But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake. And it shall turn*

to you for a testimony. Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer: For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.

Nowadays, the fashion is always to meditate, and think, and excogitate a gospel for yourself. To be a thinker, — that is the very crown of perfection to some minds, but it is not so according to our Master's mind. His servants are to speak, not their own thoughts, but his thoughts. If they will keep to his gospel, he will give them a mouth and wisdom, which all their adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist. We are to be the repeaters of a message which is given to us, not the manufacturers of tidings. There is to be an exhibitions of inventions very soon, and it is quite right and proper that there should be; but I pray that none of us may ever be the inventors of a new gospel, or of new doctrines, or of new systems of theology, but, on the contrary, let us settle it in our hearts that we will speak Christ's Word all our days; and if thereby we are brought into trouble, we will depend upon him to give us a mouth and wisdom, which all our adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.

[Luke 21:16](#). *And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death.*

How true that has been many a time! For how long a period the saints were martyred! And the days of martyrdom are not yet over.

[Luke 21:17-18](#). *And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake. But there shall not an hair of your head perish.*

During all the terrible siege of Jerusalem, it is believed that not one Christian perished, for God took special care of the followers of his Son. They were the most hated of all men, yet nobody could touch them. None of them took up arms, for it was contrary to their religion; as, indeed, if we are Christians, it is contrary to our religion to resist evil, but we are to bear and endure. The early Christians did so; and because of their very defenselessness, they were safe under the guardian care of the Lord their God.

[Luke 21:19-24](#). *In your patience possess ye your souls. And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are*

with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

And it is so even to this day. Here is another instance in which the Lord bade his people expect his coming, and yet at the same time told them that he would not come so long as Jerusalem should be trodden down of the Gentiles. “Until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled” means the time when the Messiah shall gather in those Gentiles unto himself; for, when he shall appear, they shall look on him whom they have despised, and turn to him whom they have so long rejected.

[Luke 21:25](#). *And there shall be signs in the sun —*

As there were at the destruction of Jerusalem, and as there will be at the second coming of Christ. We have had a rehearsal of that coming in the destruction of the favored city; but the grand event itself, who shall rightly speak of it?

[Luke 21:25-27](#). *And in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see —*

Whether they wish to see him or not, “then shall they see” —

[Luke 21:27-32](#). *The Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh. And he spake to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; when they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled.*

As I understand it, for the first time; and afterwards it shall be fulfilled again. It is a prophecy that bears two meanings, an outer and an inner; it has been fulfilled once, and it shall soon be fulfilled again.

[Luke 21:33-34](#). *Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away. And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, —*

Please notice that “cares of this life” are put down with over-eating and over-drinking, for men can be intoxicated and surfeited with care, either the care of getting, or the care of keeping, or the care of spending, or the care of losing. Any of these cares may cause a surfeit and a drunkenness wherefore, “take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life,” —

[Luke 21:34](#). *And so that day come upon you unawares.*

All that you can see in this world, you are to regard as being doomed to destruction; that destruction commenced, so to speak, when Jerusalem fell beneath the Roman sword. Everything earthly is doomed. You are living, not in your eternal mansions but you are living a makeshift life; you are passing through a wilderness, you are pilgrims, you are sojourners; this is not your rest. Do not get to love this world, or to be taken up with it. Do not strike your roots into it; you are not to dwell here, and to live here always. You are walking among shadows; regard them as such. Hug them not to your bosom; feed not your souls upon them, lest, when that day comes, before whose coming all of them shall melt away, you shall be filled with amazement and shame.

[Luke 21:35-37](#). *For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man. And in the day time he was teaching in the temple; and at night he went out, and abode in the mount that is called the mount of Olives.*

You know what he did there, for —

“Cold mountains and the midnight air,
Witnessed the fervor of his prayer.”

Jesus ever practiced what he preached. He said to his disciples, “Watch ye therefore, and pray always,” so he himself both watched and prayed.

[Luke 21:38](#). *And all the people came early in the morning to him in the temple, for to hear him.*

May we all be willing, not only to hear him, but also to heed what he says! Amen.

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CHAPTER 22

Verses 1-39

Luke 22:1-2. Now the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the Passover. And the chief priests and scribes sought how they might kill him; for they feared the people.

Dastardly fear often drives men to the greatest crimes. He who is not brave enough to be master of his own spirit, and to follow the dictates of his own conscience, may do, before long, he little knows what. Because of the fear of the people, the chief priests and scribes were driven to compass the death of Christ by craft, and to bring him to his death by the cruel betrayal of Judas, one of his own apostles.

Luke 22:3-6. Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve. And he went his way, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray him unto them. And they were glad, and covenanted to give him money. And he promised, and sought opportunity to betray him unto them in the absence of the multitude.

Was it not a sad thing that the betrayer of Christ should be one of the twelve? Yet deeply trying as it must have been to the heart of Christ, there is something useful about even that horrible transaction. It says to all the professing Church of Christ, and it says to us who claim to be Christ's followers, "Do not think yourselves safe because you are in the visible church; do not imagine that even holding the highest office in the church can prevent you from committing the basest crime. Nay, for here is one of the twelve apostles, yet he betrays his Master. Sometimes, we have found this betrayal to be a source of comfort. I have myself desired, in receiving members into the church, to be very careful if possible only to receive good men and true; yet, though pastors and elders of the church may exercise the strictest watch, some of the worst of men will manage to get in. When that is the case, we say to ourselves, "No new thing has happened to us, for such a sinner as this marred the Church from the very beginning." Here is Judas, when Christ himself is the Pastor, when the twelve apostles make up the main body of the Church, here is Judas, one of the twelve, ready to betray his Master for the paltry bribe of thirty pieces of silver, just the price of a slave. Yes, we might have been put out of heart in building up the Church of God if it had not been for this sad but truthful narrative concerning Judas and his betrayal of our Lord.

Luke 22:7-8. *Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed. And he sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the passover, that we may eat.*

Notice how carefully our Lord respected the ordinances of that dispensation so long as it lasted. The passover was an essential rite of the Jewish faith, and our Lord therefore duly observed it. Learn hence, dear brethren, to esteem very highly the ordinances of God's house; let baptism and the Lord's supper keep their proper places. You do them serious injury if you lift them out of their right places, and try to make saving ordinances of them; but, in avoiding that evil, do not fall into the opposite error of neglecting them. What Christ has ordained, it is for his people to maintain with care until he comes again; and if he kept up the passover even when, in himself, it was already on the point of being fulfilled, let us keep up the ordinances which he has enjoined upon us. If any of you have neglected either of them, let me remind you of his gracious words, "Thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness," and "This do ye, in remembrance of me."

Luke 22:9-13. *And they said unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare? And he said unto them, Behold, when ye are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he entereth in. And ye shall say unto the goodman of the house, The Master saith unto thee, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? And he shall show you a large upper room furnished; there make ready. And they went, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover.*

Observe in this passage a singular blending of the human and the Divine; no mention is made of either as a matter of doctrine, but incidentally our Lord's Divinity and humanity are most fully taught. Here is Christ so poor that he has not a room in which to celebrate the most necessary feast of his religion; he has made himself of no reputation, and he has no chamber which he can call his own; yet see the Godhead in him. He sends his messengers to a certain house, and tells them to say to the goodman of the house, "Where is the guestchamber?" It all turns out just as he said it would be, and he is welcomed to this man's best room, and to the furniture thereof. Jesus speaks here as did his Father when he said to Israel in the olden time, "Every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills." All the guestchambers in Jerusalem were really at Christ's disposal; he had but to ask for them, and there they were all ready for him.

Here we see the majesty of his Deity; but, inasmuch as he had no room that he could call his own, we see also the humility of his manhood.

Luke 22:14-16. *And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.*

This was to be his last meal with his disciples before he died, and he had looked forward to it with great desire. It was a most solemn occasion, and yet to him a most desirable one. May something of the Master's desire overflow into your hearts, beloved, whenever you are about to partake of the sacred feast which he instituted that night!

Luke 22:17-20. *And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves: For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come. And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.*

Do you see how this new memorial was blended with the passover, how it melted into that social meal which formed part of the paschal celebration? There was a cup, then bread, and then the cup after supper; so there was a gracious melting of the one dispensation into the other. We see our Lord's wisdom in thus leading his children on from step to step, without a break, conducting them from one line of service to another and a still higher one.

Luke 22:21. *But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table.*

This was a sad and solemn fact; yet it has often been so since that night. The nearer to Christ, the farther from him, — so has it sometimes happened since. He who was in some respects the highest in the College of the Apostles became the lowest in the ranks of the children of perdition.

Luke 22:22-23. *And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed! And they began to inquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing.*

Let us also pass that question round among ourselves.

“When any turn from Zion's way,

(Alas, what numbers do!)

Methinks I hear my Saviour say,

‘Wilt thou forsake me, too?’

“Ah, Lord, with such a heart as mine,

Unless thou hold me fast,

I feel I must, I shall decline,

And prove like them at last.

“The help of men and angels join’d Could never reach my case;

Nor can I hope relief to find But in thy boundless grace.

“What anguish has that question stirr’d,

If I will also go;

Yet, Lord, relying on thy Word,

I humbly answer, No.”

God grant us more grace, that we may be held fast by the records of love!

Luke 22:24. *And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.*

Let me read you these two verses together; they strike me as being very remarkable. Here are two questions: “They began to enquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing,” that is, betray their Lord. “And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.” What poor creatures we are! How we are tossed with contrary winds! The new question comes up; and yet the old question, which ought to have been smothered by it, still remains there. It is possible that Luke is here alluding to some dispute which the apostles had previously had; and now the Lord, remembering that even in the ashes of contention lived the wonted fires of ambition, would quench the last sparks of the evil fire.

Luke 22:25. *And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors.*

The people are compelled to use sweet terms to express a very bitter bondage; so they call their tyrants “benefactors.”

Luke 22:26-27. *But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth?*

The guest, or the waiter at the table?

Luke 22:27-31. *Is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth. Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations.*

And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:

As our Lord Jesus looked upon his eleven apostles, he felt that their time of greatest trial was fast approaching. Beyond anything they had ever endured before, they were now to be put into the devil's sieve, and Satan would toss them to and fro, and seek, if possible, to destroy them.

Luke 22:32. *But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: —*

“I have made thee, Simon, a special object of thy prayer. All the brotherhood will be tried, but for thee I have especially prayed, for thou, who seemest to be the strongest, art the weakest of them all, so I have prayed specially for thee, that thy faith fail not.”

Luke 22:32. *And when thou art converted, —*

“When thou art restored,” —

Luke 22:32-39. *Strengthen thy brethren. And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death. And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me. And he said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye anything? And they said, Nothing.*

Then said he unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip, and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one. For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning me have an end. And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough. And he came out, and went, as he was wont, to the mount of Olives; and his disciples also followed him.

Verses 1-71

Luke 22:7-20. *Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed. And he sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the passover, that we may eat. And they said unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare? And he said unto them, Behold, when ye are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he entereth in. And ye shall say unto the good man of the house, The Master saith unto thee, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? And he*

shall shew you a large upper room furnished: there make ready. And they went, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover. And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. And he said unto them. With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves: for I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come. And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament —

(Or, covenant —)

Luke 22:20-21. In my blood, which is shed for you. But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table.

What a shadow this revelation must have cast over that solemn feast over the Saviour's heart, and over the minds of all his attached disciples! We can scarcely imagine what pangs tore his loving spirit. He could have used the language of David, with even deeper emphasis, and said, "It was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him: but it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance." "The hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table." O beloved, I pray that you and I may never betray our Master; if ever we should so fail as to deny him, may the Lord stop us where Peter fell, and never suffer us to betray him as Judas did!

Luke 22:22. And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed!

The decree of God does not lessen the responsibility of man for his action. Even though it is predetermined of God, the man does it of his own free will, and on him falls the full guilt of it.

Luke 22:23-24. And they began to enquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing. And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.

Be astonished, dear friends, as you read, in such a connection as this, "There was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest." What! while yet the anxious question as to which of them was

the traitor was being passed round, “Lord, is it I?” Is it so closely followed by another question, “Which of us shall be highest in the kingdom?” Oh, the awful intrusiveness of pride sad ambition! How it will come in, and defile the very holy of holies! Nay God prevent our falling victims to it! The last question for a Christian ever to ask is, “How may I win honour among men?” The one question for a believer should be, “How can I glorify my Master ?” Very often, that can best be done by taking the very lowest place in his church.

Luke 22:25-26. *And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve.*

Let every respect be given to the elder, and let such as God honours be honoured among us; but let no man honour himself, or seek honour for himself. After all, in Christ’s kingdom, the way to ascend is to descend. Did not the Master act thus? He descended, that he might ascend, and fill all things; and so must his disciples do. Less, and less, and less, and less, must we become; and so we shall really be, in his sight, more, and more, and more, and more.

Luke 22:27. *For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth.*

For he had just then taken a towel, and girded himself, and washed their feet, so becoming *Servus servorum*, the Servant of servants, though he was in very truth the King of kings.

Luke 22:28. *Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations.*

There is a reward to the righteous, though they serve not for reward, for the Lord says: —

Luke 22:29-30. *And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink; at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*

Ah, but see what follows! No sooner, in this chapter, does the thought seem to rise than it is dashed down again; the brightness ever has a shadow cast across it,

Luke 22:31-32. *And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for*

thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.

We are thinking about thrones, and about which of us shall have the loftiest throne, but see how the Master is thinking about the necessary while we are dotting upon the superfluous. He thinks of our needs while we are dreaming of something great. What a blessing it is that we have our Saviour praying for us when we ourselves may be fancying that we need not pray! Our hands are ready for the scepter, and we are anxious to sit down on the throne, when the Lord knows that our proper place is at the footstool, pleading for mercy still.

Luke 22:33. *And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death.*

That is bravely spoken, Peter; and yet it is very foolishly said, too. He spoke out of his very heart, and he meant what he said; but Peter did not know what a poor weak body Peter really was. His Master understood him far better.

Luke 22:34. *And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me.*

And so it came to pass. Let us read a part of the sad story, beginning at the fifty-fourth verse.

Luke 22:54. *Then took they him, and led him, and brought him into the high priests house. And Peter followed afar off.*

I do not think that he was to be blamed for that; I do not see how he could very well have followed any nearer, for he was already a marked man. That sword-cut of his upon the ear of Malchus had made him specially prominent amongst the apostles, even if he had not been well known before. He got into the crowd, and came after his Master at such a distance as seemed safe for him.

Luke 22:55. *And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them.*

I do think that he was to be blamed for that action, for it brought him into dangerous company. Better be cold, than go and warm your hands in ungodly society.

Luke 22:56. *But a certain maid beheld him as he eat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him,—*

As the flame came flashing up every now and then, she looked at him, and Peter was troubled by her gaze: she “earnestly looked upon him,”

Luke 22:56-59. *And said, This man was also with him. And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not. And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not. And about the space of one hour after another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with him; for he is a Galilaeen.*

For he got talking to this ill company, and his speech had betrayed him.

Luke 22:60. *And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest.*

Another Evangelist tells us that he began to curse and to swear, as if that was the surest proof that he could possibly give that he did not know Jesus; for, when you hear a man swear, you know at once that he is no Christian, you may conclude that safely enough. So Peter thought that, to prove that he was no follower of Christ, he would use such ill language as the ungodly speak.

Luke 22:60-61. *And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter.*

God has all things in his hands, he has servants everywhere, and the cock shall crow, by the secret movement of his providence, just when God wills; and there is, perhaps, as much of divine ordination about the crowing of a cock as about the ascending of an emperor to his throne. Things are only little and great according to their bearings; and God reckoned not the crowing bird to be a small thing, since it was to bring a wanderer back to his Saviour, for, just as the cock crew, “the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter.” That was a different look from the one which the girl had given him, but that look broke his heart.

Luke 22:61. *And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crew, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.*

How many there are, who sin with Peter, but who never weep with Peter! Oh, if we have ever transgressed in such a way as he did, let us never cease to weep! Above all, let us begin at once to lament it, and rest not till the Master looks again, and says by that look, “I have blotted out all thy transgressions; return unto me.”

Verses 7-54

Luke 22:7-13. *Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed. And he sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the passover, that we may eat. And they said unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare? And he said unto them, Behold, when ye are*

entered into the city, there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he entereth in. And ye shall say unto the good-man of the house, the Master saith unto thee, Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? And he shall shew you a large upper room furnished: there make ready. And they went, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover.

The hour of Christ's humiliation was drawing nigh, but he was still "The Master." He had but to send his servants, and his request was at once obeyed, just as he might have asked for more than twelve legions of angels and they would have been immediately placed at his disposal.

Luke 22:14-22. And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God. And he took the cup, and gave thanks and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves: for I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come. And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you. But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table. And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed!

What consternation those sentences must have caused in that little company! Christ and his twelve apostles alone present, yet one of them was about to betray his Lord!

Luke 22:23-24. And they began to enquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing. And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.

How strange that such a quarrel should be going on just then! Their Master was going out to betrayal and crucifixion for them, yet they were disputing about which of them "should be accounted the greatest."

Luke 22:25-30 And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that

sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth. Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table, in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

What folly and sin to quarrel about earthly precedence when such heavenly honours were awaiting them!

Luke 22:31-32. And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.

Trial would be general to all the apostles: Satan hath desired to have you;” but the danger would be special to Peter on account of his tendency to presumptuous zeal: “I have prayed for thee.’ Thy danger will be that, after having transgressed, thy faith will fail, so I have specially prayed about that. Where thy greatest danger lies, there have I planted my batteries of prayer: ‘I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.’”

Luke 22:33. And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death.

And I have no doubt that he thought he was ready to do all this; he spoke out of the fullness of his heart, but he did not know the weakness of his flesh. We are all too apt to promise great things, and to fail in the fulfillment of them.

Luke 22:34-36. And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me. And he said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing? And they said, Nothing. Then said he unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one.

At first, our Saviour had great popularity amongst the people; and, under the cover of this, his disciples were received with respect and kindness so that, though they went forth without purse or scrip, they lacked nothing. But, now, Christ warns them that there is to be a very different state of things. Jesus is about to die, and people will not be ready to entertain them; they will need to have a purse and scrip of their own. They will constantly be in peril of their lives, and they will need the sword now, and the scrip. This is all that the Saviour meant.

Luke 22:37. *For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning me have an end.*

“They are drawing to their close. I am about to be put to death as a transgressor, and you will be treated as though you were the off-scouring of all things, and were not fit to live, because you are my followers.”

Luke 22:38. *And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough.*

A smile must have passed over the Saviour’s face as he saw how egregiously they had misunderstood him. He did not mean that they should literally carry swords, but that they should now have to go through an alien world, and to meet with no friends or helpers. He evidently did not mean that they were to defend him with the sword, for two such weapons would not have been “enough” against the Roman legionaries who were sent to seize him. How apt they were to misconstrue, and take literally that which he was accustomed to speak in figures, just as, to this day, some will have it that the bread on the communion table is Christ’s body and the juice of the vine is his blood.

Luke 22:39-40. *And he came out, and went, as he was wont, to the mount of Olives; and his disciples also followed him. And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation.*

“There is a peculiar temptation coming upon you. I have taught you to pray every day, ‘Lead us not into temptation;’ but, tonight, make very special use of that petition: ‘Pray that ye enter not into temptation.’”

Luke 22:41-44. *And he was withdrawn from them about a stone’s cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.*

Was he heard? Ah, my brethren he was indeed heard, but especially in that part of his prayer, “nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done;” and that was the most vital part of his prayer; for, much as he shrank from that bitter cup, still more did he shrink from any thought of going contrary to the will of his Father. That ought to be the heart of all our prayers; whatever we are asking for, chiefly and above all else this should be our cry, “nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.”

Luke 22:45-46. *And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow, and said unto them, Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.*

There must have been some very peculiar temptation about that night, that Christ's disciples should have needed to be again and again commanded to pray this prayer.

Luke 22:47-50. *And while he yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him. But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss? When they which were about him saw what would follow, they said unto him, Lord, shall we smite with the sword? And one of them smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear.*

No doubt he meant to cut his head in twain, but the sword slipped, and merely took away his right ear.

Luke 22:51. *And Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye thus far. And he touched his ear and healed him.*

There was no lasting mischief done; but, on the contrary, another instance given of the divine power of Christ. No other miracle of this kind is mentioned in Scripture; I mean, the healing of a wound received by violence, the restoration of a member which had been cut off: and Luke is the only Evangelist who mentions it:-it has been thought that, because he was a physician, and had a quick eye for acts of healing, that he mentions that Christ touched the ear of Malchus, and healed him.

Luke 22:52-54. *Then Jesus said unto the chief priests, and captains of the temple, and the elders, which were come to him, Be ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and staves? When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness. Then took they him, and led him, and brought him into the high priest's house. And Peter followed afar off.*

Verses 14-24

Luke 22:14-16 *And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat the passover with you before I suffer: for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.*

This was to be the last occasion on which our Lord and his disciples would thus meet.

Luke 22:17-18. *And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves: for I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come.*

That was the passover cup. Now the passover melts into the Lord's supper; and, henceforth, the Lord's supper remains, and the passover has passed away.

Luke 22:19-21. *And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you. But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table.*

What a sobering, saddening effect this must have had upon those who were at that festival! We have reason to fear that it will be true of our gathering also. There were only twelve apostles, yet there was a Judas among them; we shall have many hundreds at our observance of the ordinance, may we not fear that there will be many a Judas, too! Can we expect that we shall have a better selection of professed followers of Christ than the Lord had made for his apostles?

Luke 22:22-24. *And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed! And they began to enquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing. And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.*

That had been their question among themselves, but now they have another enquiry, of quite a different sort, to answer. It was wise of the Master to give them a heart-searching question, to drive out that question of ambition which had filled them with pride and contention. Oh! if any of us ever had such a thought as that in our bosom,— which of us is greatest? — who can speak the best? — who can serve God the most? — who can take the lead?

— let all such questions be set aside while we sorrowfully enter in the other sad enquiry,— which of us will betray our Lord? God grant that none of us ever may do so!

This exposition consisted of readings from 1 Corinthians 11:17-34; and Luke 22:14-24.

Verses 14-46

Luke 22:14-16. *And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.*

And it is fulfilled, for Christ himself is the Lamb of our Passover. His blood has been shed and sprinkled; his people have been brought up out of their Egyptian bondage; and, by faith, they feed upon him, and are glad. How sweetly the passover melted away into the Lord's supper, and how graciously did our Saviour thus teach us that, as a rule, he does not make violent changes in the development of his people's spiritual life, but he leads them on gradually from one stage to another! There may be, sometimes, very sudden elevations; but, as a general rule, we go from strength to strength, a step at a time; and the truth is revealed to us little by little.

Luke 22:17-18. *And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves for I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come.*

This was the passover cup,-the cup with which they concluded the paschal supper. At such times, they also usually began to chant a Psalm in happy unison. Just at that point, Christ interjected the first part of the celebration of the new ordinance,-the Lord's supper, into which the paschal supper was to melt.

Luke 22:19. *And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body, which is given for you this do in remembrance of me.*

It was clearly impossible that he could have meant that bread to be literally his body, because his body was there at the table. Therefore, the misunderstanding, or misrepresentation, of the Church of Rome is altogether without excuse. Our Saviour plainly intended to say, "This bread represents my body; it is an emblem, a symbol, of my body." If this had been spoken concerning the bread after Christ had been dead and gone, and not before, there might have been some warrant for the teaching of the Papists; but there cannot be any such warrant, as he used the words while he was sitting there with his apostles. Let us be careful not to lose the true meaning of Christ's words, while we combat the false interpretation that has been given to them.

Luke 22:20. *Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.*

He could not have meant that, literally, that cup was the new covenant; I never heard of anybody who thought he did. Why, then, take one part of the ordinance literally, if not the other? But our Lord did mean that the contents of that cup represented the blood, which seals and ratifies the eternal covenant on which our hopes are built.

Luke 22:21. *But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table.*

Lamentable circumstance,-sad index of what often still occurs! The worst traitors to Christ are not outside, but inside the visible church; there they have the best opportunity for doing mischief; there they can give the unkindest cut of all. God grant that none of us may be among that miserable number!

Luke 22:22. *And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined; but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed!*

The fact that it was determined, in the eternal decrees of God, that Christ should die, did not at all diminish the responsibility of all had a share in bringing about that death. Learn, beloved, to believe firmly in Divine predestination without doubting human responsibility. Even though you may not be able to show how these two things agree, do not be anxious about that matter; be satisfied to believe what you cannot understand. Both these things are true, and they are both of them in this verse.

Luke 22:23-24. *And they began to enquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing. And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.*

What a strange thing that it should have been so! Is there any such strife among us here? If so, how utterly unworthy are we to be the disciples of such a Master as our Lord Jesus Christ!

Luke 22:25-26. *And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve.*

You know, brethren, that it always will be so. If a man tries to be great in the church, somehow or other his brethren generally think very little of him; but he who is willing to serve,-whose one ambition it is to lay himself out for the glory of his Master, and for the general good,-that man usually has a

great deal more honour than he would have expected to receive. The way to be great in the church is to be serviceable to all around us, to be meek and lowly, to be willing to wait upon others. We have good reason for being the servants of our brethren when we remember the humble position that our Lord himself assumed.

Luke 22:27. *For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth.*

He served in the very humblest capacity, for did he not even wash the disciples' feet? And if he, who was the greatest of all, thus condescended to perform the lowliest service, who among us shall be so lifted up as to suppose that no common work is good enough for him? Brethren, we must be humble, or else we shall be humbled. And let me remark that the latter experience is by no means a pleasant one, while the former experience is most sweet and gracious. God give us the grace to be humble!

Luke 22:28-30. *Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*

Yes, there are thrones and a kingdom for those who are faithful to the King of kings; but there is something else to think of beside that kind of glory, for notice our Saviours next words,

Luke 22:31. *And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:*

And between us and the kingdom there will be struggles and dangers; and watchfulness and wrestling prayer will be required of us. And here is our only hope of escape from the perils of the way, as it was with poor Peter

Luke 22:32-34. *But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren; And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death. And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me.*

Though Peter did not really know himself, Christ knew him. That is one of our comforts,-that the Lord Jesus Christ foresees all future ill, and so provides against it; he looks down into our nature, and deals with us as we need to be dealt with. It is well for us that we are in his hands.

Luke 22:35-40. *And he said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing? And they said Nothing. Then said he unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one. For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning me have an end. And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough. And he came out, and went, as he was wont, to the Mount of Olives; and his disciples also followed him. And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation.*

Or, “into trial.” We do not often enough present that petition, “Lead us not into temptation.” We are not able to bear temptation if it goes beyond a certain point; and it is a greater mercy to escape temptation than it is to pass through it, and to overcome it. I mean, of course, only in some respects. We may ask to be delivered from the evil one if we must be tempted by him; but our first prayer should be that we may not enter into temptation.

Luke 22:41-42. *And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.*

We can read these words in a calm, quiet tone; but they were uttered by our Lord with an intensity of agony which we can scarcely call up before our mind's eye. So terrible was that agony, that our Saviour became utterly weak and faint through the intensity of his pleading.

Luke 22:43-44. *And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly:*

More and more intense was that brief prayer as his supplication was continued.

Luke 22:44. *And his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.*

Luke was a physician, you know, so he was the most likely one to record this phenomenon. It has happened—so we have been told,—to some other persons in intense fright or agony, that their sweat has been tinged with blood; but we never remember reading or hearing of anyone but our Lord of whom it could be said, “His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.”

Luke 22:45. *And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow,*

Great sorrow may have quite opposite effects upon different men. You have, perhaps, sometimes noticed that intoxication produces upon some men exactly the opposite effect to that which it produces upon others; some become irritable and noisy, while others become taciturn and quiet. It is also quite a matter of fact that great sorrow has various effects upon different minds. In the Saviour's case, it aroused him to an awful agony of earnestness in prayer. In the disciples case, it sent them to sleep.

Luke 22:46. *And said unto them, Why sleep ye! rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.*

The great trial for them, as well as for their Lord, was close at hand then. It was late at night, and they were drowsy and sleepy; yet no time is amiss for supplication. Prayer is never out of season, and never unnecessary. We never know when temptation is near, so let us pray without ceasing to him who is able to preserve us from temptation, or to deliver us out of it.

Verses 39-65

In anticipation of the communion that is to follow this service, let us read once more the story of our Lord's agony and arrest, as recorded in the twenty-second chapter of the Gospel according to Luke. Probably we are all familiar with the narrative of the event which happened on that dreadful night; may the Holy Spirit teach us what they meant!

Luke 22:39. *And Jesus came out, and went, as he was wont, to the mount of Olives; and his disciples also followed him.*

The garden of Gethsemane had often been the place of our Lord's private prayer, and it was therefore well selected as the scene of his fierce struggle with the foe. Where we get strength from God in private, it may often happen that we shall have to endure our greatest conflicts. Singularly enough, it is said that the Jews had a custom of taking the red heifer to the Mount of Olives before it was sacrificed, as if they set forth in that very act the leading of Christ Jesus into Gethsemane, and the bringing him back again with his raiment all red with his own blood. We might alter the prophet's words a little, and ask "Who is this that cometh from Olivet, with dyed garments from Gethsemane?" and the Divine Sufferer himself might answer, "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save."

Luke 22:40. *And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation.*

He knew what sore temptation meant, and he was about to feel it at its utmost, and he therefore exhorted his disciples to pray even as he had formerly taught them in the model prayer, "Lead us not into temptation."

Luke 22:41-43. *And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.*

This is so plain a proof of Christ's condescension as a man that it has overwhelmed some persons; they could hardly understand how it could be true. Hence, I believe this forty-third verse is omitted in some versions of the Scriptures, and there have been several learned men who, while they could not disprove the existence of the verse in the most ancient manuscripts, have yet laboured hard to cut it out, since they thought it too great a stoop for Christ to take. But, my dear friends, in this condescension of our Lord we learn how truly he was bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. Doubtless, we receive much strengthening from angels: "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" And why should not Christ, who was in all things made like unto his brethren, also be strengthened by an angel?

Luke 22:44. *And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.*

The Greek has the idea of the stretching of the sinews; Christ prayed to the very stretching of his nerves and sinews. As when men wrestle for their lives, so did Christ in prayer strain every power of mind and body that he might prevail. Luke alone describes this dread scene of Christ's agonizing even unto blood; but there is no doubt whatever, from this passage, that our Lord Jesus did actually sweat blood, — not something like blood, but blood itself, — and that in great drops and in such quantities that it did not only adhere to his flesh, and dye all his garments, but there was such an abundance of it that in great drops it fell down to the ground.

Luke 22:45-46. *And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow, and said unto them, Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.*

Our Lord was himself so smarting under the pain of fierce temptation that he would have his disciples pray even unto an agony, that they might

not be led into it. And oh! if you and I have to pray that we be not led into temptation, how much more should we be instant in supplication when we are in the furnace of temptation! Then, indeed, if we restrain prayer before God, we shall be in an evil case.

Luke 22:47. *And while he yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him.*

It is a remarkable fact that we do not read in Scripture that any other of our Lord's apostles — not even John, — ever kissed the Saviour. It seems as if the most impudent familiarity was very near akin to dastardly treachery. The eleven would have thought it a high honour to be allowed even to kiss Christ's feet; but Judas, having lost his respect for his Master, it was no very great descent for him first to sell his Lord, and then to betray him with a kiss. Mark you, brethren, our Lord Jesus Christ is generally betrayed thus. How, for instance, do men usually begin their books when they mean to undermine the inspiration of Scripture? Why, with a declaration that they wish to promote the truth of Christ! There is the Judas-kiss, and the betrayal comes quickly afterwards. How is it that Christ's name is often most grossly slandered among men? Why, by those who make a loud profession of love to him, and then sin foully as the chief of transgressors!

Luke 22:48. *But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?*

Christ might put that question to many of his nominal followers in the present day: "Betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?"

Luke 22:49. *When they which were about him saw what would follow, they said unto him, lord, shall we smite with the sword?*

There is always that tendency, even among Christian people, to get their hands on the sword-hilt, and a good man's hand is never more out of place than there. When he has his hands clasped in prayer, or placed upon the promises of God, then it is well; but a Christian with his hand upon his sword is something like an angel putting forth his hand unto iniquity.

Luke 22:50-53. *And one of them smote the servant of the high priest, and cut of his right ear. And Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye thus far. And he touched his ear, and healed him. Then Jesus said unto the chief priests, and captains of the temple, and the elders, which were come to him, Be ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and staves? When I was*

daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness.

“This is the time when I am given up, on the one hand to the temptations of Satan, — the power of darkness, — and, on the other hand, to you: ‘This is your hour.’” And, as beasts that prowl in the darkness are generally the most ravenous and fierce, so were these chief priests and captains and elders most determined in seeking the blood of Christ. Paul afterwards wrote that none of the princes of this world knew the hidden wisdom, “for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.” It was just the darkness of their minds that led them thus to hunt the only Saviour of sinners to his death. Satan himself would scarcely have had a hand in crucifying Christ had he understood that, by that very crucifixion, Christ would break the old serpent’s head for ever.

Luke 22:54. Then took they him, and led him, and brought him into the high priest’s house. And Peter followed afar off.

For which he is not to be altogether blamed. I do not find that any other disciple followed Christ so near as Peter did, John was, probably, even farther off at first. Yet, dear friends, you and I may rest assured that, if we follow Christ afar off, it will not be long before we deny him. Those disciples who are ashamed of their Master, who never come out and openly confess their faith in him, have the seeds of treachery already sown within them. O brethren and sisters, be bold, and cleave close to Christ, for this is the way to walk securely!

Luke 22:55. And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them.

“Evil communications corrupt good manners.” Get up, Peter and run away; what business have you sitting there? Better be in the cold, far off from in company, than in the warm in the midst of sinners.

Luke 22:56-57. But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with him. And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not.

See how the most courageous are often cast down by the very slightest means. The tongue of a poor feeble woman is too much for this valiant Peter, who said that he never would deny his Master, even though he should die with him.

Luke 22:58-60. And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not. And about the space of one

hour after another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with him: for he is a Galilaean. And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest.

Matthew and Mark tell us that, to prove this statement, and to make it quite clear that he was not a follower of Christ, he began to curse and to swear, as if the best evidence that he was not a Christian would be afforded by his cursing and swearing.

Luke 22:60-61. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter.

How that look must have pierced Peter through and through!

Luke 22:61-64. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly. And the men that held Jesus mocked him, and smote him. And when they had blindfolded him, they struck him on the face, and asked him, saying, Prophecy, who is it that smote thee?

Upon this passage, a good man well observes that, one of these days, Christ will answer this taunt. With his unerring finger, the Judge of all shall point them out, and say to each one, "Thou art the man." There are many of you, perhaps, who are committing sin in private, and you think it is not known. You are almost ready to ask the question of him whom you look upon as a blindfolded God, "Who is it that smote thee?" Ah! but he sees you all the while, he reads the secret the thoughts of your hearts, and the day will come when he will let you know that nothing has escaped his all-seeing eye.

Luke 22:65. And many other things blasphemously spake they against him.

The Lord bless to us all the reading of this sad, sad story! Amen.

Verses 54-62

Luke 22:54-56. Then took they him, and led him, and brought him into the high priest's house. And Peter followed afar off. And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them.

But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire,-The flickering light helped to reveal his features to this maid "as he sat by the fire,"

Luke 22:56-58. And earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with him. And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not. And

after a little while another saw him, and said Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not.

Both Matthew and Mark say that it was a maid, and another maid who spoke to Peter; and now Luke mentions a man; but there is no reason why all three of them should not have united in bringing this charge. One maid began the accusation, and the others joined with her.

Luke 22:59-61. And about the space of one hour after another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with him: for he is a Galilaean. And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter.

The Saviour had been standing in the upper part of the room, which was probably roofed over, while Peter and the rest were down below in the courtyard, which was open to the sky, and therefore they needed a fire to warm them. Jesus had been standing before his judge; but on a sudden, as the cock crew, he “turned, and looked upon Peter.”

Luke 22:61. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crew, thou shalt deny me thrice.

That cock crowing had come at the very moment Christ had foretold, for Peter had already denied his Master thrice.

Luke 22:62. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.

Now hear what John has to say about this matter. He wrote after the other three Evangelists, and he generally supplies their deficiencies. He it is who tells us how Simon Peter got into the hall. (See John 18:15-18; John 18:25-27)

This exposition consisted of readings from Matthew 26:31-35; Matthew 26:57-58; Matthew 26:69-75 Mark 14:53-54; Mark 14:66-72 Luke 22:54-62; and John 18:15-18; John 18:25-27.

Verse 63

Luke 22:63-71. And the men that held Jesus mocked him, and smote him. And when they had blindfolded him, they struck him on the face, and asked him, saying, Prophecy, who is it that smote thee? And many other things blasphemously spake they against him. And as soon as it was day, the elders of the people and the chief priests and the scribes came together, and led him into their council, saying, Art thou the Christ? tell us. And he said unto them, If I tell you, ye will not believe: and if I also ask you, ye will not answer me, nor let me go. Thereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right

hand of the power of God. Then said they all, Art thou then the Son of God? And he said unto them, Ye say that I am. And they said, what need we any further witness? for we ourselves have heard of his own mouth.

Luke 23:1. And the whole multitude of them arose, and led him unto Pilate.

This exposition consisted of readings from John 18:12-14; John 18:19-26; Mark 14:53-65; and Luke 22:63-71; Luke 23:1.

[LUKE CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 23

Verses 1-16

[Luke 23:1](#). *And the whole multitude of them arose, and led him unto Pilate.*

Our Lord had been taken to the tribunal of Annas and of Caiaphas, and now the whole multitude of them arose and led him unto Pilate. The first two tribunals were ecclesiastical and religious. There they charged him with crimes against the law. Now they take him to Pilate, and bring accusations against him, concerning Caesar and the Roman Government. "The whole multitude of them arose and led him unto Pilate."

[Luke 23:2](#). *And they began to accuse him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a King.*

A wily charge. It was the duty of the ruler of the province to protect the province from any rebellion against Caesar; so they put in the, "He perverts the nation, forbids to give tribute to Caesar."

[Luke 23:3](#). *And Pilate asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews?*

It must have seemed a strange question to himself, as he saw the poor emaciated form of Jesus of Nazareth standing before him. "Art thou the King of the Jews?"

[Luke 23:3](#). *And he angered him and said, Thou sayest*

"It is even so."

[Luke 23:4](#). *Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the people, I find no fault in this man.*

He took him aside and conversed with him, and perceived that his kingdom was not of a kind that would interfere with Caesar. As he looked at

him, he found that it was not a matter which really could concern the great Roman Empire. It was in no danger from him. Pilate said to the chief priests and the people, "I find no fault in this man."

[Luke 23:5](#). *And they were the more fierce, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place.*

He caught at that.

[Luke 23:6-7](#). *When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the man were a Galilaean. And as soon as he knew that he belonged unto Herod's jurisdiction,*

For Herod was ruler of Galilee.

[Luke 23:7](#). *He sent him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time.*

By which he answered two purposes. First, he would get out of the scrape himself; and secondly, he would compliment Herod by acknowledging that, as the man was a Galilean, he was under Herod's jurisdiction. What devices men have to escape from responsibility! This vacillating Pilate knew the right, and did it not. He would be very glad to avoid coming to any decision about it at all.

[Luke 23:8-9](#). *And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him. Then he questioned with him in many words; but he answered him nothing.*

Now was Christ the Lamb — the sheep before her shearers who is dumb. He did answer Pilate a little, There was a little that was good about Pilate, vacillating as he was; but Herod had not a trace of anything upon him upon which the good seed could possibly take root; so he answered him nothing.

[Luke 23:10-11](#). *And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused him. And Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate.*

This robe was probably white, sparkling, splendid. It tended to mock him. It set the example to Pilate and his men to clothe him in a scarlet robe, and mock him yet again. There is a contagiousness about an evil example.

[Luke 23:12](#). *And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves.*

Behold how sinners will agree when Christ is to be slaughtered. They shake hands together when he is to die.

[Luke 23:13-16](#). *And Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people. Said unto them, Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people: and, behold, I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him: No, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him. I will therefore chastise him, and release him.*

But what duplicity! If he is innocent, release him, but do not scourge him. If he is guilty, crucify him, but do not balk about releasing him. When men are wrong at heart, when they come to a resolution, it is self-contradictory. There is nothing more inconsistent than sin. It is an image whose head may be of gold, but the feet are always of clay. You cannot make sin hang together, and the verdict of one who is undecided and has two minds is always a very vicious one. “I will chastise him and release him.”

Verses 1-56

[Luke 23:1-2](#), *And the whole multitude of them arose, and led him unto Pilate. And they began to accuse him saying, We found this —*

Put in what word you like — villains — scoundrel — our translators could not find a better word than that inexpressive-expressive word “fellow.” “We found Eats fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ, a King.” They shift the charge, you see, now; before, it was blasphemy, now it is sedition.

[Luke 23:2-3](#). *Fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar saying that he himself is Christ a King. And Pilate asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answered him and said, Thou sayest it.*

Another of the evangelists tells us that he first asked Pilate what he meant by the question, explaining that he only claimed the kingdom in a spiritual sense.

[Luke 23:4-5](#). *Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the people, I find no fault in this man. And they were the more fierce, saying. He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place.*

When Pilate heard them say Galilee, he caught at that; ‘he did not wish to displease the multitude.

[Luke 23:6-7](#). *When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the man were a Galilean. And as soon as he knew that he belonged unto Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time.*

So away the Master goes; he must be dragged through the streets again to a third tribunal. Oh! thou blessed Lamb of God! Never were sheep driven to the shambles as thou wert driven to death!

[Luke 23:8](#). *And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad; for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him.*

But the Lord never worked miracles yet, to gratify idle curiosity. He who would have worked a miracle to heal the poorest beggar in the street would not work a wonder to please the king in whose power he was.

[Luke 23:9](#). *Then he questioned with him in many words: but he answered him nothing.*

“No,” says good Christopher Ness — “John Baptist was Christ’s voice, and Herod had stopped him; there Christ would not speak; as if he would say, ‘No, no’; thou didst cut off John Baptist’s head, who was my messenger, and since thou hast ill-treated my emir, I, the King of kings, will have nothing to say to thee.”

[Luke 23:10](#). *And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused him.*

The original word is made nought of him — made him ads nothing.

[Luke 23:11-12](#). *And Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate. And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together; for before they were at enmity between themselves.*

Two dogs could well agree to hunt the same prey, and sinners who quarrel on other things will often be quite agreed to persecute the gospel.

[Luke 23:13-16](#). *And Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, Said unto them, Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people; and, behold, I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him: No, nor yet Herod; for I sent you to him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him. I will therefore chastise him, and release him.*

Ah! that word “chastise” shim so glibly over the tongue, but you know what it meant, when the Roman lectors laid bare the back and used the terrific scourge? “I will scourge him,” said Pilate. Perhaps he thought that if he scourged him, his suffering would induce the Jews to spare his life.

[Luke 23:17-20](#). *(For of necessity he must release one unto them at the feast). And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas: (Who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison). Pilate, therefore, willing to release Jesus, spake again to them.*

He seems to have gone backward and forward many times, desiring to save the life of Christ, but not having the moral courage to do it.

[Luke 23:21-26](#). *But they cried, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. And he said unto them the third time, Why, what evil hath he done? I have found no cause of death in him: I will therefore chastise him, and let him go. And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that he might be crucified. And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed. And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required. And he released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired.’ but he delivered Jesus to their will. And as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus.*

This exposition consisted of readings from [Matthew 26:59-68](#); Luke 23.

Verses 13-28

[Luke 23:13-15](#), *And Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, Said unto them, Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people: and, behold, I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him: No, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him: and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him.*

They were judges not at all inclined to favor him; but yet, though his accusers were mad against him, nothing could be brought before these two judgment-seats which would hold water for a single moment. Holy and harmless was Christ, and, therefore, his accusers knew not what to say against him.

[Luke 23:16-23](#). *I will therefore chastise him, and release him. (For of necessity he must release one unto them at the feast.) And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas: (Who*

for certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison). Pilate therefore, willing to release Jesus, spake again to them. But they cried, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. And he said unto them the third time, Why, what evil hath he done? I have found no cause of death in him: I will therefore chastise him, and let him go. And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that he might be crucified.

Never did man's enmity to God become more clear than when God, in human flesh, descending upon an errand of mercy, must, nevertheless, be hunted down by these cruel cries of "Crucify him, crucify him." Man would be a Decide if he could. "The fool hath said in his heart, "No God." To get rid of God — to get rid of God, even in human form, is the enmity of man's heart. He will have it if he can.

[Luke 23:23-26](#). *And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed. And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required. And he released unto them him that for sedition, and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired; but he delivered Jesus to their will. And as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus.*

Fit type of all Christ's followers, who must expect to carry Christ's cross, and who should be happy and honoured in carrying it after Jesus.

[Luke 23:27-28](#). *And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children.*

He had the siege of Jerusalem before his mind, and, therefore, in tender pity he bade them save their tears for other sorrows.

Verses 18-34

Our Lord's last days gave tragic proof of the hate and cruel mockery of his foes; yet how marvelously he endured!

[Luke 23:18-19](#). *And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas: Who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison.)*

Do you not see how they refuted their own accusation? If Christ was really the leader of sedition, would they have asked that he should be put to death? Would they have preferred a murderer to him? There can be no danger of a man leading people astray when those very people were crying, "Let him be put to death." It must have been a transparent fraud. Pilate must

have loathed them. Mean as he was, he must have seen through their meanness.

[Luke 23:20-22](#). *Pilate therefore, willing to release Jesus, spake again to them. But they cried, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. And he said unto them the third time, Why, what evil hath he done? I have found no cause of death in him: I will therefore chastise him, and let him go.*

He thinks a great deal of his own inconsistent conclusion, and so many men do. When they came to a conclusion, bad as it is, contradictory, they will stick to it. Adhesive to nothing but to wrong, like a pendulum swinging between right and wrong, was this Pilate. Yet he will keep on the swing. He is only steady in that, — “I will, therefore, chastise him and release him.” Oh! dear friends, it would be better for you to come to thorough decision one way or the other — Christ, or no Christ; true religion, or no religion; but to halt between the two is a lame business that will be ruinous to you.

[Luke 23:23](#). *And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that he might be crucified. And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed.*

These men were bribed. The popular feeling was with our Lord to a very large extent, but, under the influence of threats and bribes, they found a mob to cry, “Crucify him.” You know the old saying, *Vox populi vox Dei*,” There is no truth in it. The voice of the people is not the voice of God, for they said, “Crucify him, crucify him.”

[Luke 23:24](#). *And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required.*

Again attempting to evade the responsibility by saying that they should be both accusers and judges.

[Luke 23:25](#). *And he released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired; but he delivered Jesus to their will.*

Sad scene. May our hearts be broken, and made tender, end sanctified by meditation upon it.

Let us turn now to the later events.

[Luke 23:32-33](#). *And there were also two other, malefactors, led with him to be put to death. And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary,*

The margin reads, or the place of a skull, when they were come to the place which is called a skull.

[Luke 23:33](#). *There they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.*

Come hither, soul. Thou who readest this chapter, come to this place of a skull. It is the first resting-place of every weary soul. There is no rest for the sole of your foot till first you come to Calvary, and see your Saviour die.

[Luke 23:34](#). *Then said Jesus,*

As they crucify him.

[Luke 23:34](#). *Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.*

Verses 26-33

Now, Luke supplies some particulars which Mark has left out. Turn, therefore, to the 23rd chapter of Luke and the 26th verse. Luke, also, tells us of Simon.

[Luke 23:26](#). *And as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus.*

Now these are the things which Mark has not put in.

[Luke 23:27](#); [Luke 23:29](#). *And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck.*

This was accounted a curse, but their curses should seem blessings unto them when compared with the curse of the dreadful slaughter at Jerusalem.

[Luke 23:30-31](#). *Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree what shall be done in the dry?*

If they do these things while yet the Jewish State is standing, what will they do when that State is broken up? If they do these things to innocent persons, a green tree, what will they do to the unhallowed person, the ungodly and the rebellions, who are like dry, rotten trees? How will the flame lay hold on those branches out of which the sap of virtue has long ago been dried?

[Luke 23:32](#). *And there were also two other malefactors,*

It should be others—there should be an “s” there.

[Luke 23:32-33](#). *Led with him to be put to death. And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the*

malefactors, one on the right hand and the other on the left.

Shall we refuse to take up our cross and follow the Lord Jesus Christ? I think not. If any ask us whether we will leave him because of the fears which may be excited by the world's frowns, this shall be our answer—let us sing it—with regard to the world and all its temptations:—

“No, facing all its frowns or smiles,
Counting its gain but loss;
Without the camp we take our place,
With Jesus bear the cross.”

This exposition consisted of readings from [Psalms 69:1-21](#). [Mark 15:15-23](#). [Luke 23:26-33](#).

Verses 27-49

[Luke 23:27-31](#). *And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?*

Our Saviour, even amidst the greatest sufferings, seemed almost to forget them in the deep sympathy that he had for the people around him. He pictured in his mind's eye that awful siege of Jerusalem. Who can read it, as Josephus describes it, without feeling the deepest horror? Oh, the misery of the women and of the children in that dreadful day when the zealots turned against each other within the city, and fought to the death, and when the Roman soldiery, pitiless as wolves, at last stormed the place! Truly did the Saviour say of it that there should be no day like to it; neither was there it was the concentration of human misery; and our Lord wept because he foresaw what it would be, and he bade these poor women reserve their tears for those awful sorrows.

[Luke 23:32-33](#) *And there were also two other, malefactors, led with him to be put to death And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.*

O blessed Master they did not spare thee any scorn! There was no mode of expressing their contempt, which their malignity did not invent. Truly,

“he was cumbered with the transgressors.” You could not count the three sufferers on Calvary without counting him; he was so completely numbered with the others that he must be reckoned as one of them.

[Luke 23:34](#). *Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.*

It was all that he could say in their favor, and he did say that. If there is anything to be said in thy favor, O my fellow-sinner, Christ will say it; and if there is nothing good in thee that his eyes can light upon, he will pray or his own account, “Father, forgive them for my sake.”

[Luke 23:34](#). *And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.*

His garments were the executioners’ perquisites; pitilessly they took them from him, and left him naked in his shameful sorrow.

[Luke 23:35](#). *And the people stood beholding.*

There was no pity in their eyes. No one of them turned away his face because he could not look upon so disgraceful a deed.

[Luke 23:35](#). *And the rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God.*

I have already reminded you that there was a deep truth hidden away in what these cruel mockers said, for Jesus must give himself up as a ransom if we were to be redeemed.

[Luke 23:36-38](#). *And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar, and saying, If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself. And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew,*

For these were the three languages known to the throng, and Pilate invited them all to read in “Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew,”-

[Luke 23:38-39](#). *THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS. And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.*

Poor man; even though he is dying a felon’s death, he must be in the swim with the multitude, he must keep in with the fashion, so strong, so powerful, is the popular current with all mankind.

[Luke 23:40-42](#). *But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.*

It was strange that Christ should find a friend dying on the cross by his side. Nobody else spoke to him about a kingdom. I am afraid that even his former followers began to think that it was all a delusion; but this dying thief cheers the heart of Jesus by the mention of a kingdom, and by making a request to him concerning that kingdom even when the King was in his death agony.

[Luke 23:43](#). *And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.*

The Master, you see, uses his old phraseology. In his preaching, he had been accustomed to say, “Verily, verily,” and here he is, even on the cross, the same Preacher still, for there was such assurance, such confidence, such verity, in all his words, that he never had to alter his style of speaking. “Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.” Well does our poet put it,-“

He that distributes crowns and thrones,
Hangs on a tree, and bleeds and groans.”

He was distributing these crowns and thrones even while hanging on the tree. “Tell it out among the nations that the Lord reigneth from the tree,” may not be an exact translation of the Psalm, but it is true, Psalm or no Psalm.

[Luke 23:44](#). *And it was about the sixth hour,
About noon, when the sun was at its height.*

[Luke 23:44](#). *And there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour.*

Three o’clock in the afternoon.

[Luke 23:45](#). *And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst.*

As if the great light of heaven and the pattern of heavenly things were both disturbed. The sun puts on mourning, and the temple rends her veil in horror at the awful deed enacted on the cross.

[Luke 23:46](#). *And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said,
Father,*

Is it not sweet to see how Jesus begins and ends his prayers on the cross with “Father”?

[Luke 23:46-48](#). *Into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost. Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man. And all the*

people that came together to that sight, beholding the things, which were done, smote their breasts, and returned.

A strange ending to that day, was it not? The three hours' darkness and the death-cry of the Christ had not converted them, but it had convicted them of sin. They felt that a great and heinous crime had been committed; and, though they had come together as to a mere show or sight, they went away from the spectacle impressed as they had never been before: "All the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned."

[Luke 23:49](#). *And all his acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things.*

In these doings on Calvary you and I have a share,-in their guilt, or else in their merit. Oh, that we may not be condemned with those who were guilty of his death, but may we be cleansed by that precious blood which puts away the sin of all who believe on him!

This exposition consisted of readings from [Mark 15:15-39](#); and [Luke 23:27-49](#).

Verses 33-46

We have often read the story of our Saviour's sufferings; but we cannot read it too often. Let us, therefore, once again repair to "the place which is called Calvary." As we just now sang, —

"Come, let us stand beneath the cross;

So may the blood from out his side Fall gently on us drop by drop;

Jesus, our Lord is crucified."

We will read, first, Luke's account of our Lord's crucifixion and death.

[Luke 23:33](#). *And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one of the right hand, and the other on the left.*

They gave Jesus the place of dishonour. Reckoning him to be the worst criminal of the three, they put him between the other two. They heaped upon him the utmost scorn which they could give to a malefactor; and in so doing they unconsciously honoured him. Jesus always deserves the chief place wherever he is. In all things he must have the pre-eminence. He is King of sufferers as well as King of saints.

[Luke 23:34](#). *Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.*

How startled they must have been to hear such words from one who was about to be put to death for a supposed crime! The men that drove the nails, the men that lifted up the tree, must have been started back with amazement when they heard Jesus talk to God as his Father, and pray for them: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Did ever Roman legionary hear such words before? I should say not. They were so distinctly and diametrically opposed to the whole spirit of Rome. There is was blow for blow; only in the case of Jesus they gave blows where none had been received. The crushing cruelty of the Roman must have been startled indeed at such words as these, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

[Luke 23:34](#). *And they parted his raiment, and cast lots. And the people stood beholding.*

The gambling soldiers little dreamed that they were fulfilling Scriptures while they were raffling for the raiment of the illustrious Sufferer on the cross; yet so it was. In the twenty-second Psalm, which so fully sets forth our Saviour's sufferings, and which he probably repeated while he hung on the tree, David wrote, "They parted my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture." "And the people stood beholding," gazing, looking on the cruel spectacle. You and I would not have done that; there is a public sentiment which has trained us to hate the sight of cruelty, especially of deadly cruelty to one of our own race; but these people thought that they did no harm when they "stood beholding." They also were thus fulfilling the Scriptures; for the seventeenth verse of the twenty-second Psalm says, "They look and stare upon me."

[Luke 23:35](#). *And the rulers also with them derided him, Laughed at him, made him the object of course jests.*

[Luke 23:35](#). *Saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God. And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar.*

In mockery, not giving it to him, as they did later in mercy; but in mockery, pretending to present him with weak wine, such as they drank.

[Luke 23:37](#). *And saying, If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself.*

I fancy the scorn that they threw into their taunt: "If thou be the king of the Jews;" that was a bit of their own. "Save thyself;" that they borrowed from the rulers. Sometimes a scoffer or a mocker cannot exhibit all the

bitterness that is in his heart except by using borrowed terms, as these soldiers did.

[Luke 23:38](#). *And a superscription also was written over him in the letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.*

John tells us that Pilate wrote this title, and that the chief priests tried in vain to get him to alter it. It was written in the three current languages of the time, so that the Greek, the Roman, and the Jew might alike understand who he was who was thus put to death. Pilate did not know as much about Christ as we do, or he might have written, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS, and OF THE GENTILES, TOO.

[Luke 23:39](#). *And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.*

He, too, borrows this speech from the rulers who derided Christ, only putting the words “and us” as a bit of originality. “If thou be the Christ, save thyself and us.”

[Luke 23:40](#). *But the other answering rebuked him saying, Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss.*

A fine testimony to Christ: “This man hath done nothing amiss;” nothing unbecoming, nothing out of order, nothing criminal, certainly; but nothing even “amiss.” This testimony was well spoken by this dying thief.

[Luke 23:42](#). *And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily, I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise. And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst. And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up his ghost.*

He yielded his life. He did not die, as we have to do, because our appointed time has come, but willingly the great Sacrifice parted with his life: “He gave up the ghost.” He was a willing sacrifice for guilty men. Now let us see what John says concerning these hours of agony, these hours of triumph.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Luke 23:33-46](#); [John 19:25-30](#)

LUKE CONTENTS

CHAPTER 24

Verses 1-53

Luke 24:1-11. *Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulcher, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them. And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulcher. And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus. And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments: and as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. And they remembered his words, and returned to the sepulcher, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest. It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them, which told these things unto the apostles. And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not.*

What an emptying power unbelief has! No news could ever be more full of solace than the news of a risen Saviour; but to the ears of unbelief this news, which made all heaven glad, seemed to the apostles but as idle tales. Unbelief tied the hands of Jesus once when he was at Nazareth, for “he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief:” and unbelief seems often to tie our heart-strings too, so that they can give forth no sweet music. O Lord, help us to overcome our unbelief, and enable us ever confidently to believe the truth that comes to us supported by such testimony as these good women gave to the apostles!

Luke 24:12-14. *Then arose Peter, and ran unto the sepulcher; and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass. And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about three score furlongs. And they talked together of all these things which had happened.*

As was most proper, they that feared the Lord spake often one to another. Just as Elijah and Elisha talked with each other as they went towards the Jordan where Elijah was to be translated, so these two disciples were talking together of the great events that had recently happened; and especially talking of the death and the reported resurrection of Christ. This was most natural, for what is uppermost in the heart will soon be uppermost upon the tongue. They had had their minds greatly exercised concerning the departure of their Lord, and it was only natural that they should speak of it. If we never talk of Christ, we have great reason to suspect whether he is really in our hearts at all. Christ's declaration to his disciples, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them," was literally fulfilled in the case of these two disciples going to Emmaus.

[Luke 24:15](#). *And it came to pass that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them.*

And, beloved, if you would have communion with Christ, have communion with one another. If my Lord will not reveal himself to me, perhaps he will reveal himself to others, therefore let me get into the company of his chosen, and then, surely, when he appears in the midst of their assembly, I shall have a share of the fellowship that they will enjoy.

[Luke 24:16-19](#). *But their eyes were holden that they should not know him. And he said unto them, What manner of communication are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad? And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass in these days? And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: —*

What a little advance these disciples had made in the knowledge of Christ! He had been their Teacher, they had seen his miracles, and yet, though they had been constantly under his superintendence, they had not learned enough to know that he was divine. The Holy Ghost had not yet been given; and, without the Holy Spirit's divine instruction, these disciples could only say that Christ "was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people:" —

[Luke 24:20-25](#). *And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, today*

is the third day since these things were done. Yea, and certain woman also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulcher; and when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive. And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulcher, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not. Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken.

Supposing him to be a stranger in Jerusalem, yet one who was well acquainted with Jewish prophecy, they had told him exactly what the prophecies had foretold concerning the Messiah. If they had meant to refer to the various prophecies concerning Christ, they could not have detailed facts which would have more accurately fulfilled them, and therefore Christ said to them “O you foolish men, how slow of heart you are to believe all that the prophets have spoken!”

[Luke 24:26](#). *Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, —*

“Are not those just the very things which the prophets say that the Christ, the Anointed, must suffer? ‘Ought not Christ to have suffered these things,’” —

[Luke 24:26-28](#). *And to enter into his glory and beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further.*

For Christ never forces his company upon anyone; and if we are willing to let him go, he will go, nor will he return until we are heartily sick of having treated him coldly. When we can no longer bear the absence of Christ, then he will speedily return to us. There is an instance of this in the life of Christmas Evans, which impressed me very much when I read it. Sandemanianism had spread very much through Wales, and he had been very busy attacking it; but it seemed as if, in doing so, his sermons had lost all their former power and unction, and his own soul also grew very dry and barren, and he had little or no fellowship with Christ. He said that, at last, his soul grew utterly weary of being absent from his Lord and he could not endure it any longer, but felt that he must once again enjoy communion with his Lord, and experience the power of the Holy Spirit in his preaching. So he stopped at the foot of Cader Idris and spent some three hours in an intense agony of prayer; and the result was that, when he next preached, he did so with all the unction and power which had formerly rested upon him.

He had grown weary of the absence of Christ and therefore Christ returned to him. O brethren, if Christ makes as though he would go further, do not let him go, but hold him fast!

[Luke 24:29-33](#). *But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them. And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him, and he vanished out of their sight. And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures? And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, —*

This shows their zeal and also their courage; this news was too good to be kept to themselves, and although it was nearly night, and they had a good distance to go, in a country that was far from safe for travelers, they “returned to Jerusalem,” —

[Luke 24:33-36](#). *And found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon. And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread. And as they spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.*

No more appropriate greeting could have been given to the troubled disciples.

[Luke 24:37-45](#). *But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And he said unto them, why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see: for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And he took it, and did eat before them. And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures.*

And he said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in the name of all nations, beginning

in Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high. And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.

Verses 13-35

[Luke 24:13-15](#). *And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them.*

Where two talk of heavenly things they shall not be long without a third. Jesus loves holy company, and he will join himself to those who in their conversation join themselves to him.

[Luke 24:16-17](#). *But their eyes were holden that they should not know him. And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?*

The first part of that question some professors might be ashamed to answer, “What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another as ye walk?” It is not always that all Sunday talk is Sabbath talk — not always that we converse as we should upon the things of God. We are, many of us, blameworthy here.

[Luke 24:18-19](#). *And one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days? And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and in word before God and all the people:*

Just as a schoolmaster, though he knows more than the children, yet asks them questions to see what they know. So did the Saviour, “What things?.... And they said to him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in word and deed.” I ought to have said, “in deed and word.” You see my mistake. That is how we put it, “word and deed,” for our words go first, but, with Christ, the practical comes first, and then commences the doctrinal.

[Luke 24:20-24](#). *And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, today is the third day since these things were done. Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulcher; and when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive. And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulcher, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not.*

They made out a very clear case against their own unbelief here. They had the evidence of the women, and they had the evidence of the men of their own company; the women, they knew were honest. About their own company they could have no doubt, but yet they did not draw the inference which was clear enough, namely, that Jesus had risen, and that what he said he was he had proved himself to be.

[Luke 24:25-26](#). *Then he said unto them. O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?*

Is not this just what he said he would do?

[Luke 24:27-28](#). *And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further.*

Never had they had a shorter walk in their lives; his holy talk had made the journey seem as nothing, and sorry they were to see the village, and especially when they found, that their companion had an idea of going further.

[Luke 24:29](#). *But they constrained him saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them.*

O wise disciple, when thou hast thy Master to hold him. "I held him," says the spouse; "I held him, and I would not let him go." So may it be with us.

[Luke 24:30-31](#). *And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight.*

Sometimes when you do not remember a friend who has greatly changed, or from whom you have been long apart, some old familiar sign

will bring it all back as with a rush of memory; you know him at once. Now if this were an ordinary meal, as perhaps it was, Jesus was so in the habit of giving thanks that they knew him by that. I wish we knew every Christian by the same sign. Or if this were, indeed, a celebration of his own sacred festival, then again they knew, for is not this the sign between Christ and his people, and is not this table the place where Jesus meets his beloved? “And their eyes were opened, and they knew him.” But they knew him to see him no more that night.

[Luke 24:32-35](#). *And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures? And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, Saying, the Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon. And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread.*

Did they go to their beds? The day was far spent; late traveling was dangerous in Israel. Ah! dangerous or not, they are so overwhelmed with joy that they must go and communicate what they had seen.

Verses 13-48

[Luke 24:13-15](#). *And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them.*

When two saints are talking together, Jesus is very likely to come and make the third one in the company. Talk of him, and you will soon talk with him. I would that believers more often spoke the one to the other about the things of God. It has been said that, in the olden time, God’s people spake often one to another; and now we have altered that, and God’s people speak often one against another. It is an alteration; but it certainly is not an improvement. May we get together again, and, like these two disciples, talk of all the things that happened in Jerusalem eighteen centuries ago! If we have less of reasoning than they had, let us have more of communion.

[Luke 24:16](#). *But their eyes were holden that they should not know him.*

Christ was there; but they did not perceive him. Our eyes may be very easily shut so that we do not see Christ even when he is close to us; we see a thousand things; but we miss the Master.

[Luke 24:17](#). *And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?*

Christian people, why are you sad? It should not be so. And when you talk, why do you increase each other's sadness? Is that wisdom? Surely, the Master might say to some here present, "Why are ye sad?" I hope that he will enable you to shake off the sadness, and to rejoice in him.

[Luke 24:18-20](#). *And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days? And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him.*

These were sad things to talk about. They thought that they had lost all when they had lost Christ; and yet there is no theme in all the world that is more full of joy than talk about the crucified Christ. This is strange, is it not? If we look beneath the surface, we shall see that the darkest deed that was ever perpetrated has turned out to be the greatest blessing to mankind; and that the cruelest crime ever committed by mortal man has been made the channel of the divinest benediction of God.

[Luke 24:21-23](#). *But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, today is the third day since these things were done. Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulcher; and when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive.*

How innocently they tell the story! How they convict themselves of stark unbelief! And the Master hears it all patiently and quietly. What a strange sensation it must have been for him to hear them talking about him in this singular way when, all the while, they did not know who the "stranger" was to whom they were speaking! Have you ever thought of what the Saviour must think of many things that we say? We think them wise; but they must be very foolish to the eye of his infinite wisdom, and very shallow to him who sees everything to the bottom.

[Luke 24:24-25](#). *And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulcher, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw*

not. Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken:

He loved them tenderly, but he rebuked them strongly, I had almost said sternly: “O fools, and slow of heart!” I am afraid that is our name: “fools.” I am afraid that it may be said of us that we are “slow of heart to believe.” We want so many proofs. We very readily disbelieve, but we very slowly believe. If you had a piano in your house, and you left it for months; and when you came back, you found it all in beautiful tune, you would be sure that somebody must have been there to put it in tune; but if, on the other hand, you left it to itself, and it got out of tune, you would say that such a condition was only what was to be expected. So it is natural for us to get out of tune. Sometimes we ring out glad music on the high sounding cymbals, and we lift up the loud hallelujahs of exultant joy; but soon we are down again in the deeps, and strike a minor key. Grace alone can raise us; nature, alas! sinks if left to itself.

[Luke 24:26-27](#). *Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.*

The best Book, with the best Teacher, descanting upon the best of subjects. Everywhere this Book speaks about Christ; and when Christ explains it, he only brings himself more clearly before our minds.

[Luke 24:28](#). *And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went:*

They were sorry to be nearing their destination. They would have liked to walk to the ends of the earth in such company, and listening to such conversation.

[Luke 24:28](#). *And he made as though he would have gone further.*

Christ intended to go further unless the two disciples constrained him to tarry with them.

[Luke 24:29](#). *But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for 'it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.*

That is our prayer to the Lord Jesus tonight, “Abide with us, dear Master; we had thy blessed company this morning; and now the sun is almost down, abide with us!” Let each one of us pray the prayer that we often sing, for, morning, noon, and night, this is a suitable supplication:—

Abide with me from morn till eve,
For without thee I cannot live;
Abide with me when night is nigh,

For without thee I dare not die.”

[Luke 24:29-31](#). *And he went in to tarry with them. And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him;*

In the breaking of bread Christ is often known. It is a wonderful emblem. Even if this breaking of bread were not the observance of the Lord’s Supper, it was something very like it. Christ’s blessing and breaking of bread anywhere are the true token of himself.

[Luke 24:31-33](#). *And he vanished out of their sight. And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures? And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem,*

It was getting late; but it is never too late to tell of Christ’s appearing, and never too early. Such a secret ought not to be kept an hour, and therefore “they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem.”

[Luke 24:33-36](#). *And found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon. And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread. And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them,*

You see that, while they were talking about Christ, he came, and stood in their midst. Speak of your Master, and he will appear. Oh, happy people! who have but to talk of Jesus, and lo! he comes to them.

[Luke 24:37-40](#). *But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet.*

They knew those signs, the marks of his crucifixion. They ought to have been convinced at once that it was even he.

[Luke 24:41](#). *And while they yet believed not for joy,*

Does joy stop faith? Beloved, anything stops faith if we will let it. Faith is a divine miracle. Wherever it exists, God creates it, and God sustains it; but without God, anything can hinder it: “while they yet believed not for joy,”-

[Luke 24:41](#). *And wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat?*

That is, “anything eatable.”

[Luke 24:42](#). *And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish,*
Which, as fishermen, they were pretty sure always to have.

[Luke 24:42](#). *And of an honeycomb.*

As a second course, to complete the meal.

[Luke 24:43](#). *And he took it, and did eat before them.*

Some of the old versions add, “and gave the rest to them,” which I think is very likely to have been the case. It would be all the more convincing to them if he really ate before them, and then that they also partook of the same food of which he had taken part.

[Luke 24:44-45](#). *And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures,*

Good Master, do the same with us tonight!

[Luke 24:46-47](#). *And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.*

This gospel message was to be proclaimed among all nations, “beginning at Jerusalem”, but not ending there. It has been preached to us; let us see to it that we pass it on to those who have never heard it yet.

[Luke 24:48](#). *And ye are witnesses of these things.*

We also are called to be “witnesses of these things.” May the Lord make us to be faithful and true witnesses, for his name’s sake! Amen.

Verses 32-44

[Luke 24:32-35](#). *And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures? And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together and them that were with them, saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon. And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread.*

These were the two disciples who had recognized their Lord in the breaking of bread, though they did not know him during their walk with him to Emmaus.

[Luke 24:36](#). *And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in time midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.*

This was the common Jewish salutation; but, henceforth, it would be sanctified most divinely, and it would be a Christian greeting to say, “Peace be unto you.”

[Luke 24:37-44](#). *But they were terrified and affrighted and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And he took it, and did eat before them. And he said unto them, These are the words which I spoke unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things ‘must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.*

Notice the seals which our Lord continually set upon the Old Testament, the manner in which he always treated the Scripture, the reverent way in which he confessed its infallibility, and his determination that, in every item, every jot and tittle, it should be fulfilled by himself. This was often manifested before his death; and, on his return from the grave, he had not changed his mind. He here speaks of the three great parts into which the Old Testament was divided by the Jews, and he expressly sets the seal of his royal assent upon “the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms.” May we, in like manner, prize the whole-inspired Word!

This exposition consisted of readings from [Mark 16:1-14](#); [Luke 24:32-44](#).

Verses 49-53

This Exposition belongs to last week’s Sermon, but there was no space available for its insertion there, and no Exposition appears to have been given before the preceding discourse.

[Luke 24:49](#). *And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.*

The promise of the Father was, as you know, the gift of the Holy Spirit. By this gift our Lord’s rising again into glory was celebrated. The Holy Spirit was the heavenly largess of the great King by which he did honour to

the return of his Son to his ancient throne. The apostles and the other disciples were to wait for this gift. They might have to wait for some days, but it is better to wait for divine equipment than to go out to holy service in our own strength. All that you do will have to be undone unless it is done in the power of the Holy Ghost. “But tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.” Has that command ever struck some people who profess to be serving the Lord? Are there not men who preach whom God never sent to preach? The best advice we could give them would be, “Tarry ye.” Are there not some who teach, and some who take office in the church, whom God has never endued with gifts or graces for such work? Powerless workers stand in the way of true workers, they block up the path of those whom God sends to serve him.

[Luke 24:50](#). *And he led them out as far as to Bethany,* —

The ruling passion was strong in the hour of his departure. Well did he know that place, Bethany, — the place of love, where he had received a welcome such as he had experienced nowhere else on earth, — where lived Mary, and Martha, and Lazarus; — there did he bid “Good-bye” to his disciples.

[Luke 24:50](#). *And he lifted up his hands, and blessed them.*

He never had lifted up his hands to strike them, or to invoke curses upon them. Those hands were filled with blessings, and the last thing that was seen of Jesus by human eyes was his hands uplifted in the act of blessing.

[Luke 24:51-52](#). *And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him, —*

Then they were not Unitarians — “They worshipped him,” — and there were angels present at the time who would have been sure to have rebuked them if it had been a wrong thing for them to worship him. Indeed, they themselves, both as Jews and as Christians, would have felt, in their inmost soul, that they could not worship anyone but God; but Christ is God, so they did well to worship him.

[Luke 24:52](#). *And returned to Jerusalem with great joy:*

Back to the place of his murder, — back to the place where they were likely to be themselves murdered.

[Luke 24:53](#). *And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.*

So bold were they that the very central spot for the worship of Jehovah we made the place where Christ’s divine sovereignty was proclaimed.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Luke 24:49-53](#); and [Acts 1:1-12](#)

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MAIN CONTENTS

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CHAPTER 1

Verses 1-34

May the Holy Spirit, who inspired these words, inspire us through them as we read them!

[John 1:1](#). *In the beginning was the Word.*

The divine Logos, whom we know as the Christ of God. “In the beginning was the Word.” The first words of this gospel remind us of the first words of the Old Testament: “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” Even then “the Word” was; he existed before all time, even from everlasting.

[John 1:1](#). *And the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

I know not how the Deity of Christ can be more plainly declared than in his eternal duration. He is from the beginning. In his glory he was “with God.” In his nature he “was God.”

[John 1:2](#). *The same was in the beginning with God.*

As we have been singing —

“Ere sin was born, or Satan fell;”

ere there was a creation that could fall,

“the same was in the beginning with God.”

[John 1:3](#). *All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.*

He that hung upon the cross was the Maker of all worlds. He that came as an infant, for our sake, was the Infinite. How low he stooped! How high he must have been that he could stoop so low!

[John 1:4](#). *In him was life;*

Essentially, Eternally.

[John 1:4](#). *And the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.*

It never has done so; it never will. You may sometimes call the darkness, the ignorance of men, or the sin of men. If you like, you may call it the wisdom of men, and the righteousness of men, for that is only another form of the same darkness. “The light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.”

[John 1:6](#). *There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.*

How very different is the style of this verse from the one that precedes it!

How grand, how sublime, are the Evangelist’s words when he speaks of Jesus! How truly human he becomes, how he dips his pen in ordinary ink, when he writes: “There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.” Yet that was a noble testimony to the herald of Christ. John the Baptist was “a man sent from God.”

[John 1:7](#). *The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe.*

Dear friends, if you and I know our real destiny, and are the servants of God, we are sent that men might, through us, believe in Jesus. John was a special witness; but we ought all to be witnesses to complete the chain of testimony. Every Christian man should reckon that he is sent from God to bear witness to the great Light, that, through him, men might believe.

[John 1:8-9](#). *He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.*

There was no light from John except what he reflected from his Lord. All the light comes from Jesus. Every man who comes into the world with any light borrows his light from Christ. There is no other light; there can be no other. He is the “Light of the World.”

[John 1:10](#). *He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.*

This is a sad verse. He was a stranger in his own house. He was unknown amidst his own handiwork. Men whom he had made, made nothing of him.

“The world knew him not;” did not recognize him.

[John 1:11](#). *He came unto his own, and his own received him not.*

That favored circle, the Jewish nation, where revelation had been given, even there, there was no place for him. He must be despised and rejected even by his own nation.

[John 1:12-13](#). *But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*

To receive Christ, a man must be born of God. It is the simplest thing in all the world, one would think, to open the door of the heart, and let him in; but no man lets Christ into his heart till first God has made him to be born again, born from above.

[John 1:14](#). *And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.*

They who saw Christ on earth were highly privileged; but it is a spiritual sight of him alone that is to be desired, and we can have that even now.

How full of grace, how full of truth, he is to all those who are privileged to behold him!

[John 1:15-16](#). *John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me. And of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace.*

I wish that we could all say that. Even out of this company, many can say it; and linking our hands with those who have gone before us, and those who are still with us in the faith, we say unitedly, "Of his fullness have all we received," and we hope to receive from it again tonight, for it is still his fullness. There is never a trace of declining in him. It was fullness when the first sinner came to him; and it is fullness still; it will be fullness to the very end. "And grace for grace." We get grace to reach out to another grace, each grace becoming a stepping-stone to something higher. I do not believe in our rising on the "stepping-stones of our dead selves." They are poor stones; they all lead downwards. The stepping-stones of the living Christ lead upwards; grace for grace, grace upon grace, till grace is crowned with glory.

[John 1:17](#). *For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.*

We know that the law came by Moses. The law has often burdened us, crushed us, convinced us, condemned us. Let us be equally clear that grace and truth come by this divine channel, "Jesus Christ."

[John 1:18](#). *No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.*

We do not want to see God apart from Christ. I am perfectly satisfied to see the Eternal Light through his own chosen medium, Christ Jesus. Apart from that medium, the light might blind my eyes. “No man hath seen God at any time.” Who can look on the sun? What mind can look on God? But Christ does not hide the Father; he manifests him. “The only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.”

[John 1:19-22](#). *And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? And he confessed and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou the prophet? And he answered, No. Then said thy unto him, Who art thou? That we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? He said, I am the voice--*

Not “I am the Word,” but “I am the voice.” Christ is the essential Word; we are but the voice to make that word sound across the desert of human life.

[John 1:23](#). *Of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias.*

You see, even as a voice, John was not original. That straining after originality, of which we see so much today, finds no warrant among the true servants of God. Even though John is only a voice, yet he is a voice that quotes the Scriptures: “Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias.” The more of Scripture we can voice, the better. Our words, what are they? They are but air. His Word, what is it? It is “grace and truth.” May we continually be lending a voice to the great Words of God that have gone before!

[John 1:24-27](#). *And they which were sent were of the Pharisees. And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet? John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not; He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose.*

Ah! Dear friends, although it was a lowly expression that John used, you and I often feel that we want something that goes lower even than that. What are we worthy to do for Christ? Yet there are times when, if there is a shoe-latchet to be unloosed, we are too proud to stoop to do it. When there is something to be done that will bring no honour to us, we are too high and

mighty to do it. O child of God, if you have ever been in that condition, be greatly ashamed of yourself! John was first in his day, the morning-star of the Light of the gospel, yet even he felt that he was not worthy to do the least thing for Christ. Where shall you and I put ourselves? Paul said that he was “less than the least of all the saints.” He ran away with a title that might have been very appropriate for us. Well, we must let him have it, I suppose; and we must try to find another like it; or if we cannot find suitable words, God help us to have the humble feeling, which is better still!

[John 1:28-29](#). *These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing. The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.*

John preached a sacrificial Saviour, a sin-bearing Saviour, a sin-atonement Saviour. You and I have nothing else to preach. Let each of us say —

“Tis all my business here below
To cry, Behold the Lamb!”

[John 1:30-31](#). *This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. And I knew him not:*

Although John knew the Saviour personally, he did not know him officially.

He had a token given to him by God, by which he was to know the Messiah; and he did not officially know him till he had that token fulfilled.

[John 1:31-33](#). *But that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.*

John would not know of his own judgment. No doubt he was morally certain that Jesus was the Christ. He had been brought up with him; he knew his mother, he had heard of his wondrous birth; John and Jesus must have been often together; but he was not to use his own judgment in this case, but to wait for the sign from heaven; and until he witnessed it, he did not say a word about it. When he saw the Holy Ghost descend upon him, then he knew that it was even he.

[John 1:34](#). *And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.*

Hear ye, then, the witness of John. The Christ, who came from Nazareth to be baptized of him in Jordan, he on whom the Holy Ghost descended like

a dove, “this is the Son of God.” This is the sin-bearing Lamb. Oh, that you and I might fulfill John’s expectation, for he spoke that we might believe. He, being dead, yet speaketh. May we believe his witness, and be assured that “this is the Son of God”!

Verses 1-37

John is the majestic Evangelist; he is the high-soaring eagle with the piercing eye. His is the Gospel of the Son of God.

[John 1:1-3](#). *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made.*

We cannot describe the Deity of Christ in clearer language than John uses. He was with God; he was God; he did the works of God, for he was the Creator. If any doubt his Deity, they must do so in distinct defiance of the language of Holy Scripture.

[John 1:4-5](#). *In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.*

Christ is still not understood, Jesus is still not known. How should darkness understand light? It opposes light, it has to flee before light, but it does not, it cannot understand light. O God, work a miracle in our dark hearts, and fill them with the light of Christ!

[John 1:6-7](#). *There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe.*

That is our business, too. We who are ministers sent from God bear witness of the Light, that all men through him may believe. Oh, how often we go home, and cry, “Who hath believed our report?” We do not ask you to believe in us; no, but in our Master, whose heralds we are. If we can lead you to faith in him, we shall be glad indeed; but, if not, we will sorrow because we have missed our mark, and failed in our purpose.

[John 1:8-9](#). *He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.*

If any man has saving light, true light, he gets it through Christ. There is no other light; all other light is but darkness visible. The light in which we see God comes from Jesus.

[John 1:10](#). *He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.*

Strange was it that the Creator came to his own earth, and yet he was unknown. Men mistook him, they hated him, they crucified him whom they ought to have entertained with sacred hospitality, and worshipped with holy loyalty.

[John 1:11-12](#). *He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:*

All men are not the sons of God; the doctrine of the universal Fatherhood is utterly untrue. They only become the sons of God who receive Christ, and believe on his name; else are they heirs of wrath, even as others:

“To them gave he power to become the sons of God.”

[John 1:13](#). *Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*

There is another birth beside the natural one; never does the birth of the flesh make us Christians. If our ancestry should be a line of saints yet are we born sinners; we must be born again if we are to become saints. If we could trace our pedigree to a perfect man, if such there be, yet the birth by the flesh would not avail us. Sons of God are.” born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

[John 1:14](#). *And the Word was made flesh,*

Here was the incarnation of him who made all things. He that is God “was made flesh.”

[John 1:14](#). *And dwelt among us, (and we —*

The apostles —

[John 1:14](#). *Beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.*

Oh, all ye who would know Christ, learn that he is worth the knowing! He is full of grace for your sinnership, and full of truth for your ignorance. He can cleanse and he can teach; there is everything in him that you need. You shall not be deceived, for he is full of truth; you shall not be rejected, for he is full of grace.

[John 1:15-18](#). *John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me. And of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. No man hath seen God at any time;*

He is too high, too spiritual, to be perceived by human senses.

[John 1:18](#). *The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.*

What of God we need to know, we may see in Christ; enough to save us, enough to sanctify us, enough to make us all like the only-begotten Son of the Father.

[John 1:19-20](#). *And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ.*

With indignation he must have repelled the idea that he was the Messiah:

“I am not the Christ.”

[John 1:21-23](#). *And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No. Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? He said, I am the voice —*

Humbly he reduces himself to a voice; but he was not “a voice and nothing more.” There was much that was mighty and wise in that voice.

[John 1:23-27](#). *Of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias. And they which were sent were of the Pharisees. And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet? John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not; he it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose.*

How John hides himself behind his Master! He was a most worthy man, a truly great man; but he counted himself unworthy of the most menial service for Christ, and felt honoured by filling the office of a slave to unloose his Master's shoe's latchet. It is better to be the slave of Christ than to rule vast empires; he who truly serveth him is glorified thereby.

[John 1:28-29](#). *These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing. The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.*

Now is he bringing out his message; now is he pointing out his Master.

[John 1:30-31](#). *This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. And I knew him not:*

John knew Jesus very well; but he did not know him as the Sent One of God, the Messiah, till after he had received the sign and token at his baptism: "I knew him not."

[John 1:31-34](#). *But that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.*

Jesus and John must have been well acquainted with one another; they were closely related, but John was not to know anybody as the Messiah till he received the token from God. When he saw that token, then he officially knew, and he bore instant witness: "This is the Son of God."

[John 1:35-36](#). *Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; and looking upon Jesus as he walked,*

With holy reverence, with loving awe, gazing upon this extraordinary Person "as he walked", —

[John 1:36-37](#). *He saith, Behold the Lamb of God! And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.*

This is our one business tonight, to cry, "Behold the Lamb of God!"

Verses 15-37

[John 1:15](#). *John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me.*

He was not before John in the order of human birth, yet he was truly before John, for he had an eternal pre-existence, as he was none other than the uncreated Son of God.

[John 1:16-21](#). *And of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him. And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered; No.*

As they meant, “Art thou, literally, the prophet Elijah risen from the dead?”

“John said,” “I am not.” “Art thou that prophet of whom Moses foretold?”

“And he answered, No.” John gave short, sharp answers to these cavilers.

He was not a man of dainty words and polished periods, especially in dealing with such people as they were.

[John 1:22-23](#). *Then said they unto him, who art thou that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? He said, I am the voice--*

Not “the Word.” — Christ is that, but John was “the voice.”

[John 1:23-37](#). *Of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias. And they which were sent were of the Pharisees. And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet? John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not; he it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose. These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing. The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God. Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples, and looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the lamb of God! And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.*

In the third chapter of the same Gospel, we have yet another testimony by John the Baptist concerning Christ.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Matthew 3:1-12](#); [John 1:15-37](#); [John 3:22-36](#).

Verses 19-33

[John 1:19-28](#). *And this in the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? And he confessed and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No. Then said they unto Him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the Esaias. And they which were sent were of the Pharisees. And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet? John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not: He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet, I am not worthy to unloose. These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing.*

Was that the place where the Israelites caressed the Jordan? It is said to have been so; and truly this is the place where we cross the Jordan too — come out of old Judaism into the true faith of the revealed Christ.

[John 1:29](#). *The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.*

I think I hear the Elijah-like tones of that son of the desert, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”

[John 1:30](#). *This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me.*

Ah! how infinitely before John; how before him? Having no beginning of days, before him in his exalted nature, before him in his superior rank and office!

[John 1:31](#). *And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water.*

It was by baptism that the Christ was to be known. John knew more of Jesus Christ than anybody else, yet he did not know him to be the Lamb of God until he had baptized him.

[John 1:32-33](#). *And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me. Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.*

I doubt not that John had assuredly guessed that Jesus was the person; but he had nothing to do with guesses: he was a witness for God, and he could only speak as God revealed things to him.

This exposition consisted of readings from [John 1:19-33](#); [John 19:1-16](#).

Verses 19-51

[John 1:19-20](#). *And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ.*

“I am not the One anointed of God to save mankind.”

[John 1:21](#). *And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias?*

“Art thou Elijah come back to earth?”

[John 1:21](#). *And he saith, I am not.*

For, though indeed he was the true spiritual Elijah who was to come as the forerunner of the Messiah, yet, in the sense in which they asked the question, the only truthful answer was, “I am not.”

[John 1:21](#). *Art thou that prophet?*

The long-expected prophet foretold by Moses?

[John 1:21-23](#). *And he answered, No. Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? He said, I am the voice –*

That is all; a voice and nothing more. John did not profess to be the Word;

he was only the voice which vocalized that Word, and made it audible to human ears. He came to bear witness to the Christ, but he was not himself the Christ: “I am the voice”

[John 1:23-27](#). *Of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias. And they which were sent were of the Pharisees. and they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet? John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not; he it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose.*

How wisely does God always choose and fashion his servants! John is evidently just the man for his place; he bears testimony to Christ very clearly; he earnestly turns away all attention from himself to his Master; and he has such a reverent esteem for him of whom he is the herald that he puts all honour and glory upon him.

[John 1:28-30](#). *These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing, The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the-sin of the world. This is he of whom I said, after me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me.*

You know, dear friends, that Christ existed from all eternity, so, in very truth, he was before John; you know, too, the glory and the excellency of our Divine Master's person, so that, in another sense, he was and is before John and all other creatures whom he has made.

[John 1:31-34](#). *And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.*

The secret sign of the descent of the Spirit, in dovelike form, upon our Lord, was given to John; and as soon as he saw it, he knew of a surety that Jesus was the Sent One, the Messiah, and that he must point him out to the people.

[John 1:35-36](#). *Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; and looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!*

This was the same text from which he had preached the day before, and it was the same sermon, somewhat shortened. So should it be with us.

His only righteousness I show,
His saving truth proclaim;
'Tis all my business here below
To cry, 'Behold the Lamb!'

[John 1:37](#). *And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.*

Thus John was losing his own disciples. By his testimony to the truth, he was sending them to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, and he did it well and gracefully. There are many who would find it a hard task to reduce the number of their disciples; but it was not so with John.

[John 1:38-46](#). *Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye ? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say,*

being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou ? He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day: for it was about the tenth hour. One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus. and when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone. The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me. Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip findeth Nathanael, and earth unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth ? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.

It was all a seeing gospel. John said, "Behold the Lamb of God!" Then Jesus said, "Come and see;" and now Philip says the same. Faith is that blessed sight by which we discern the Saviour. Whoso looks to Christ by faith shall live.

[John 1:47](#). *Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!*

"There is no craft or deception in this man, as there was in Jacob; he is a true Israelite, like Israel at his best."

[John 1:48](#). *Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me ? Jesus answered and said unto Him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.*

What Nathanael had been doing there, we do not know; probably he had been meditating, or he may have been engaged in prayer. But this announcement was a proof to Nathanael that Jesus could see all things, and read men's hearts, and know what they were doing in their chosen retreats: "When thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee." Christ knows all of you who came in here, tonight, in a prayerful spirit, seeking him. And whenever men are seeking him, be you sure that he is also seeking them.

[John 1:49](#). *Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel.*

"Thou sawest what I was doing in secret; and by that token I perceive that thou art God's own Son."

[John 1:50](#). *Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou! thou shalt see greater things than these.*

Those who are ready to believe Christ, on what may be thought to be slender evidence, shall “see greater things than these.” “Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.” They shall gaze upon a wonderful sight by-and-by.

[John 1:51](#). *And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.*

“Thou art a true Israelite, and thou shalt have Israel’s vision. Thou shalt see the same sight as thy father Jacob saw when he fell asleep with a stone for his pillow, only thy vision shall be far grander than his. Christ always knows how to meet the needs of our hearts, and to give us something in accordance with our own expressions, and to make his answers fit our requests, only that he always far exceeds all that we ask or even think, blessed be his holy name!”

This exposition consisted of readings from [John 1:19-51](#); and [Matthew 4:12-24](#).

Verses 29-42

[John 1:29](#). *The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of god, which taketh away the sin of the world.*

John lost no time. He had no sooner discovered the Saviour than he bore witness of him. “The next day.” As soon as ever his eyes lighted upon Jesus, he had his testimony ready for him. “Behold!” said he, “the Lamb of God.”

[John 1:30-33](#). *This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me: And I knew him not: but that he should manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not:*

At first.

[John 1:33-34](#). *But he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw and bare record, that this is the Son of God.*

Notice how very clear John is. There is no mistaking him. He repeated himself lest there should be any possibility of an error, and he gives the detail of the mode by which he recognized the Saviour, in order that all might be persuaded to accept Jesus as in very truth the Messiah and the Son of God, so that we are to preach very plainly — not with enticing words of men’s wisdom, but with demonstration of the Spirit and with power. What have we to conceal? Nay, we have everything to reveal and our business is that men should be convinced that Jesus is the Christ, and should come and put their trust in him

[John 1:35-36](#). *Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples: And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God?*

There is no objection to preaching the same sermon twice if it be on such a matter as this. “Behold the Lamb of God,” he said one day, and the next day he did not vary the phraseology. He had no new metaphor — no new figure — with which to set forth Christ, but, as striking a nail upon the head and the same nail will help to fasten it, and may do more service than bringing out a new nail, so he gets to the same word and the same subject — “Behold the Lamb of God.”

[John 1:37](#). *And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.*

They went beyond their teacher. And oh! what a mercy it is if our hearers can go Christward far beyond us. John was well content to be left behind if they followed Jesus; and so may any minister of Christ rejoice if his people will follow Jesus, even if they go far beyond his attainments.

[John 1:38](#). *Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye?*

Christ wants intelligent followers: so he asks the question, “What seek ye?”

[John 1:38-39](#). *They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master), where dwellest thou? He saith unto them, Come and see,*

Which is often his answer to enquirers — “Come and see.” “Oh! taste and see that the Lord is good.” Learn by experience. Do not merely hear what I say, but come and see.

[John 1:39-42](#). *They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day: for it was about the tenth hour. One of the two which heard John*

speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus,

This is how the kingdom began to grow — by individual effort. “Andrew findeth Simon”: one convert must bring another: “and he brought him to Jesus.”

[John 1:42](#). *And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone,*

There was a meaning in the change of names, for there was about to be a change of character — the timid son of a dove soon to become a very rock for the Church.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Isaiah 40:1-17](#); Isaiah 25-31. [John 1:29-42](#).

Verses 29-51

[John 1:29](#). *The next day —*

This chapter is a record of the events that occurred on different days. Sometimes God does great things in a single day; one extraordinary day may have more in it than a hundred ordinary years. It is well for us to try to live by the day, and not to let any day pass without some good action having been done in it. Let us never have to cry, “I have lost a day.”

[John 1:29](#). *John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.*

We ought never to be slow in delivering such a message as that which John the Baptist uttered. I do not wonder that, as soon as ever John knew that Jesus was the Messiah, he told the good news to others. Hast thou found Jesus? Tell thy brother tonight; or, if not tonight, go as soon as thou canst, and bid him, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”

[John 1:30-34](#). *This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am. I come baptizing with water. And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on him, the same is he which*

baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.

John was acquainted with Jesus, for they were related to one another, and were brought up together, but he did not officially know him as the Messiah until he saw the Holy Spirit descending and remaining on him; for that was the Lord's token by which he was to recognize him. He refused, therefore, to follow any knowledge or judgment of his own. He would not know Jesus as the Christ until he saw the private mark for which the Lord had told him to look. As soon as he saw that, then John said that he knew him; and as soon as he thus knew him, he began to preach him. Has the Lord given thee in thy soul a token that Christ is thy Saviour? Dost thou know him by the witness of the Holy Ghost? Then go and speak of him to others and, like John, say, "Behold the Lamb of God." Let this be your one business between here and heaven.

[John 1:35-36](#). *Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; and looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!*

"Again the next day." See how the Evangelist goes by days in his record. John preached the same sermon two days running, and if you proclaim Christ and him crucified, you may preach him two hundred days running, but you will never preach him too often. If you preach Christ as the Lamb of God, the great Sin-bearer, you may be always at that blessed work. There are some who very seldom preach Christ as bearing the sin of men; so that others of us must do it all the oftener to make up for their shortcomings. As for me, I can say with Charles Wesley, —

"His only righteousness I show,
His saving truth proclaim;
'tis all my business here below,
To cry, 'Behold the Lamb!'"

[John 1:37](#). *And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.*

It is hard preaching when you preach away your congregation, but John did this deliberately, He wished these two no longer to be his disciples, but to become the disciples of Jesus. He had mastered the meaning of his own words, "He must increase, but I must decrease," and he was quite willing that it should be so: "The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus."

[John 1:38-39](#). *Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou? He saith unto them, Come and see.*

He gave them a full invitation to come to the place where he tarried, and see for themselves. That is what Jesus still says, "Come and see." If any of you want to know him, "Come and see." You are perfectly welcome to "Come and see" all that Jesus has to show you.

[John 1:39](#). *They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day: for it was about the tenth hour.*

The best part of that day was the portion which they spent with Jesus it was the best day they had ever enjoyed, for they lived with Jesus. It was also the beginning of better days for these two disciples; for, having once lived with Jesus, they learnt never to live without him. Oh, that we also may abide with him!

[John 1:40-41](#). *One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ.*

Where should missionary work begin? A brother should begin with his brother. It is all very well to have a desire to go to the heathen in Africa; you had better begin work as a missionary in England, and then go to Africa. He who cannot win his brother is not likely to win anybody else. "He first findeth his own brother Simon:" this Andrew, who was afterwards to bring so many to Christ, must begin at home, and succeed there. If we are not faithful with one or two relatives, how can God trust us with a pulpit and a congregation?

[John 1:42](#). *And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona:*

"Simon, son of a dove, thy name may point thee out as being timid; mind where thou dost wing thy flight."

[John 1:42](#). *Thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, a stone.*

Something more solid than the son of a pigeon; something more stable than the son of a dove. Christ changes men's names, and changes their natures, too. He can make the most fickle of us to become firm and steadfast. Oh, that he would thus work by his grace upon us!

[John 1:43-44](#). *The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me. Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.*

“The day following.” See, friends, what a wonderful chapter this is. There is a book called, *The Book of Days*; I call this chapter the chapter of days. Every day seems memorable for some great event. “Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter,” was a poor, miserable village; but God greatly honoured it. Great works often begin in little places. The best of beings came out of the despised town of Nazareth, and three of the best of men, Philip, Andrew, and Peter, came out of Bethsaida.

[John 1:45](#). *Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.*

True faith may make blunders. Jesus was not the son of Joseph, except by reputation, and he was Jesus of Bethlehem quite as much as he was Jesus of Nazareth; but true faith is accepted of God even though it makes some mistakes. It believes God’s Word, and it believes God’s Son, and therefore it shall be accepted.

[John 1:46](#). *And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.*

Christ had said, “Come and see.” Now Philip used the same words, “Come and see.” It is always right to follow the example that the Lord Jesus has set us.

[John 1:47-48](#). *Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me?*

You may remember that, a short time ago, I preached a sermon upon Nathanael. He was a kind of Jewish John Blunt, a man who always spoke his mind. He had a mind, and he had a mind to speak it, and he spoke his mind. So, the moment that Christ spoke of him, he asked, “Whence knowest thou me?” He was conscious that Christ did know him, and being a man who was altogether free from cunning and craftiness, he pointedly asked how Christ came to know him.

[John 1:48](#). *Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.*

What was he doing under the fig tree? Jesus knew, and Nathanael knew, but nobody else knew, and perhaps nobody else ever will know. That was a

secret between Christ and Nathanael. He was doing something there that he regarded as quite private, and the Saviour's allusion to his being under the fig tree was the plainest proof he could have of Christ's divinity. "Oh!" thought he, "he who can remind me of that secret transaction must be God."

[John 1:49-50](#). *Nathanael answered and saith unto him: Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the king of Israel. Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these.*

You who are honest in heart, you who can be convinced by a single argument, — and, mark you, one good argument is as convincing as twenty good arguments, and a great deal better than a hundred bad ones, — you who are willing to be led by a single thread shall be led. If you are willing to believe on what is clear evidence, you shall have more evidence: "thou shalt see greater things than these." God will show much to that man who has eyes with which to see it. He who will not see, and does not wish to see, shall grow more and more blind, and the darkness shall thicken about him.

[John 1:51](#). *And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.*

He could see actually what Jacob saw only in a dream, when he beheld that wonderful stairway of light which leads from earth to heaven, even the Lord Jesus Christ, who by his manhood and his Godhead bridges the distance between us and God.

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CHAPTER 2

Verses 1-11

Our Saviour had lived on the earth for thirty years, and had worked no miracle. There was the hiding of his power. He had been subject unto his parents, and had lived in obscurity. Now he has broken through the obscurity, and he begins his public ministry by working a miracle.

[John 2:1](#). *And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee;*

"The third day." John keeps a kind of diary for Christ. In those first days there was something for every day, and they were a specimen of the whole life of the Saviour. He could never say, like Titus, "I have lost a day." Every

day had its deed, glorifying to God, and blessed to men. Let us also try to labour for Christ every day; let there be no day without its mark. May God grant that there may be something to make every day memorable! “And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee.” The first miracle of our Lord was not wrought at Jerusalem; but away there in the back settlements, in “Galilee of the Gentiles.” It was necessary for him to be seen, and to work miracles which might be seen; but he began in an obscure region, among a despised people.

[John 2:1](#). *And the mother of Jesus was there:*

This expression leads to the belief that there was some kind of kinship between the bridegroom or the bride and the mother of Jesus, for it is not said that she was invited to be there, but that she “was there.”

[John 2:2](#). *And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage.*

Happy marriage, where Christ is invited to be present! Where Christ goes, his disciples go. If they suffer with him, they also rejoice with him. If he goes to a feast, they must go, too: “Both Jesus was called, and his disciples.” They were only five; but five is a large number to add to a poor family’s wedding party. It shows the generosity of their heart that they invited Jesus to come and bring his disciples; and he went to put honour upon marriage, especially as he foresaw that the day would come when the apostate church of Rome would reckon marriage to be dishonourable, and not permit one who was married to officiate as a minister.

[John 2:3](#). *And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine.*

I notice that John calls Mary “the mother of Jesus.” I suppose he had in his mind the dying word of Christ, “Behold thy mother!” Such things make a deep impression upon us; and we are apt, when writing, to use the phrases that have been burnt into the memory. “The mother of Jesus.” Because she has been too much exalted in the Romish church, I fear that we run to the other extreme, and think too little of this woman to whom the angel Gabriel said, “Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.” “They wanted wine.” They had not been long married before there was want in the house. Even in the brightest days of life, they wanted something more; and the mother of Jesus saw that they were in want, and that the marriage festival would be dishonoured; so she went to her son and she said, “They have no wine.” I fear she spoke a little like an ordinary mother addressing her son; but the time had come when that

discipline was to end. Mary was not his mother as the Son of God. He was about to work a miracle, and he would have her and all his relatives know that he would not use his miraculous powers merely for their advantage; but for the glory of God and the instruction of men.

[John 2:4](#). *Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come.*

It was a very difficult position for him to be in, to act the part of a loving and obedient son as far as his manhood was concerned, and yet, as the Son of God, by no means to compromise his divine character, but to stand out there as being under no influence of the flesh. Just as we are not to know Christ after the flesh, so he no longer knew mother, or brother, or friend, according to earthly relationship; and when Mary intruded her motherhood upon him, it was but right and fitting that he should say, "What have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come." The Saviour had an hour for everything; an hour for suffering, and an hour for working; and he did everything punctually, promptly to the minute. That was one of the beauties of his life: "Mine hour is not yet come." Perhaps he meant, "My hour to work this miracle is not yet come;" and he would not be hurried by anybody. Beloved, it is not easy to be familiar with Christ, as I trust we are, and yet always to maintain humble deference to his sacred will. Never let us pray as if we were dictators, or his equals. We must keep our place, however near we come to the dear bosom of our Lord. He is still in heaven, and we are upon earth. He is the Master, we are the servants; and if we are as favored as his mother was, we must not go too far, as she did.

[John 2:5](#). *His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.*

This holy woman took the rebuke in silence. She said nothing; she felt the force of Christ's words, she proved that she did by now fully believing that he would do something or other. Had he not said, "Mine hour is not yet come"? Did not that mean that the hour would come, and that he would do something by-and-by? So she quietly accepted his reproof. Oh, you who are in great trouble, you feel as if you could force the hand of Christ; but you must not think of doing that. Even if you could have power over him, you would be very foolish to use it. Let him alone; he knows best how and when to show his grace towards you. Keep silence before him, and in patience commit your way unto him.

[John 2:6](#). *And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece.*

I admire the accuracy of the Holy Spirit. John does not know exactly how much these vessels held; they were not made to measure things in, so he writes, “containing two or three firkins apiece.” Let us always speak correctly; sometimes, “almost” or “thereabouts” will be words that will just save our truthfulness. Let us not speak positively when we do not know; and when the accuracy of a statement is necessary, and we cannot give it in terms that are definite, let us give it in words like these, “containing two or three firkins apiece.” These were great “waterpots of stone.” Stone will not, as a rule, hold the flavour of anything that has been in it, like an earthen vessel would do; so these pots, which had contained nothing else but water, could not be suspected of having any lees of wine concealed therein, or any flavouring material that would make the water taste like wine. No, they were genuine stone waterpots.

[John 2:7](#). *Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim.*

There was no fear of anything but water being there: “They filled them up to the brim.” They obeyed Christ to the letter. If Christ says to you, “Fill the waterpots with water”, fill them up to the brim. Never cut down his commandments; carry them out as far as the largest interpretation can go.

When you are bidden to believe in him, believe in him up to the brim. When you are told to love him, love him up to the brim. When you are commanded to serve him, serve him up to the brim.

[John 2:8](#). *And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it.*

“Draw out now.” “Now.” He had not turned the water into wine by any incantation. He simply willed it, and it was done. He said, “Draw out now.” He did not want to leave it unnoticed, because he had not worked a miracle before, and he could not say whether this was one. He was sure it was; so he said to the servants, when they had filled the waterpots with water, “Draw out now. Do not bring it to me for me to taste it; I know what it is. Take it to the chairman of the festival, to him who sits at the head of the table, and is the judge of the wine: “and they bare it.” The holy confidence of Christ is admirable. May we be able, by faith, so to work, with a calm consciousness of divine help! But notice this. Whenever the Lord fills any of you with a blessing, think that you hear him say, “Draw out now.” He

does not fill these pots that they may keep full. “Draw out now.” Did you have a good time last Monday night at the prayer-meeting? Some of us had. “Draw out now.” Have you lived near to God of late, and are you very happy? “Draw out now.” If he has filled you up to the brim, draw out now; for, if you try to store it up, it will become useless. Selfishness will poison it all.

[John 2:9](#). *When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom,*

There was no collusion, for the governor, who tasted it, did not know where it came from; and the servants, who knew where it came from, did not taste it, so that they did not know what it was like. If anybody objects to the Saviour making wine, I think that the best reply is that all the wine which is made of water will do nobody any hurt, and the more of it the better; and this was so made, certainly. They say that there is a devil in every grape. There were no grapes here; and I am afraid that there is not much of them in most of the wine that is made nowadays; there is something worse than devil in that.

[John 2:10](#). *And saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now.*

That the governor of the feast did not understand, but he admired it and here is a picture of what our Lord always does. He gives his people the best last. At first, the wine of the kingdom is mingled with much bitterness, salt tears of sorrow flow into it, but it improves as we go on; and when we shall drink it with him, in the kingdom of God, what will it be like? The joy of Christ’s love on earth is heaven, but when we get to heaven, and drink it fresh from the everlasting spring, what will that joy be? Oh, the blessedness laid up for the people of God! We pluck some of the fruit from the trees, and eat it; but the fruits laid up in the fruit-chamber, to get ripe by-and-by, are the very pick of the fruit of the tree of life. You who live for the world have had your best already; but, as for our feast with Christ, we go from good to better, and from better to the best.

[John 2:11](#). *This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory;*

Moses turned water into blood; Christ turned water into wine. One brought a curse upon the common things of daily life; the other put an

added sweetness and blessing into them.

[John 2:11](#). *And his disciples believed on him.*

They did believe on him before; but now they had ocular demonstration of his divine power and Godhead; and they believed as they had not believed before. May you and I often make distinct progress in faith, so that it may be said of us also, “His disciples believed on him”!

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CHAPTER 3

Verses 1-15

[John 3:1-3](#). *There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*

There must be a new birth because a new name is absolutely necessary for the discernment of spiritual things. The natural man cannot comprehend spiritual things, they must be spiritually discerned. The new birth is therefore necessary that we may have a spirit within us which can see or understand the kingdom of God; but until a man is born again, “he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

[John 3:4-5](#). *Nicodemus saith unto him, how can a man be born when he is old/ can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*

We understand the passage to mean, “Water, that is, the Spirit;” but it may refer to the purifying influence of the Word as symbolized by water. I do not think that baptism is referred to here at all.

[John 3:6](#). *That which is born of the flesh is flesh;*

Parents may be the most devout people who ever lived, but that which is born of them is only flesh.

[John 3:6](#). *And that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.*

It is only then, as we are born of the Spirit of God that there is any spiritual life in us whatsoever.

[John 3:7-8](#). *Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.*

He undergoes a mysterious change, he becomes a new man, he enters into a new life which others cannot comprehend; though they hear the sound of it, they cannot tell whence this man's new life comes, or whither it goes. He has become a spiritual person, not comprehended of natural men.

[John 3:9-10](#). *Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knoweth not these things?*

“So learned in the law of God, art thou ignorant of the Spirit of God? Hast thou read the law so many times, and yet not found out that natural births and outward washings are of no avail in spiritual things?”

[John 3:11-12](#). *Verily, verily I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?*

“If, at the very entrance to the kingdom of heaven, you say, ‘How can these things be?’ what will you say if I take you into the central metropolis of truth, and introduce you to the great King himself?”

[John 3:13](#); [John 3:15](#). *And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.*

This exposition consisted of readings from [Numbers 21:1-9](#); and [John 3:1-15](#).

Verses 1-18

If you were called in to see a person who was dying, and wished to read a chapter from the Word of God, and you were afraid that the sick one did not know the way of salvation, you could not select a better portion than the one we are about to read. I have chosen it in the hope that some may now learn from it what they must do to be saved.

[John 3:1-2](#). *There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came to Jesus by night,*

Perhaps he was very busy during the day. It is better to come to Jesus at night than not to come to him at all. All hours are convenient to Christ; you may come to him when you are at home tonight. When everybody else is asleep, Jesus is still awake. In all probability, however, Nicodemus did not wish to commit himself by coming to Christ by day. He had not yet tried and tested him, so he would not be thought to be Christ's follower till he had first had a quiet private talk with him. As a ruler of the Jews, he was wise in acting thus discreetly.

[John 3:2](#). *And said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.*

He admitted the truth as far as he could see it. The miracles of Christ proved him to be a divinely-commissioned teacher. Always be willing to go as far as you can go in the pursuit of truth. If you cannot see everything at once, see all that you can see. Be not of a cavilling spirit; be frank and teachable as this man was.

[John 3:3](#). *Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*

It is such a mystery, a thing of such a marvilous character, that his old nature cannot see it. He must have new eyes, he must be a new man, he must be born again, before he can "see the kingdom of God." Have you caught this idea, my dear hearer? Do you understand that you cannot polish yourself up to a certain point, and then see the kingdom of God? You must be born again; there must be a radical change in you, a new birth, a birth from above, if you are ever to see the kingdom of God.

[John 3:4-5](#). *Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*

At first Jesus said that a man could not see the kingdom of God except he was born again; now he tells Nicodemus that a man cannot enter the kingdom except he is born of water and of the Spirit. There must be a cleansing; he must be "born of water." There must be a spiritual life; he must be "born of the Spirit", or he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

[John 3:6](#). *That which is born of the flesh is flesh;*

Nothing more. However godly your father, however gracious your mother, all that is "born of the flesh is flesh."

[John 3:6](#). *And that which is born of the spirit is spirit.*

There must be, then, a Spirit-birth, or else you have no spirit; you belong not to the spiritual realm; and you cannot see and you cannot enter the spiritual kingdom.

[John 3:7-8](#). *Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof,*

The sounding of the wind blowing through the trees, —

[John 3:8](#). *But canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth:*

Where it begins, whither it goes, or where it comes to an end, you cannot tell.

[John 3:8](#). *So is every one that is born of the Spirit.*

You do not know where the spirit-life begins; and you cannot tell to what it will lead. There are heights to which the spirit-life can carry you, of which you have never dreamed; this is a mystery beyond your ken.

[John 3:9](#). *Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be?*

He did not deny that they might be; but he asked how they could be. Ah, many a man has asked the same question! “How may I be made anew? How may I become a new creature?” Only he that makes all things can make all things new. The new birth is as great a wonder as creation itself; and there is as much, and a great deal more, to be wrought upon you to make you a Christian, as has been wrought upon you to make you a man.

[John 3:10](#). *Jesus answered and said, unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?*

These truths lie on the very doorstep of our holy religion. There are deeper and higher mysteries than these.

[John 3:11-12](#). *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things,*

Common-place things, the lower things of faith. “If I have told you these,”

[John 3:12](#). *And ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?*

There are mysteries in our holy religion which we would not tell to everybody. It would be casting pearls before swine to mention them to unregenerate men. Christ tells Nicodemus that the primary truths must be believed before the more advanced doctrines can be revealed.

[John 3:13](#). *And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even, the Son of man which is in heaven.*

It is Christ who knows everything. He understands all mysteries; he can teach all truth, for he has been in heaven, he came down to earth, and he has gone back again to heaven. Now, perhaps, some of you will be saying, “How are we to be saved? If there is no salvation without the new birth, how can we obtain the new birth?” Listen. The same chapter which tells you of the mystery of regeneration, tells you of the simple way of salvation by faith in Christ.

[John 3:14-15](#). *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.*

“Whosoever.” If you believe in Christ, you are born again. If you trust him, you have the new life. This simple way of salvation is not contradictory to the way of salvation by the new birth, it is the same thing stated in a form that we can comprehend.

[John 3:16](#). *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

This text has saved thousands of souls. The constellation in the heavens, called the Great Bear, has in it the two pointers which direct the eye of the observer to the pole star; and this verse points to Christ so clearly, so distinctly, that many have found him by it, and have lived. Let me read it again: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

[John 3:17-18](#). *For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn, the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth, not is condemned already,*

Not, “shall be condemned at the last,” though that also is true; but “he that believeth not is condemned already,” —

[John 3:18](#). *Because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*

May the Lord bless to us the reading of this very simple gospel chapter, for our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

Verses 1-21

Let us once more read together part of this blessed soul-saving chapter. I suppose that more souls have been saved through the reading of this chapter

than through almost any other portion of Holy Writ.

[John 3:1-2](#). *There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came to Jesus by night,*

He could not have come at a better time; the business of the day was over, and all was quiet.

[John 3:2](#). *And said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest except God be with him.*

It is always well to go as far as you can in your avowal of belief in Christ. Nicodemus confessed what he knew to be true, and he drew from it the thoroughly accurate conclusion that Christ must be a teacher come from God because of the miracles which he wrought. Dear hearer, if thou dost not yet fully know Christ, take heed that thou dost not trifle with the truth which thou dost know. If God has taught thee a little about him, prize that little, and thou shalt have more, as we have often said, "He that values moonlight shall yet have sunlight." Thank God if thou knowest as much as Nicodemus knew, and ask him to teach thee more.

[John 3:3-4](#). *Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, how can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?*

Staggering at the symbol, he stumbled at the letter of Christ's saying, and did not perceive its inward sense.

[John 3:5-6](#). *Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh;-*

Flesh, and nothing more; and it never can be anything more than flesh. The first birth brings no one any further than that. The children of the most godly parents, so far as their sinful nature is concerned, are in precisely the same condition as the offspring of the most ungodly. If they are ever to be numbered amongst the children of God, they must be born again, because "that which is born of the flesh is flesh;" —

[John 3:6](#). *And that which is born of the Spirit-*

And that alone —

[John 3:6](#). *Is spirit.*

Now, the flesh cannot enter into the spiritual kingdom, only the spirit can enter that realm; and hence the need of a new birth, that this spirit may

be created in us.

[John 3:7-8](#). *Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.*

He is a mystery. The effect of the work of the Spirit upon him is seen in him, but no man understands what the Spirit of God is, or how he works, any more than he knows whence the wind comes, and whither it goes.

[John 3:9-10](#). *Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?*

A very similar query to that might be put to some who are living now “Are you profound philosophers, students deeply learned in classic lore, or wise concerning many of the mysteries of nature; yet know you not these things? What will be the good of all your knowledge if you do not know how to gain admission into the kingdom of heaven? It would be better for a man to be ignorant of all other things, and to know this one thing, than to have all possible human learning, and yet to miss this knowledge which is the most essential of all.

[John 3:11](#). *Verily, verily, I say unto thee,*

Christ speaks with an authority that no mere human teacher can ever possess.

[John 3:11](#). *We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness.*

In a certain sense, every true minister of Christ and every true child of God, can say this, for we know that there is a spiritual kingdom. We have seen it, we have entered into it; and we can testify that there is another life which is as much superior to the ordinary life of men as the life of men is superior to that of the brutes that perish; and we know that we have that superior life. We have other eyes than these eyes that are visible, and other ears than the ears of our flesh. There is a higher and better life to be enjoyed even now, and he that believeth in Christ has that life. “We speak that we do know and testify that we have seen;” and yet, though our testimony would be believed if we gave it concerning anything else, we are not believed when we witness concerning this higher and better life.

[John 3:12](#). *If I have told you earthly things,-*

Things that take place here below, such as the new birth, —

[John 3:12](#). *And ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?*

Christ will not go on to teach us the deepest doctrines of the Christian faith if we will not learn that which is simplest. Shall the boy be taught the classics if he will not study the spelling-book? If men will not believe that there is such a thing as the new birth, shall they be taught the doctrine of union to Christ, and all those higher truths that rise out of it? They would not believe these things if they were taught them.

[John 3:13](#). *And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.*

There was a nut that Nicodemus could not crack, a riddle that he could not solve; and the Saviour left him thus puzzled, for the time being, that he might learn that, unless he was taught of the Spirit, he could not understand the teaching of Christ. You and I, who have been taught of the Spirit, understand the meaning of these words, but Nicodemus did not, though he was “a master of Israel.”

Now follows another passage of Scripture which I always rejoice to read in this chapter. There are two great truths revealed here; the one is, that we must be born again, and the other is, that whosoever believeth in Christ is saved. Sometimes those two truths seem to come into conflict with one another. A man says, “You say to me, ‘Only believe, and you shall be saved;’ and then, by-and-by, you tell me that I must be born again. Are both these statements true?” Yes, they are both true, and they are both in this chapter. We have been reading about the necessity of regeneration, now comes the glorious freeness of the gospel of Christ.

[John 3:14-15](#) *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.*

You must be born into a new life if you are to be saved; how are you to have that great blessing? There is life for a look at Jesus Christ lifted up upon the cross, and lifted up in the preaching of the gospel. Look to him, then; and, as surely as those who were bitten by the serpents in the wilderness were healed the moment that they looked at the serpent of brass, so surely shall every son or daughter of Adam, who gives a faith-look at the crucified Saviour, be saved at once and for ever.

[John 3:16-17](#). *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have*

everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

There was no necessity for Christ to come here to condemn us, for we were condemned already by our sin. Why, then, did Jesus come? He must have come upon an errand of mercy, to bring salvation to the lost. It is even so; God sent him for that very purpose, that he might give eternal life to as many as believe on him. Oh, the glorious freeness of this precious gospel! Surely they deserve the deepest hell who will not have heaven upon such terms. They must forever perish if they reject life when it is set before them in this truly gracious manner.

[John 3:18-19](#). *He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation,-*

The very first form of it, the proof of it, and the reason for it: “This is the condemnation,” —

[John 3:19-21](#). *That light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.*

Those who love their sins cannot at the same time love the Saviour; they must love the one, and hate the other; and it is a terrible choice when they deliberately reject the only Saviour; “the Light of the world,” and choose the darkness of sin, the darkness of woe, the outer darkness, where there shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.

Verses 1-24

This is a very wonderful chapter, because, while it teaches the doctrine of regeneration, and the necessity of a great moral and spiritual change, it yet also reveals the doctrine of salvation by faith alone, — a very wonderful combination, which puzzles many who read what is here recorded. Many have been staggered by one or other of these great truths, yet they evidently agree together, for they are taught by the same unerring Teacher, and they are preserved to us by the Spirit of God in the same chapter.

[John 3:1-2](#). *There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.*

Nicodemus was very candid; he went as far as he could go. If he had not yet learned to believe in Christ as his Saviour, he did at least admit that Christ, upon the evidence of his miracles, was “a teacher come from God.” There is always hope of a man who is willing to see all that he can, and who acknowledges what he can see. He will see “greater things than these” if he is willing to use his eyes.

[John 3:3](#). *Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.*

Without a new birth, “he cannot see,” he cannot comprehend, he cannot understand, he cannot know anything about “the kingdom of God.”

[John 3:4](#). *Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born?*

Ah, me! our blessed Master taught much by parables, and parabolic teaching is the best of teaching; but you see how readily it can be misunderstood, how men can take the emblem in a carnal way, and not understand its spiritual meaning. This is how the false doctrine of transubstantiation is taught. When Christ says of the bread, “This is my body,” the Romanists take his words literally, and so miss their spiritual meaning. It was in the same way that Nicodemus fell into error concerning Christ’s teaching.

[John 3:5](#). *Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*

If the water here signifies baptism, — mark you, if it does, — then, observe, that there is no entering into the kingdom without it. I do not think that baptism is here intended at all, but the purifying influence of the Word of God symbolized by water. We might read the verse “Except a man be born of water, even of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” There is a great change of character necessary for entrance into the kingdom; seeing it is one thing, entering into it is another matter; yet one cannot even see the kingdom of God without being born again, or born from above.

[John 3:6-7](#). *That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.*

Nicodemus was well born, no doubt; probably, he was a pure Jew; yet he must be born again. And you may have descended from a long line of saints, your parents may be in the Church of Christ, and your parents’

parents, too; but still the truth remains, “that which is born of the flesh is flesh,” at its very best. It cannot rise above that which gave it birth, it is but flesh. “Ye must be born again.” There is no hope for you apart from the new birth from above. You cannot see, and you cannot enter, the kingdom of God merely by your first birth. Birthright-membership is a great delusion, for “that which is born of the flesh is flesh;” and only “that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”

[John 3:8](#). *The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.*

It is a mystery. Thou canst never fully understand it, but thou canst enjoy it. If thou art born again, thou wilt know what it is; but thou canst no more discover thy second birth than thy first birth, except by its results and effects. May God give you to know what it is to be born again! There are many doctors of divinity and men of great learning who know nothing about this new birth, and there are many who are mere babes in Christ who nevertheless enjoy the fruit of this blessed regeneration by the Holy Spirit.

[John 3:9-10](#). *Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?*

These A B C truths, which are taught in the very first school-book used by Christ’s scholars, — “Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?”

[John 3:11](#). *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness.*

This is true of all faithful ministers of the gospel; we do not preach theories, we preach facts. We do not talk about speculations; we speak of a new birth through which we have ourselves passed. If there be no such thing, we are liars unto you; but there is such a thing, and this is our witness: “We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen.” The fashion, nowadays, is to make statements upon religious matters with great caution, expecting to have them disputed; but we need exercise no caution when we state what we know to be true. We will be positive, we will utter our “verily, verily,” when we speak what is a matter of fact to our own consciences: “We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness.”

[John 3:12](#). *If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?*

Regeneration is a work that is wrought here on earth, and belongs to this present life. High as the mystery is, it lies but at the very threshold of the temple of divine truth: "If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?" No doubt, unbelief hides much of heavenly truth from us; but if we begin to doubt the very elementary doctrines of our holy faith, how shall the great Master take us on and up to the higher science that he is ready to teach us?

[John 3:13](#). *And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.*

This saying must have puzzled Nicodemus; he had, doubtless, read a great many riddles, but into the meaning of this riddle he could not enter; yet, beloved, any child of God, though he was converted only yesterday, may know what Jesus meant. Now observe that, as the first part of this chapter sets forth the need of a great and supernatural change, the latter part of the chapter shows us the door of mercy wide open, and tells us that faith in Christ will save us.

[John 3:14-15](#). *And, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.*

There is no contradiction here to what we have been reading. He that believes in Christ receives the new birth, receives eternal life, and thus by faith, he gets that which is essential to a sight and entrance into the kingdom of God.

[John 3:16-18](#). *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned:*

What a charming sentence! What comfort it ought to bring to the mind of every sinner who will now believe in Christ!

[John 3:18](#). *But he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*

"He that believeth not is condemned already." If you have heard of Christ's salvation, and you have not believed in him, that is evidence enough of your condemnation. There is no need to prove your evil works,

no need to fetch your diary, and turn over the record of your life. If you have not believed in Jesus Christ, it shows a natural want of holiness, a lack of love to the loving God; and by that evidence you are condemned already, because you have not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God.

[John 3:19](#). *And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.*

The dislike of Christ is caused by a love of sin. If men did not hug their sins, they would embrace the Saviour.

[John 3:20-21](#). *For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.*

If you do not like self-examination, be sure that you are wrong. If you do not like reading heart-searching books, or listening to a faithful gospel ministry, be sure that you are wrong. If you do not like that part of the Word of God which judges you, and makes you tremble, be sure that you are wrong. The man in business, who cannot bear to look at his books, most probably has good reason to be afraid of his books. He shuts them up because they would shut him up if he were to pay attention to them. O sirs, there is no more damning sign of human's condition than his endeavor to avoid the light. Search and see, look and examine. Make sure work for eternity, whatever you trifle with, trifle not with your souls. Take other things on hearsay, if you please; but not your condition towards God. Let that be searched into with all earnestness and sincerity; and be not satisfied till the truth has satisfied you.

[John 3:22-24](#). *After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judaea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized. And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized. For John was not yet cast into prison.*

We ought to be thankful that God's ministers are not silenced in this age. May the Lord raise up, in these evil days, many a John the Baptist, who shall faithfully declare his testimony concerning the Lamb of God!

Verses 13-36

[John 3:13](#). *And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that come down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.*

We are in the stairway now between heaven and earth; Christ has come down; Christ has gone up, and yet he was always there; a mystery, but one that is true, and new. Today we can go up by thought and prayer, and blessings can come down; and Christ is always there. “He is at the Father’s side, the Man of Love, the Crucified.”

[John 3:14-15](#). *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.*

What a glorious word! Here is the gospel in a verse, the whole Bible in a line or two. If we believe in him this morning, we have eternal life; not merely life, but life similar to the very life of God himself — eternal life. We have in us that which will outlast the world, the sun, the moon, and the stars; we have a life which, being like the life of God, we shall live for ever and ever.

[John 3:16-17](#). *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.*

Condemnation does come to the world through Christ, because the world rejects him; but that was no part of God’s design in sending him. His design is salvation — salvation only. Oh! that we might so believe as to answer to the divine purpose in the sending of his Son. “He that believeth on him is not condemned,” not even now, notwithstanding every sin he has committed, he is not condemned; “but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God.” Unbelieving is the condemning sin; it seals upon us the condemnation of every other sin. If thou dost not believe in Christ this morning, my hearer, thou art not in a state of probation, thou art condemned already; he that believes on him is not in a state of probation, he is not condemned, he is already acquitted, he is at this moment free from condemnation before the judgment-seat of God.

[John 3:19-21](#). *And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. But he that doeth truth cometh to*

the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

You see why men do not come to Christ; they do not want to give up their sin; they do not want to be made uneasy in it; they are afraid of being reproved. You see why saintly men do come to Christ, for they take a delight in beholding him, and in having their faith and their grace made manifest, both to themselves and to onlookers.

[John 3:22-24](#). *After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judaea: and there he tarried with them, and baptized. And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized. For John was not yet cast into prison.*

So he was busy until he was cast into prison. He would not waste an hour while he had an opportunity of doing good; he did it with all his heart. John! are you here in this sanctuary at this moment, not yet laid up, not yet obliged to keep your bed? Work while you can then; spend every moment in your Master's service.

[John 3:25](#). *Then there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying.*

Is it not a come-down — from reading about looking to Christ and loving, to a contention about purifying? There always are in the Church more or less idle quarrels about the dress of the preacher, about the mode of administering sacraments, and so on — a discussion about purifying.

[John 3:26](#). *And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him.*

“They are leaving you.” They felt an envy on behalf of John, because his influence appeared to be declining. John was quite a stranger to this feeling; he loved to see his Master grow, even at the cost of his own effacing.

[John 3:27](#). *John answered and said, A man can receive nothing except it be given Him from heaven.*

No spiritual power, no power to bless his fellow-men, except it come from God. Shall I quarrel with God, therefore, if he gives to this man more power than he gives to me? Shall I dispute about it? It is God's sovereign will, and he does as he pleases.

[John 3:28-29](#). *Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.*

They were vexed, but John was joyful; he loved to hear of Jesus prospering.

[John 3:30](#). *He must increase, but I must decrease.*

So he did. This is John's one song, last of his utterances almost. He preaches no more sermons that are recorded; he must now go to prison, and there lie in a silence which he could scarcely bear. It was very hard for John to be quiet; he had an active, noble mind, and he became the victim, we fear, of doubts when he was shut up in prison. The breezy air of the wilderness suited him much better than the dull, heavy atmosphere of a prison. I daresay some of you may feel this at this time; do not set it down to spiritual results, to spiritual causes; set it down to the atmosphere, for so it is. We feel dull and heavy often, but heaviest when the heart is in a heavy air; every wind that rises blows away despair. So we must not think too much of our feelings, which even the wind can change.

[John 3:31](#). *He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all.*

However good a man may be, he is earthly; there is flesh and blood about him, akin to the earth; and even if he handles heavenly things, the earthiness of the preacher peeps out every now and then. Christ had nothing of that about him; he was above all.

[John 3:32](#). *And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony.*

Sad note! The news that all men went to Christ pleased John, but the fact that none received his testimony, comparatively none, grieved his heart.

[John 3:33-34](#). *He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true. For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.*

There is an infinite spiritual power about the words of Christ; they are the words of God, and the Holy Spirit concentrates all his energy in those words.

[John 3:35-36](#). *The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.*

So John's last words are thunder; his dying speech has in it the word most terrible to all of you who believe not in Christ, "The wrath of God abideth on him."

Verses 14-17

[John 3:14-15](#). *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.*

"Whosoever." Note that word, for it means you, and it means me. No matter though you are near to death's door, crushed and broken, bruised and mangled, look to the Crucified One, and, looking, you shall find that there is life eternal for you. Though your soul has been ready to choose strangling rather than your life, yet there is a better life for you by trusting in Christ. Choose that, and rest in him. Say, from your heart, the last lines of the hymn we sang just now, —

"Jesus, to thy arms I fly;
Save me, Lord, or else I die."

[John 3:16-17](#). *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.*

Now this, which is good teaching for those who have but lately come to Christ, or for those who are seeking to come to him, is the very same teaching which will bring comfort to the most advanced and best instructed of the saints. How I love continually to begin with Christ over again as I began at the first! They say, when a man is sick, that it is a good thing to take him to his native place, and when a true believer's soul gets faint and unbelieving, let him breathe the air of Calvary over again. The learned Grotius, who had spent the most of his life in theological disputations, — not always or yet often on the right side, — when he was dying said, "Read me something;" and they read him the story of the publican and the Pharisee. He said, "And that poor publican I am; thank God, that publican I am. 'God be merciful to me a sinner.'" That was the word with which the

great scholar entered into heaven, and that is the way in which you and I must come to God. May the Holy Spirit help us to come to him thus!

Amen.

This exposition consisted of readings from Job 7, and [John 3:14-17](#).

Verses 22-36

[John 3:22-29](#) *After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judaea, and there he tarried with them, and baptized. And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized. For John was not yet cast into prison. Then there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying. And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him. John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. Ye yourselves bare me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am Sent before him. He that hath the bride is the bride groom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.*

“I have introduced the Bridegroom; and, henceforth, it will be my part gradually to disappear from the scene.”

[John 3:30](#). *He must increase, but I must decrease.*

As fades the morning star when the sun himself arises, so was it the joy of the herald of Christ to lose himself in the supreme radiance of his Lord's appearing.

[John 3:31-34](#). *He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all. And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth His testimony. He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true. For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit it by measure unto him.*

Did not the Holy Spirit descend, and remain upon him, and that without measure or limit?

[John 3:35-36](#). *The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life:*

He has it now; and he can never lose it, or else it would not be everlasting. He has a life that must exist for ever and ever.

[John 3:36](#). *And he that believeth not the Son shall not see life;*

He shall not even know what spiritual life is, he shall not be able to understand it, or to form any idea of it. While he is an unbeliever, he is blind to spiritual things. What a dreadful sentence that is I “He shall not see life;” —

[John 3:36](#). *But the wrath of God abideth on him.*

God is ever angry with him because he has rejected his own GOD, and refused the great salvation.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Matthew 3:1-12](#); [John 1:15-37](#); [John 3:22-36](#).

[JOHN CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 4

Verses 1-29

I have often read this chapter in your hearing, and you have often read it yourselves; but the Word of God is not like the grapes of an earthly vine, which when once trodden are exhausted. You may come to Holy Scripture again and again; it is like an ever-flowing fountain, the more you draw from it, the more you may draw.

[John 4:1-3](#). *When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,) he left Judaea, and departed again into Galilee.*

Observe here that our Lord at first shunned conflict with the Pharisees. When he knew that they were jealous of him, he went away from Judaea to a more remote district, “into Galilee.” May he help us always to take that which may be the wiser course in every emergency! He was not guilty of cowardice; that, he could not be, for he was the bravest of the brave; and sometimes it will be most courageous on our part to shun a conflict. When you believe it is right to do so, never mind what anybody may say; but do as your Master did on this occasion.

[John 4:4](#). *And he must needs go through Samaria.*

It is true that it was the nearest way, yet he might have gone round about; but he would not do so, for there were souls in Samaria who were to be blessed by his presence. He had a constraint upon him, an inward impulse, so that “He must needs go through Samaria.” Dear friends,

whenever you feel the drawings of the Spirit in any particular direction do not resist them, but yield yourself entirely to his gracious influence, even as your Lord did.

[John 4:5-6](#). *Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour.*

About twelve o'clock, in the middle of the day, at high noon. You will observe, dear friends, that our Lord spoke to Nicodemus at night, but when he was about to talk to a fallen woman alone, he did it in the middle of the day. There is a time for everything; so let those who serve God be careful as to the best time of their service. Our Lord had a tender delicacy about him which led him instinctively to do the right thing at the right time.

[John 4:7](#). *There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water:*

That was not the usual time for drawing water; women generally went to the well in the morning and in the evening; but this poor fallen creature was not one with whom other women would associate, so she came alone, at the hour when the sun was hottest, and when nobody else would be likely to be there.

[John 4:7](#). *Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink.*

This was quite a natural way of beginning a conversation; and they will best touch other people's minds and hearts who do not harshly interject religion, but who wisely introduce it, leading up to it with a holy dexterousness such as our Lord always exhibited. He begins, not with any remarks about the woman's life, or her sin, or even about his great salvation, but with the simple request, "Give me to drink."

[John 4:8-9](#). *(For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.) Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.*

But our Lord did not come to maintain these distinctions of race and caste. It is altogether foreign to the spirit of Christianity for nationalities to be despised. We sometimes hear people say of a person, "Oh, he is only So-and-so!" mentioning some nation that happens to be in the background. Christ was cosmopolitan, he loved men of every nation, and tribe, and tongue, and people. To him, there was neither Jew nor Samaritan; all such distinctions were banished from his mind. The woman might well say what

she did, but her words would have sounded strangely out of place from the lips of Christ.

[John 4:10-11](#). *Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water?*

Holy knowledge is very advantageous; it often is the means of breeding prayer: “If thou knewest thou wouldest have asked... , and he would have given.” Therefore, beloved, let us teach the truth to all who come in our way, for it may be that we, too, shall meet with many of whom it can be said that, if they know what the gift of God is, they will ask for it; and if they ask for it, Christ will give it to them.

[John 4:12](#). *Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which have us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle?*

Ah, she did not know how infinitely superior Jesus was to Jacob! There could be no comparison between the two. Jesus is the true Father of all Israel, and in that respect he is like to Jacob; but he is immeasurably greater than “father Jacob.”

[John 4:13-14](#). *Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.*

Hence he will always be contented. He who has grace in his heart is a happy man; he grows more and more satisfied with the grace as it wells up increasingly in living power in his character and life. Oh, if you have never received that living water, may God give it to you just now! You shall never regret receiving it; but you shall rejoice over it evermore.

[John 4:15](#). *The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.*

Up till now she has not imbibed a single idea from Christ. The Lord has spoken to her in parables, but she has not seen through the thin veil, so she has missed his meaning. Now he fires another shot, and deals with her in another fashion.

[John 4:16-18](#). *Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither. The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband: For thou hast had five*

husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly.

It was needful to arouse this woman to a sense of her sinfulness. It was no use putting on plasters where there was no knowledge of a sore, and no use attempting to fill the void where there was no feeling of emptiness. So first she must be brought low, she must be made to see herself in the glass of truth, and then she would begin to understand her need of salvation.

Oftentimes, in seeking to bless people, the kindest way is not to build them up, but to pull them down; not to begin to encourage their hopes, but to let them see how hopeless their case is apart from sovereign grace.

[John 4:19](#). *The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.*

She did not deny Christ's charges; she could not, for they were so accurately descriptive of her whole life.

[John 4:20-23](#) *Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth:*

It is not the place which makes the true worship; it is the heart. It is not even the day; it is the state of a man's mind. It is not that the place is said to be holy, and therefore prayer is accepted; every place is equally holy where holy men worship God. All distinctions of buildings are heathenish; or, at the best, Jewish; they are done away with by Christ.

[John 4:23-26](#). *-For the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. The woman saith unto him, I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.*

And she believed it, for what she had heard had prepared her mind for this declaration. Christ's reading of her heart had convinced her that he was the Messiah. How many have been brought to Christ's feet by having their characters laid bare in the preaching of the Word! The very thing they did in secret, ay, the very thought of their heart which they never communicated even to their best-beloved friend, has been told them. Their dream has been

revealed to them, and the interpretation of it, too; and they have been convinced that he who can thus read their hearts must be the Son of God.

[John 4:27-28](#). *And upon this came his disciples, and marvelled that he talked with the woman; yet no man said, What seekest thou? or, Why talkest thou with her? The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, —*

So that blessed interview was broken up by Christ's own disciples, What a set of blunderers we are! We sometimes come in between Christ and poor sinners whom he is going to bless. There is many a lover of stern doctrine, with an unsympathetic heart and a harsh tone of speech, who has intruded just when he was not wanted. If we cannot help poor souls, brothers and sisters, let us never hinder them. What Christian would not wish to help a poor sinner to her Saviour? Yet these disciples, unconscious of what they were doing, had by their very looks driven this poor woman from their Master; but she "went her way into the city," —

[John 4:28-29](#). *And saith to the men, Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?*

May we be made useful, even as this woman was, in bringing others to Christ's feet, for his dear name's sake! Amen.

Verses 1-32

[John 4:1-4](#). *When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,) He left Judaea, and departed again into Galilee. And he must needs go through Samaria.*

When he was wanted in so many places, he did not care to stay among the Pharisees where he was not wanted. They would not receive his message, so he quitted the lordly professors, and went to look after a fallen woman. Christ's estimates of usefulness are not always the same as ours. We think it a grand thing to be the means of converting a great man; Christ thinks it a worthy work to convert a great sinner.

[John 4:5](#). *Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.*

You remember how the patriarch said to his favourite son, "Moreover I have given to thee one portion above thy brethren, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow." This was "the parcel of ground" which was near to Sychar.

[John 4:6](#). *Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well:*

What could the wearied Saviour do? Why, he could save a great sinner; and now that he is no more wearied, what can he not do? Brethren, when you go to preach or to teach, you like to feel fresh and vigorous; but do not think that this state is at all necessary. Your wearied Master won the woman at Samaria; so may you win souls, even in your weariness. Let us not make excuses for ourselves because we do not feel fit for our work.

God may bless us more when we feel weary than he does at any other time.

[John 4:6](#). *And it was about the sixth hour.*

Twelve o'clock in the day, I suppose. Was that the time when the women usually came to draw water? No; but it was the time when a woman, who was shunned by other women, would be most likely to come; and the Saviour knew that. She had to take odd times to get to the well, for her neighbors did not care to be seen in the company of such a reprobate as she was, and she was probably just as anxious to avoid them.

[John 4:7-8](#). *There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink. (For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.)*

Or, "food."

[John 4:9](#). *Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.*

The woman seemed to say to the Saviour, "You Jews will not own us until you want something from us. Now that you happen to be thirsty, you do not mind asking for drink from me; but, at other times, you will have no dealings with us." This was a tart reply to our Lord's request, but he did not answer the woman in the tone she had adopted. When you are dealing with a soul, you must not lose your temper because of a sharp word, a hard saying, or even a blasphemous reply. Soul winners must be very tender and gentle; God make us so!

[John 4:10](#). *Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.*

Oh, that ignorance, that baneful ignorance! "If thou knewest thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee." Sometimes,

my brethren, the key of a man's salvation may lie in your instructing him in the simplest matters of the gospel, for, if he does but know, he will ask, and Christ will give. Great issues may depend upon this, which seems but the turning of a straw. Therefore, go and tell men the way of salvation; for, in the most of cases, ignorance, alas! bars the door. I mean not among those who have long heard the gospel, but I mean the outsiders who do not know anything about it. Tell it to them, and you may thereby open to them the kingdom of heaven.

[John 4:11-14](#). *The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.*

So you see, my dear hearer, if you get grace from Christ, you really possess it, and it is of that nature that it remains in you, and becomes itself a spring within you, "springing up into everlasting life." It is not that temporary, trumpety salvation which some preach, which saves you for a quarter of a year, and then lets you perish; it is everlasting salvation. Once received, it does not pass away like that little dribbling shower that watered the pavement just now, and is gone, but it shall be in you a well of water, springing up, a living and enduring principle; or, to use another scriptural expression, "incorruptible seed, which liveth and abideth for ever." This salvation is worth your having ; then, get it. It is worth your pining after, and praying for, and believing. Oh, that you might have it, even you! As soon as you trust the Lord Jesus Christ, it is yours, and yours for ever.

[John 4:15](#). *The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.*

The woman had not even the faintest idea of the spiritual truth of which Christ had spoken to her. The fact is, conviction must come before conversion. No sinner is made alive till he is first killed. You cannot clothe him till he is naked. So now the Saviour began that conviction work in this woman; and he did it very wisely. He did not at first charge her with criminality, but he led her to accuse herself.

[John 4:16-17](#). *Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither. The woman answered and said, I have no husband.*

And, as she said it, no doubt she tried to look as innocent as possible; but a guilty flush stole over her face despite her attempt to keep it back.

[John 4:17](#). *Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband:*

Always give people credit for what is well said. If you want to win them, you must mind that you are not rough with them, but admit what you can of the truth in their utterance: "Thou hast well said, I have no husband."

[John 4:18-19](#). *For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly. The woman said unto him, Sir, I Perceive that thou art a prophet.*

It would have been better if she had perceived that she was a sinner. Perhaps she did perceive it, but scarcely liked yet to confess it openly, so she said, "I-perceive that thou art a prophet." Now she has a religious difficulty; and what man or woman is there in the world, however far gone from morality, who has not some religious difficulties? And the more immoral they become, the more difficulties they are pretty sure to have. I hate that style of preaching which is everlastingly pandering to difficulties which never would exist except in a dissolute generation like the present. We preach a plain gospel; and when men's hearts are right, it is all plain to them. To him who desires to understand, difficulties soon cease to be a trouble. We had better deal with men's hearts and lives than try to answer their quibbling questions. This was the woman's dilemma,--

[John 4:20](#). *Our fathers worshipped in this mountain;*

That is, Mount Gerizim,--

[John 4:20-23](#). *And ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what. We know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.*

You see, brethren, all the difficulties that arise are but temporary. Put them away, and get to the great spiritual business that concerns us all, the seeking truly after God in spirit and in truth. If you really want to find God, you shall find him. He is already seeking you, and your very desire after him is the proof that he has already had dealings with you by his Spirit.

Therefore, come unto him, and come at once, “for the Father seeketh such to worship him.”

[John 4:24-27](#). *God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he. And upon this came his disciples,--*

This gracious work of the Master had been done in private. Christ knew that such a person as this woman was not to be spoken to in the presence of his disciples, who were scarcely sympathetic enough for such service. But her heart is now won by the Messias; so, now you may come in, you disciples! Providence shut the door, and kept them waiting a while until this delicate piece of work was done.

[John 4:27](#). *And marvelled that he talked with the woman:*

These men who had themselves been picked off the dunghill marvelled that Christ spoke to this woman! So have I known some, who were themselves grievous sinners once, yet they have become horribly conceited some years after conversion, and they have thought that other great sinners might not be saved as they were. God deliver from such abominable pride any soul that professes to be saved! Every believer should feel, “If the Lord has saved me, he can save anybody;” and that state of mind ought to be ours always.

[John 4:27](#). *Yet no man said, What seekest thou? or, Why talkest thou with her?*

They had some sense left, sense enough to keep silence.

[John 4:28](#). *The woman then left her waterpot,-*

Possessed only with one thought, going to tell others the glad news she herself had believed, she “left her waterpot,”-

[John 4:28-29](#). *And went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did.- is not this the Christ?*

They must have been surprised to hear her talking about good things. There was no more likely messenger to win men, or to strike them with curiosity, than such a woman as this.

[John 4:30-32](#). *Then they went out of the city, and came unto him. In the mean while his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat. But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of.*

So has every man who lives to win souls for Christ. There is a larder which he enters where the very delicacies of God are brought before him, and his soul is sustained and his strength is renewed by the dainties that the Lord has provided for those who do his will. Brethren and sisters, may we often feed upon this heavenly meat! Amen.

Verses 1-34

[John 4:1-4](#). *When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,) he left Judaea, and departed again into Galilee. And he must needs go through Samaria.*

And, surely, not only because it was the more convenient way, but because he had designs of love for some souls there that his Father had given him. There is many a needs be in divine providence because of the needs-be of divine grace.

[John 4:5-6](#). *Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour.*

Wearied, and needing rest, yet there was no rest for him, except that he found his sweetest rest in winning immortal souls unto himself.

[John 4:7](#). *There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink.*

That is practically what Jesus still says to the sons and daughters of men: "Give me to drink." He asks for your love, for your trust, for your confidence. It is his meat and drink to bless your soul, and to give you the blessing that you need, and it is a refreshment to his spirit when you give him the opportunity of thus blessing you.

[John 4:8](#). *(For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.)*

It was a great mercy that the disciples were out of the way just then; had they been there, they might have tried to keep this poor woman from speaking to the Saviour; and, sometimes, brethren, it may be well for us to be laid aside. God may do more good without our presence than with it; who can tell?

[John 4:9-10](#). *Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou being a Jew, asketh drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee,*

Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.

See, then, the evil of spiritual ignorance, and see also how the chain of grace works, “If thou knewest . . . , thou wouldest have sought . . . and he would have given.” When God gives the knowledge of Christ to the soul, then there comes the spirit of prayer, and then consequent blessing.

[John 4:11-12](#). *The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle?*

She took the Saviour’s figure literally; and there are still many who cannot see the spiritual meaning of God’s Word, and run their heads against the hard stern letter which killeth, instead of seeking and finding the inner living spirit which giveth life. These are the people who build their hopes of salvation upon outward ordinances, and who impute saving power to “sacraments.” Would God that they knew better!

[John 4:13-15](#). *Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.*

She was still unable to see the inner meaning of the Saviour’s words; the outward sense still held her fast. She needed to have her conscience aroused, for that would prove to be the way into her heart. Christ has different doors for entering into different people’s souls. Into some, he enters by the understanding; into many, by the affections. To some, he comes by the way of fear; to another, by that of hope; and to this woman he came by way of her conscience.

[John 4:16-19](#). *Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband and come hither. The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband: For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly. The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.*

Something had come home to her conscience through what the Saviour said to her, so she began to speak about what he was, not about what she

herself was. This often happens when the preacher is enabled, by divine grace, to come home to the conscience. The result is, that the hearer says, "What a wonderful preacher he is!" But that will do no good, that is not the point at which we are aiming. "The woman saith unto him, sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet," and off she goes, at a tangent, to enquire about various forms of religious observance. Evil liver as she was she was still a person who wished to be regarded as a religious woman; and it is strange how often a certain religiousness will flourish even in the most depraved heart, — not true godliness, however. So she propounded this difficulty to the Saviour: —

[John 4:20](#). *Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.*

"There are so many sects, can you tell me which is the right one?" That is the question which men often put to us when we begin to touch their consciences.

[John 4:21](#). *Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.*

This question is of very temporary interest. The hour cometh, when neither of these places, nor yet any other, shall be considered saved.

[John 4:22-24](#). *Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.*

No longer is any consecrated building necessary to true worship; indeed, no building can be consecrated. No longer are we to be confined to canonical hours. No longer is God to be sought with the sensuousness of sweet music or of fragrant incense; but he is to be sought with the heart, and soul, and spirit.

[John 4:25-26](#). *The woman saith unto him. I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.*

This great truth burst upon her with all the force of a divine revelation, and faith came with the information. The words that had gone before had prepared her to expect this manifestation of Christ to her soul.

[John 4:27-34](#). *And upon this came his disciples, and marvelled that he talked with the woman: yet no man said, What seekest thou? or, Why talkest thou with her? The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ? Then they went out of the city, and came unto him. In the mean while his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat. But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of. Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought him ought to eat?*

Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will, of him that sent me, and to finish his work.

Verses 1-39

[John 4:1-3](#). *When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,) He left Judaea, and departed again into Galilee.*

Our Saviour was not a man of strife; he was quite ready to contend with the Pharisees on fit occasions, but just then he avoided an encounter with them. Besides, one woman of Samaria, whom he was going to save, was worth more to him than ten thousand Pharisees who would not be saved by him. Most of the learning and culture of Palestine was possessed by the Pharisees, but Christ thought nothing of it in comparison with the soul of the one poor woman of Samaria whom he was going to save.

[John 4:4-7](#). *And he must needs go through Samaria. Thene cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour. There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink.*

“The sixth hour” means noonday, and that was a very unusual time for a Samaritan woman to go to draw water; but the reason why she went at that unusual hour was because she was one whom other women shunned so that, if she went to the well at all, she must go alone, for they would not be seen in her company. What a wonderful thing it is that this woman, who was not thought to be fit company for her fellow-creatures was nevertheless thought by Christ to be worth looking after and saving! But those who are the castaways of men are often among those who are the sought-out and chosen ones of Christ.

[John 4:8](#). *(For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.)*

This was quite a right thing for the disciples to do, for meat must be bought for men to eat. No doubt it is better to pray than to eat; but if one never ate, he would not long be able to pray. I have heard these disciples condemned for their worldliness and carnality, but I fail to see anything of the kind, it does seem to me necessary that somebody should go into the city to buy meat, and although it is not the noblest kind of work, yet, being necessary, it may be the stepping-stone to higher service.

[John 4:9-10](#). *Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God,*

How much we lose through ignorance! Ignorance is often like a great stone laid upon the well, so that the flocks cannot be watered, blessed is everyone who helps to roll away that stone. It is a great thing to know the gift of God: “If thou knewest the gift of God,” —

[John 4:10](#). *And who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.*

There are two things worth knowing, — what grace is, and who it is that gives it. Want of this knowledge often leads to lack of prayer, and lack of prayer leads to lack of receiving. Perhaps someone asks, “Why does not God give without prayer?” Because it is not his will to do so. His will is that we should pray about everything. Did you ever notice that, even when the harvest is ripe, it cannot be gathered in without prayer? Jesus said to his disciples, “The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.” Prayer seems indispensable; it is part of God’s necessary machinery; he has pleased to make it so. But what condescension of love it is that the prayer of man should be necessary to effect the purposes of God! God even says to Christ himself, “Ask of me and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.” So that, from the woman at the well up to the Lord Jesus himself, prayer seems to be the indispensable requisite of blessing.

[John 4:11](#). *The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water?*

You who reverence the majesty of Christ’s Deity, the perfection of his humanity, the glory of his atoning sacrifice, the splendor of his resurrection

power, you who know whence he has this living water, the power to save and to bless, worship and adore him with all your heart and soul.

[John 4:12-14](#). *Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst: —*

You know that there are some who preach of a salvation that does not save; they teach that one may be a child of God today and a child of the devil tomorrow. That is like the water in Jacob's well: "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again." But Christ's salvation is of a very different kind: "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst:" —

[John 4:14](#). *But the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.*

The grace of God is a living thing, a springing and abiding thing, an everlasting thing, and he that hath it in his heart hath that which hath saved him for ever.

[John 4:15](#). *The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.*

Christ's words were coming true. He said that, if she had known, she would have asked; and, then, in her poor groping way, she began to pray, hardly knowing what she was asking for. I advise you also to pray even before you quite understand your own prayers, before you are sufficiently instructed to know what you really need. Ask God to give you what you need. Very often we make a discovery of our needs through having them supplied.

[John 4:16-19](#). *Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither. The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband: for thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly. The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.*

She perceived that there was something about him which marked him out as a prophet, so she seemed to say to him, "As thou art a prophet, solve me this riddle:" —

[John 4:20-24](#). *Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.*

Let us never forget this. Even if we all believe it, we do not always act according to that belief. For instance, we sing through a hymn, but it might almost as well be an old song, for our hearts do not go with the words; or while our heads are bowed in prayer, mayhap our thoughts are back with our children, or our shops, or far away in some foreign land. Yet there is no benefit in coming up to a place of worship, or in listening to sermons and prayers, or joining in the singing of sacred songs unless our heart is there. Let us always recollect this, and sigh and cry rather than rejoice if we have been up to the holy assembly, and yet have not worshipped God “in spirit and in truth.”

[John 4:25-26](#). *The woman saith unto him, I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.*

Now she had made the greatest of all discoveries, for the Messiah himself had come to her, and told her “all things.” This was her test of the Messiah, and Christ had answered it.

[John 4:27](#). *And upon this came his disciples, and marvelled that he talked with the woman: yet no man said, What seekest thou? or, Why talkest thou with her?*

They had too much respect for him to ask such questions, except in their own hearts, but their Oriental prejudices made them marvel that he was talking with a woman!

[John 4:28-33](#). *The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ? Then they went out of the city, and came unto him. In the mean while his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat. But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of. Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought him ought to eat?*

They did not like to ask him plainly; although they were very curious about the matter, they scarcely dared to pry further into it, and his next words may have deepened the mystery still further.

[John 4:34-35](#). *Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work. Say not ye, there are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.*

“Look at those Samaritans trooping out of the city, drawn by that woman’s testimony concerning me. They are coming, at her invitation, to learn more about the Christ.”

[John 4:36-38](#). *And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. And herein is that saying true, One soweth and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours.*

The prophets had spoken and written concerning the Messiah, their words had prepared the minds of the Jews, and also of the Samaritans, to receive the gospel, so the great success of the apostles must not be traced merely to their teaching, but also to the preparatory work of the other labourers who had gone before: “Other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours.” The Church is always ready to praise her reapers, let her not forget her sowers. There are some of us, who bring many souls to Christ, who are greatly indebted to the work which was done by other men who preceded us. There are some who, perhaps, have few conversions although they preach the gospel faithfully, they are sowing, and there shall come others, by-and-by, who shall reap bounteous harvests as the result of their sowing the good seed of the kingdom. No matter who sows, or who reaps, the glory of the harvest shall be unto the Most High.

[John 4:39](#). *And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did.*

Verses 1-42

[John 4:1-6](#). *When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,) He left Judaea, and departed again into Galilee. And he must needs go through Samaria. Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that*

Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour.

Do not be surprised, dear brethren, if you sometimes grow weary in the Lord's work. I trust that, even then, you will not be weary of it, but that you will believe that our blessed Master can still use even his tired servants, and bless their labours. The Lord Jesus Christ wrought great marvels even when he sat wearily on the brink of Jacob's well; and you, perhaps, are at this moment as fatigued and worn as you well can be; yet, will you not awaken all the energies of your soul if you should see an opportunity of doing good, even if it should be to some poor fallen woman, as in the case here mentioned? It is a blessed thing never to be too tired to pray, and never to be too tired to speak to an anxious enquirer.

[John 4:7](#). *There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water:*

Providence was at work so that, when Christ reached the well, this woman was on her way thither. It was very late in the day for anyone to go to draw water; but, probably, the other women, who went to the well early in the morning, were not willing to associate with her, so she had to go by herself. Late as she was, however, she was all in good time, for she reached the spot just when Christ was waiting to bless her.

[John 4:7-8](#). *Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink. (For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.)*

Or else they might have drawn water from the well to refresh him.

[John 4:9-10](#). *Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.*

See the deadly mischief of ignorance concerning spiritual things. If she had known, she would have asked, and Christ would have given; but the first link was missing; and, hence, the rest of the chain was not drawn on. Sometimes, all that people need is a little wise instruction, and they will then trust the Saviour; God grant that we may ever be ready to give it! Alas! there are some who need much more than that; but Christ could truly say to this Samaritan woman, "If thou hadst known, thou wouldest have asked, and I would have given." O dear hearers, do not perish through ignorance! You

have your Bibles; then, search them. You have a gospel ministry among you; take care that you give diligent heed to what you hear from the servants of the Lord.

[John 4:11](#). *The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water?*

Christ told the woman that he could give her living water, but it puzzled her to know how he could get at it. The well where they had met was deep, and he had nothing to draw the water out of it; how, then, could he go deeper still to get the living water of which he had spoken? She could not understand his simile, and to this day it is the same with many of our hearers. The simplest language of God's ministers goes right over the heads of the people; they take our words literally, when they ought to see that they are spiritual, and, on the other hand, I have known them spirit them away when they ought to be accepted literally. Such is the perversity of man's mind that, often, he will not understand the truth.

[John 4:12-14](#). *Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.*

These words set forth the wonderful nature of divine grace. They certainly greatly err who suppose that we can ever receive it, and yet, after all, be left to perish without it. Nay; but when it is once imparted to us, it continues to spring up within us, like a well that never runs dry. It is the living and incorruptible seed, "which liveth and abideth for ever." It is of the very nature and essence of the grace of God that it is indestructible, it cannot be taken away from the heart in which it has been implanted by the Holy Spirit.

[John 4:15](#). *The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.*

This was an ignorant prayer on the part of the woman; but it is one which I would commend to every enlightened soul: "Sir, give me this water." Do you want a form of prayer? Here is one for you: "Sir," Lord,—"give me this water." The Lord is ready to hear that petition, and to give this precious living water even now.

[John 4:16-17](#). *Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither. The woman answered and said, I have no husband.*

The Lord Jesus knew all about her character, and here he touched the weakest point in it. His plainest teaching had so far missed the mark, for he had not reached her conscience; but he was about to do so.

[John 4:17-18](#). *Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband: For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly.*

You can imagine her astonishment — her blank amazement as the secret story of her life was thus repeated to her.

[John 4:19](#). *The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.*

It would have been a sign of better things if she had said, “Lord, I perceive that I am a sinner;” but that confession had to be made a little farther on. How apt people are rather to think about the preacher than about themselves! If half the criticisms which are passed upon ministers of Christ were bestowed upon the hearers themselves, how much sooner they might receive the blessing they need! The woman then asked our Lord a question about religion which was strangely out of place from such a woman as she was. Yet, often, those who have least morality will have the most ceremonialism and concern about the externals of worship.

[John 4:20](#). *Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; —*

This Mount Gerizim; —

[John 4:20](#). *And ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.*

This she thought was a very important matter.

[John 4:21](#). *Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.*

“There shall be an abolition of all specially-holy shrines, for all places shall be alike holy. There shall be a putting an end to all your traditions, and your forms of worship, for God shall be worshipped after another fashion than that which is merely formal and superficial.”

[John 4:22-26](#). *Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him*

must worship him in spirit and in truth. The woman saith unto him, I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.

That majestic word of Christ carried conviction with it; the woman believed it there and then.

[John 4:27-28](#). *And upon this came his disciples, and marvelled that he talked with the woman: yet no man said, What seekest thou? or, Why talkest thou with her? The woman then left her waterpot, —*

She was too glad, too happy, to recollect so poor a thing as a waterpot. It was much to her before, but very little now. As one who finds a precious pearl forgets some trifle that he carried in his hand, so she “left her waterpot,” —

[John 4:28-29](#). *And went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?*

Her notion was, that when Christ came, he would tell all things. Here was a man who revealed her innermost secrets; — was not he the Christ?

[John 4:30-32](#). *Then they went out of the city, and came unto him. In the mean while his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat. But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of.*

O beloved, there is a wonderful fascination about the blessed work of soul-seeking! When one is really anxious to bring a sinner to the Saviour, eating and drinking are often forgotten. As the hunter of the chamois, in the heat of the chase, leaps from crag to crag, and is oblivious of danger, and forgets all about the time for his meals, so he that hunts after a precious soul, to win it for Christ, forgets everything else. He is altogether absorbed in this holy pursuit; the Master was more absorbed in it than any of us are ever likely to be.

[John 4:33-35](#). *Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought him ought to eat? Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work. Say not ye, There are but four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, for they are white already to harvest.*

That was probably an old Oriental proverb, used by lazy men who never thought it time to get to work; but Jesus said, “Do not use the idler’s language any longer; now, at once, there is work for you to do.”

[John 4:36-42](#). *And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours. And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did. So when the Samaritans were come unto him, they besought him that he would tarry with them: and he abode there two days. And many more believed because of his own word; and said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.*

The Lord bring us all to trust in him, for his dear name's sake! Amen.

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CHAPTER 5

Verses 1-9

[John 5:1-9](#). *After this there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had. And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years. When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole? The impotent man answered him, Sir, have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me. Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the sabbath.*

I hope to speak on these miracles in my discourse, so only briefly refer to them now; but this Sabbath afforded another memorable instance of our Lord's healing power. In the ninth chapter of John's Gospel you have the remarkable story of the man born blind. (See [John 9:1-14](#))

This exposition consisted of readings from [Luke 4:33-36](#); [Luke 6:6-11](#); [Luke 13:10-17](#); [Luke 14:1-6](#); [John 5:1-9](#); ND 9:1-14.

Verses 1-23

[John 5:1](#). *After this there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.*

For he had respect to the Law. As long as the Law lasted, Christ observed it. Oh, that we were as careful to obey the rules of the Gospel as our Lord was to observe the ritual of the Law! Moreover, he went to Jerusalem because he had an opportunity of addressing great numbers of people there. While I have been resting at Menton, I have been very glad to be of service to a few friends who were either seeking the Saviour, or needing some guidance in their spiritual life; but I cannot tell you how happy I am to be once more in the Tabernacle, preaching to the great congregation. Fisherman like to cast their nets where there are plenty of fish; and fishers of men delight to be where there are many men who may be enclosed in the gospel net. “After this there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.”

[John 5:2](#). *Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches.*

This pool of Bethesda was rightly called “the house of mercy”; but it might have just as truly named “the house of misery”: for its “five porches” were the abode of many who were in misery, and who needed mercy.

[John 5:3](#). *In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, Invalid persons, diseased, and scarcely able to move.*

[John 5:3](#). *Of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water.*

What a sight for the Great Physician to look upon! The whole world must have been to him like one huge hospital, full of “impotent folk, blind, halt withered.” Wherever he went, he was surrounded by the sick, and sad, and suffering, those who were afflicted physically, mentally, and spiritually. But there was a special reason for the gathering together of so many sufferers at the pool of Bethesda.

[John 5:4](#). *For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.*

It was the last remnant of miracle. Such things were common enough in Judaea in her better days; but now the times of the prophets had ceased, and the day of miracles was almost over. Here, at Bethesda, were just a few

relics and remnants of the good old days. Only one was cured, he that stepped into the pool first after the angel had troubled the water. It was but a scanty power that was left to the troubled water; but it was quite enough, if only one in a thousand was healed, to bring a crowd of people to wait around the pool. If only one person in a year were saved, I should not wonder if you thronged the place to hear the gospel that saved him; but your privilege is much greater. Here all who come, if they will hear and believe, shall find healing. It is not the first only, but even unto the last who shall step into the pool, that shall be healed.

[John 5:5](#). *And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years.*

That was a great portion of the man's life. If he was a full-grown man when he was attacked with the infirmity, he had now become old and gray. What a long time to be afflicted, thirty and eight years! Have we not with us at this time some who have been afflicted with the soul-sickness of sin more than thirty and eight years?

[John 5:6](#). *When Jesus saw him lie.*

The Great Physician fixed his eye on him, for his was an extraordinary case. Probably he was known and talked of as the man who had been paralyzed eight and thirty years. Note that it does not say, "When the man saw Jesus," but "when Jesus saw him." He did not know Jesus; possibly he had not even heard of his healing power and compassionate love. He was not seeking Jesus; but Jesus was seeking him. It was so with many of us;

and therefore we sing —

"Jesus sought me when a stranger,
Wandering from the fold of God;
He, to rescue me from danger,
Interposed his precious blood."

When Jesus saw the impotent man, — And knew that he had been now a long time in that case, And a long time in that place, too, — He saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole? That must have seemed a strange question. What was he there for, if not to be made whole? But I will show you, by-and-by, that there was wisdom in the question of Jesus. It was no idle curiosity that moved him to enquire of the man whether he was willing to be made whole.

[John 5:7](#). *The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming,*

Shuffling along, as best I may, to the water's edge, —

[John 5:7](#). *Another steppeth down before me.*

Then, of course, the curative miracle is wrought, and the curative power of the water is gone until another season, when the angel troubles it again.

[John 5:8-9](#). *Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the sabbath.*

This is our Sabbath. Oh, that we might have the same miracle wrought here tonight, upon many spiritually impotent folk!

[John 5:10-11](#). *The Jews therefore said unto him that was cured,. It is the sabbath day: it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed, He answered them,*

And he did answer them, too. It was a crushing answer.

[John 5:11](#). *He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk.*

That was his warrant. None but God could have made him whole. God can set aside any of his laws if he pleases; at any rate, whatever he commands, must be right.

[John 5:12](#). *Then asked they him, What man is that which saith unto thee, Take up thy bed, and walk?*

They asked, “What man” had given this command. Why, if it had been a mere man who had said it, the impotent man could not either have taken up his bed, or have walked!

[John 5:13](#). *And he that was healed wist not who it was: for Jesus had conveyed himself away, a multitude being in that place.*

He never sought notoriety; but avoided popular demonstrations in his favor. The man who had been healed had exercised faith in Jesus, but he knew very little about him. A certain something in the air and mien of Christ had won his faith; but he did not know his name, or who he was. How small may be your knowledge, and yet you may be saved by true faith!

[John 5:14](#). *Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole; sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.*

Probably, this man's illness had been caused by sin. Christ bids him henceforth keep clear of sin, lest a worse calamity should come upon him.

[John 5:15](#). *The man departed, and told the Jews that it was Jesus, which had made him whole.*

Full of joy, full of delight, he must tell out the name of him who had cured him, as grateful patients like to sound the praises of their physician when he has been the means of healing them.

[John 5:16](#). *And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath day.*

This was a mere pretense, an idle excuse for their enmity. They not only hated Christ; but they must besmear him with their calumnies, and make him out to be an evil-doer although he was goodness itself.

[John 5:17](#). *But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.*

The whole work of nature is continued on Sabbath-days as well as other days. Stars shine through the Sabbath-night, and the sun rises and sets on the Lord's-day as on all the days of the week. God's work continues. "My Father worketh," saith Christ, "and I work." "My work is my Father's work, and that goes on whatever the day may be."

[John 5:18](#). *Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he had not only broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.*

They did not understand him to preach Unitarianism; they understood him to proclaim his own true and proper Godhead, and he never contradicted them, for he was God.

[John 5:19](#). *Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.*

Christ's work runs parallel with that of the Father. The Father and the Son ever work in perfect harmony with one another.

[John 5:20-22](#). *For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth; and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel. For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son:*

The Son as well as the Father, is the Quickener of the dead. The Son is also the Judge of all men.

[John 5:23](#). *That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.*

As the universal Judge, the Lord Jesus is to be honoured by all men, “even as they honour the Father.” Whatever others may do, or not do, we will honour the Father, we will honour the Son, and we will honour the Holy Spirit, three in one and one in three, the one God of Israel, for ever and ever.

Verses 24-44

[John 5:24](#). *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, —*

If we truly believe the word of Christ, and trust in him who sent his Son into the world, we have at this moment everlasting life.

[John 5:24](#). *And shalt not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.*

What a grand verse this is! It is worthy to be written in letters of gold at every street corner; would that we all knew the fullness of its meaning by heartfelt experience!

[John 5:25-30](#). *Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation. I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.*

Christ as Mediator did the will of the Father, and yet also did his own will, for his will was always the same as his Father’s.

[John 5:31](#). *If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true.*

He did bear witness to himself by his miracles, but that was not the witness upon which he relied, nor was it the only witness to the truth of his mission.

[John 5:32-40](#). *There is another that beareth witness of me; and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true. Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth. But I receive not testimony from man: but these things I say, that ye might be saved. He was a burning and a shining light: and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light. But I have greater*

witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me. And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape. And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not. Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.

They were great Bible-readers, great students of the letter, but they would not come to Christ; and hence the Scriptures themselves became a sepulcher in which they were entombed.

[John 5:41-44](#). *I receive not honour from men. But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you. I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive. How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?*

Some men find it difficult to believe in Christ because they are always seeking honour for themselves; desire for the praise of men often blinds the mind and prejudices the spirit. How boldly our great Master speaks! There is no flattery on his lips. He is the faithful and true Witness, the very Word of God. Oh, that all men would give heed to his message!

This exposition consisted of readings from [Genesis 45:9-28](#); and [John 5:24-44](#).

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CHAPTER 6

Verses 1-14

[John 6:1-6](#). *After these things Jesus went over the Sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias. And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased. And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples. And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh. When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do.*

That verse is worth thinking over. How often does Christ seem to ask us riddles, and place us in difficulties, so that we begin to say, “What will come of this? How shall we escape from this temptation; or how shall we stand under this trial?” He himself knows what he will do; and it is a very blessed thing when our faith being tried, it shows itself to be strong enough to leave the burden with him who can bear it, and to leave the difficulty with him who can meet it: “He himself knew what he would do.”

[John 6:7](#). *Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little.*

That is our way. When our faith is little, we begin calculating the pennyworths that are wanted, and we make them out to be so much more than we possess or can possibly scrape together. That is not faith, it is reason, — poor, dim, shallow reason, which forgets the Infinite, and begins to calculate its own limited and insufficient forges.

[John 6:8-10](#). *One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, saith unto him, There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many? And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand.*

When Christ bids men sit down, he has a dainty carpet for them to sit upon: “There was much grass in the place.” One might have thought that some of those people would have refused to sit down, for it is not everybody who will sit at a table that has nothing on it. But God knows how to move the hearts of men, and so these people. If they had not strong faith, yet had they faith enough to do as they were bidden. I wish that we all had as much faith as that.

[John 6:11](#). *And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would.*

“As much as they would.” Note those words, for they are the rule at Christ’s feasts. Of earthly things, he gives us as much as we need; and of heavenly things, as much as we would! “Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.” “According to your faith be it unto you.”

[John 6:12-13](#). *When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost. Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten.*

“Waste not, want not,” Heavenly economy is to be practiced in the things of God. Christ is no niggard, but he is no waster.

[John 6:14](#). *Then those men, when they had seen the miracle which Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.*

They were convinced through their stomachs. They came to this conviction merely through eating and drinking, and that faith which comes by the senses is no faith at all, or it is a sensual faith which cannot save the soul. These people, who came to this belief through eating, were very poor followers of Christ, as he said to them, “Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.”

This exposition consisted of readings from [John 6:1-14](#); [John 6:30-45](#).

Verses 1-21

[John 6:1-2](#). *After these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias. And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased.*

Many of them curiosity-mongers wanting to see more wonders wrought, others of them sick themselves, and anxious to be healed. Wherever Jesus went, a throng went with him.

[John 6:3](#). *And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples.*

That was his frequent posture when his disciples were gathered around him. He sat at his ease, and talked to his hearers. He was not very demonstrative in his oratory, but spoke calmly and quietly, and left the truth to find its own way into the minds and hearts of men.

[John 6:4-5](#). *And the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh. When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?*

They were in a lonely place out in the wilderness, where the people had no means of obtaining food, and Jesus knew that they would soon be faint with hunger, so he consulted with Philip as to what was to be done. It is great kindness and condescension on our Lord’s part to consult with his followers; he often did it, not that he needed their advice or help, but because they needed to be taught how to think and how to act for the good of others.

[John 6:6](#). *And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do.*

Observe the complex character of Christ; as man, he consulted with Philip; as God, he knows beforehand what he will do.

[John 6:7](#). *Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little.*

Two hundred pennyworth must have seemed an enormous amount to poor Philip, for all Christ disciples had made themselves poor by following him. The bag that Judas carried probably scarcely ever had as much as that in it. If it were all spent, it would not go far towards feeding five thousand men, beside the women and children.

[John 6:8-9](#). *One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him, There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?*

These small fishes were commonly cured and dried by that lake, little fish very much resembling sardines or anchovies, and they were eaten dry as a relish with bread. This lad had five barley cakes and a couple of these little fish, that was all.

[John 6:10](#). *And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down,--*

Jesus would have everything done decently and in order. The people obeyed Christ's command, and sat down, we are told by Mark, "in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties." "There was much grass in the place." Our Lord has a carpet in his banqueting hall, such a carpet as Solomon in all his glory could not have made. "There was much grass in the place. So the men sat down,"-

[John 6:10-11](#). *In number about five thousand. And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks,*

Among the Jews, it is always the master of the house who gives thanks. They do not call upon a child to say grace, but the father of the family, like a priest in his own house, stands up, and pronounces a blessing upon the food. It is a beautiful thought that Christ thus made himself, as it were the Father of that large family, the Head and Provider for those man; thousands of people.

[John 6:11](#). *He distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would.*

"As much as they would." That is Christ's measure for those who gather at his table; it is only your own will that limits the amount of grace that you may have.

[John 6:12-13](#). *When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost. Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments, of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten.*

I am sorry today that it is a mark of very poor people that they are often very wasteful people. These beggars, who had come only to be fed, were not satisfied to eat till they were satisfied, but they threw down pieces of bread, just as I frequently see, in the streets of London, great pieces of bread thrown away. It should not be so, for bread is the staff of life. Among the Egyptians, they are always peculiarly careful that never a portion of bread should be wasted, nor should it ever be as in a city like this where there are so many persons who are starving for lack of bread. But while I see the carelessness and wastefulness of the crowd, I also notice the carefulness and economy of Christ. He who could make food enough to feed the thousands at his will yet would not waste a crust. I think a large-hearted liberality should always be consistent with a strict economy. I have heard of one who called at a rich man's door to ask for a subscription, and he heard him scolding the servant for wasting a match." Ah!" he thought, "I shall get nothing out of him." Yet he received from that very man a larger subscription than from anybody else upon whom he called during that day. Christ would give anything but he wasted nothing; let us imitate his example.

[John 6:14](#). *Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.*

But the faith that comes by the way of the stomach is not worth much. If people are converted by loaves and fishes, bigger loaves and bigger fishes will make them go the other way; converts made thus are of small worth.

[John 6:15-17](#). *When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone. And when even was now come, his disciples went down unto the sea, and entered into a ship, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was now dark, and Jesus was not come to them.*

Then it was very dark. Ah, my dear friends, perhaps you know what it is to be in trouble, and to mourn an absent Lord. This is a direful description of a specially dark night for the disciples: "It was now dark, and Jesus was not come to them."

[John 6:18-19](#). *And the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew. So when they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they see Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the ship: and they were afraid.*

Do you wonder that they were filled with fear? It seemed so strange a sight,-a man walking on the waves of the sea.

[John 6:20](#). *But he saith unto them, It is I be not afraid.*

Then they must have felt at ease at once as soon as they knew that it was Jesus who was walking towards them upon the water. Lord, if it be thou, fear would be foolish on our part; we are only too glad to have thy company.

[John 6:21](#). *Then they willingly received him into the ship: and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went.*

No sooner was Jesus with them than they were where they wanted to be. The presence of Christ works wonders for us, we are soon at our haven when the Lord of heaven comes to us.

Verses 1-41

[John 6:1-5](#). *After these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias. And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased. And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples. And the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh. When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him,*

They had been hearing him all day, and he had withdrawn a little from them, but they pursued him up the hill, and I doubt not that as they toiled up the hill they showed their faintness and their weariness, which led the Saviour to see how much they needed refreshment.

[John 6:5-7](#). *He saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little.*

Men's calculations concerning divine things generally terminate in a deficit. Two hundred pennyworth is not sufficient. But Christ's calculations always terminate in a balance over, as we shall see. "Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing may be lost." We, at our best, fall short of the mark. Our blessed Master not only does enough, but in his house there is bread enough and to spare.

[John 6:8-10](#). *One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him, There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many? And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. —*

Or lie down, as it is, for they were accustomed to do that at feasts, and Christ would have them take their ease as well as enjoy their refreshment. “Make the men recline.”

[John 6:10](#). *Now there was much grass in the place.*

So it was a splendid dining-room. It was carpeted luxuriously. We learn from this that it was the Eastern spring time, for there is not much grass else; and there was therefore in Christ's banqueting hall the ceiling-was of blue, and the floor of green grass. What more could they want, except the meat?

[John 6:10-11](#). *So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. And Jesus took the loaves:*

— Common, coarse loaves of barley, not much esteemed even then as food.

[John 6:11](#). *And when he had given thanks,*

Though out of doors, and “in the rough,” as we say, he did not forget that. I know some that fall to their meals, like so many swine, and have not as much grace as chickens, that are sure to lift their heads whenever they take a drink, as if to bless God for every drop they receive.

[John 6:11](#). *He distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down;*

— Or reclining.

[John 6:11](#). *And likewise of the fishes as much as they would.*

That is one of the rules of Christ's feasting always — as much as they would. According to your appetite, according to your will, according to your faith, so be it unto you.

[John 6:12](#). *When they were filled, —*

Had all they could desire.

[John 6:12](#). *He said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.*

Economy in the midst of bounty. However much we have, we are never warranted in wasting a single crumb. They had as much as they would, but they were not allowed to cast away the fragments.

[John 6:13-14](#). *Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten. Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.*

Men are often convinced by the argument of selfishness. They had been fed, and now they believed. But faith that depends upon a full stomach will despair when they get hungry again. Always beware of that religion which is in dependence upon loaves and fishes. You know how it was with the children of Israel.

“Now they believed the word,
While rocks with rivers flow,
Then with their sins they grieved the Lord,
And he did bring them low.”

Oh, but we must not have a faith that depends upon what it can see, and upon what it can eat, and what it can drink. Oh, far the confidence in the blessed person of the Lord, and in the spiritual riches which he can communicate.

[John 6:15](#). *When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, To make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone.*

What, could ‘he not have used his kingship for the best of purposes? Might he not easily have routed the Romans, restored Israel to all her glory, conquered the Gentiles, and subdued the world, and set up a glorious church and state, with himself for the king, and himself at the head of the church? Ah, that has been the idol of a great many, and, like G will-o’-the-wisp, it has led many of the true people of God into bogs and sloughs, where they were likely to be lost. But our Master knew better than this, and was not to be tempted away from the true method by which his church is to be set up in the world. Therefore “:he departed again into a mountain himself, alone.”

[John 6:16-17](#). *And when even was now come, his disciples went down unto the sea, And entered into a ship, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was dark, and Jesus was not come to them.*

That is a sentence that I should think some very gloomy people might hang upon, and about which they might groan in unison, “It was now dark, and Jesus was not come to them.” Have you never been in that condition?

Dark, dark, dark, as to circumstances, and as to feelings, and Jesus was not come to them. Now, something comes beside that.

[John 6:18](#). *And the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew.*

Misfortunes never come alone. An absent Saviour, a roaring sea, and a bellowing wind. What will they do now?

[John 6:19](#). *So when they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they see Jesus—*

Here he is. Here is the first of their blessings. The first mischief is removed, and the rest will soon go. They see Jesus.

[John 6:19](#). *Walking on the sea,*

Oh, what a sight! A grander sight than to see him on the land; and it is a more glorious sight to see Christ in the time of trouble than it is in the time of prosperity. He is always sweet, but he is more marvelous when they see Jesus walking on the sea.

[John 6:19](#). *And drawing nigh unto the ship: and they were afraid.*

Afraid of their best friend — trembling at their deliverer.

[John 6:21](#). *Then they willingly received him into the ship: and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went.*

The sea and the winds knew how not only to spare the vessel, but to carry it instantaneously to the place where they wished to be. But how often have you and I been rowing about, five-and-twenty or thirty furlongs, and we did not seem to be getting out of the storm at all; but the moment Christ has come, we have been where we wished to be. Oh, glory be to his name; there is no difficulty that you can be in, dear friends, but Christ can get you out of it in a moment, and bring you where you should be.

[John 6:22-24](#). *The day following, when the people which stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was none other boat there, save that one whereinto his disciples were entered, and that Jesus went not with his disciples into the boat, but that his disciples were gone away alone; (Howbeit there came other boats from Tiberias nigh unto the place where they did eat bread, after that the Lord had given thanks:) When the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, neither his disciples, they also took shipping, and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus.*

Was not that a pleasant sight? So it seemed, but it was not. “Seeking for Jesus.” That is a good description of a man — seeking for Jesus. Ay, but they were only seeking for more bread. They looked at Him as a bread-giver, and they were after him for that.

[John 6:25](#). *And when they had found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither?*

They could not understand how he could have got there. Jesus answered them, and did not answer them. Some of Christ's answers are evidently no answer at all. That is very often the best answer you can give.

[John 6:26](#). *Jesus answered them and said,*

What, did he explain to them how 'he got there? No, he would not gratify their curiosity. He came not for that end. He therefore gave them a home stroke, and said: —

[John 6:26](#). *verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me. not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.*

You are loafers — loaf-hunters. You seek not me, but mine. It is not for the good that! can give your souls, but it is that you may have another meal, that you are here. Yours is cupboard love. You come after what you can get.

[John 6:27](#). *Labour not for the meat which perished, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.*

Now, you quite understand what Jesus meant? Seek after that: which will feed your souls. Do not hunt so much after bread for the body. Yet the Saviour puts it very curiously. This is a double-shotted perplexity, a singular, curious kind of word. You are not to labour for that which you cannot get without labour, and you are to labour for that which you cannot get by labour. The Saviour liked to put things in that sententious way, so that they might remember what he said. If they misunderstood him it was their own fault, for it is plain enough. God grant us grace to practice the meaning of these words. Why are ye so eager to get a bit of barley bread and a fish? Oh, that you were half as eager to come and get the bread which comes from heaven which will make a man live for ever, and which will be food to him as long as he lives.

[John 6:28-29](#). *Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, —*

The chief work, the greatest work which you can do.

[John 6:29](#). *That ye believe on him whom he hath sent.*

This is the point. You would like me to work miracles. You would be glad to have very wonderful, mysterious experience, but this is the thing

you ought to seek after — the grandest, greatest thing that you can have, :’ that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.”

[John 6:30](#). *They said therefore unto him, What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work?*

Are you not wonderfully struck with the patience of Jesus? These people had seen his miracles, and they had eaten loaves and fishes, and yet they say to him, “What sign showest thou, then, that we may see and believe thy work?” Oh, the matchless patience of the Lord, and the marvelous provocations of men.

[John 6:31](#). *Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat,*

Plainly hinted that they wanted more food.

[John 6:32-34](#). *Then Jesus said unto them, verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. Then they said unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread.*

Not understanding him, and praying still for bread, but not for grace.

[John 6:35-37](#). *And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not. All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.*

What a striking truth that was, with which to reply to them. You only come after me for bread, but you do not come after spiritual things. You do not believe in me. But, even if you do not, I shall not be disappointed, and my work will not fail. God has an election of grace, and that election shall be carried out. “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me.” And then, as if to cheer them up again, he says, “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”

[John 6:38-41](#). *For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day. The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven.*

And there you see Christ has got no farther with them, but to leave them murmuring. And I believe that often the tame minister of God must expect to see no other result come of faithful testimony than for the people to murmur at him. But what if it be so? Will his Master blame him? No. No more than he blamed the Only Begotten. It trust be so that there may be a separation between the precious and the vile — that God's chosen may be drawn out; while such as believe not, shall be judged, and, in their own consciences, shall be condemned.

Verses 14-40

[John 6:14-15](#). *Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world. When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone.*

Our Lord Jesus had just wrought the miracle of feeding the five thousand men with five loaves and two small fishes, so he was very popular at that time. The people even wanted to come and take him by force, and make him a king, but he escaped from them, for he knew the value of that popularity. What was it but a puff of wind?" Probably, many of the very people, who tried then to crown him were among the crowds in Jerusalem who cried, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" And, nowadays there may be a great deal of anxiety to hear the gospel, yet very little result may follow from it. A crowded house of prayer is certainly a very hopeful sight, yet it may end in disappointment to those who are looking for souls to be won for the Saviour.

[John 6:16-26](#). *And when even was now come, his disciples went down unto the sea, and entered into a ship, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was now dark, and Jesus was not come to them. And the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew. So when they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they see Jesus walking on the sea and drawing nigh unto the ship and they were afraid. But he saith unto them, It is I be not afraid. Then they willingly received him into the ship: and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went. The day following, when the people which stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was none other boat there, save that one whereinto his disciples were entered, and that Jesus went not with his disciples into the boat, but that his disciples were gone away alone; (Howbeit there came other boats from*

Tiberias nigh unto the place where they did eat bread, after that the Lord had given thanks:) When the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, neither his disciples, they also took shipping, and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus. And when they had found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither? Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.

How faithful and truthful the Master was! There was in him nothing of the politic concealment of his knowledge, and the endeavor to please everybody, which we see in so many. He speaks the truth whether it offends or pleases his hearers, and so should his servants do. “Ye seek me,” said he, “not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.”

[John 6:27](#). *Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you, for him hath God the Father sealed.*

He rebuked their excessive ardor in seeking meat for their bodies, and urged them rather to seek food for their souls. But did you ever notice what an extraordinary piece of advice our Saviour gave to these people?” It is one of his paradoxes. He bade them not to labour for the very thing which they could not get without labouring, and to labour for that which they never could get by labouring. “Labour not for the meat which perisheth:” yet how else can we have it?” But for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you.” It is a free gift, and not the reward of labour, yet Christ told them to labour for it. Did he not mean just this, Let not your greatest efforts be expended upon the things of time and sense, but let them go out after eternal and spiritual blessings.

[John 6:28](#). *Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?*

“What is the noblest work that we can do? What is that work which will please God most?”

[John 6:29](#). *Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.*

The grandest work that any man can do is to believe on the Saviour whom God has sent. There are some who despise faith, but Christ was not of that number. He honoured it exceedingly when he said, in effect “This is the Godlike work, the work which is nearest to God’s heart, that ye believe

on him whom he hath sent.” Dear friend, art thou struggling after that which is high and noble? Wouldst thou do the best day’s work that was ever done in any mortal life? Thou run not to this or that invention of thine own, but be content to believe on him whom God hath sent. This is the first, the highest, the noblest work, the work which gives to God the greatest pleasure.

[John 6:30](#). *They said therefore unto him, What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work?*

What strange questions for them to ask when he had amazed them with his wonderful works.

[John 6:31](#). *Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat.*

They talk about “bread” again, how they persist in coming back to that! You know the questions that men of the world are always asking, “What shall we eat, what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed?” This is the worldings’ wretched trinity.

[John 6:32](#). *Then Jesus said to them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven;*

Moses did not give Israel the manna, God gave it. And it did not from heaven; that is, from the celestial sphere, in the sense in which Christ, the true Bread, came from heaven.

[John 6:33](#). *For the bread of God is he which cometh down from ‘heaven’, and giveth life unto the world.*

The Bread of God is Jesus Christ himself. The man who would feed so as to satisfy his spiritual nature, and live thereby, must feed upon Jesus Christ himself.

[John 6:34](#). *Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread.*

They did not understand the meaning of their own prayer. Sometimes, in our services, when people are very quickly convinced of sin, and fall to praying on a sudden, a wise conductor ought to enquire carefully whether it is not a mistaken prayer. I do not doubt that many of the cries and many of the professions made in enquiry-rooms are mistaken ones after all, and that we put down as the results of our work much of which we shall have cause to be ashamed when it comes to the time of testing.

[John 6:35](#). *And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger and he that believeth on me shall never*

thirst.

Hear this, poor starving people; the wants of your soul can all be met by Jesus Christ. If you have him, the hunger of your spirit shall be appeased, and the thirst of your heart shall be quenched.

[John 6:36](#). *But I said unto you. That ye also have seen me, and believe not.*

How the Saviour brings the truth home to these people, and he might do the same to some of you. You pray, "Give us this bread;" and he replies, "I have given it to you, yet you have not eaten it. You have seen me, you have heard me, you know me, and yet you do not believe on me." If Christ were to appear in this building at this moment, might he not say to many of you, "You have heard of me from your childhood, and you know all you need to know about me, yet you have not believed in me"? Would God it were not so with so many of you!

[John 6:37-40](#). *All that the Father giveth me shall come to me and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.*

This is the glorious gospel of the blessed God, — that everyone, who looks to Christ with the eye of faith, hath everlasting life, and though his body may die, yet even for that there is everlasting life too, for Christ will raise him up again at the last day, Oh, that you would all believe on Jesus Christ and so find that life eternal!

Verses 22-40

[John 6:22-26](#). *The day following, when the people which stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was none other boat there, save that one whereinto his disciples were entered, and that Jesus went not with his disciples into the boat, but that his disciples were gone away alone; (howbeit there came other boats from Tiberias nigh unto the place where they did eat bread, after that the Lord had given thanks) when the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there neither his disciples, they also took shipping, and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus. And when they had found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when*

camest thou hither? Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.

Mixed motives bring multitudes together. How true our Master was, how outspoken! He never tried to win a disciple by keeping back the truth; and often he spoke very plainly indeed, as on this occasion: “Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.”

[John 6:27](#). *Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.*

He seemed to say to them, “Do not come to me for bread and fish; I have given you that. Come for something better; come to me for spiritual food, food for your souls, food for eternity.” It is with that object that we should go to the house of God; not to listen to this preacher or that, but to hear the Word of God, that we may live thereby.

[John 6:28](#). *Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?*

“What are the best works that we can do? What are the most acceptable?” I wonder what they expected Christ to say. I am sure they did not look for the answer that they received.

[John 6:29](#). *Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.*

The greatest, the best, the most acceptable work in all the world is that you come and trust Christ. This saves you; nothing else will do so: “This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.”

[John 6:30-31](#). *They said therefore unto him, What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work? Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat.*

See how they came round to the old subject again, bread to eat. The Lord Jesus Christ may point them to something higher and better; but their carnal minds always return to that congenial topic, something to eat. Their stomach was lord of their heart.

[John 6:32](#). *Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.*

“That which will really feed you, and feed you for all eternity.” Moses could not give the people that bread; the Father only can give “the true bread from heaven.”

[John 6:33](#). *For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.*

“The bread of God is he.” What a strange expression, yet what a true one! The bread of heaven is Christ himself. You must come and take him to yourself, and trust him for your salvation, and in that way feed upon him, or you can never have the heavenly bread which both gives life and sustains life.

[John 6:34-39](#). *Then said they unto him, lord, evermore give us this bread. And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life. He that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me and believe not. All that the Father giveth me shall come to me, and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.*

See how the salvation of Christ reaches right to the end of all things. You and I may die; but though we lie a while in the grave, the salvation of Christ will preserve us, to raise us up again at the last day. There shall not be a bone nor a piece of a bone, of a true believer, left in the enemies’ land.

All Israel and all that belongs to Israel, shall come out of this Egypt, through the blood of the Lamb; not a hoof shall be left behind.

[John 6:40](#). *And this is the will of him that sent me that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.*

May all of us see the Son, and believe on him, that we may have everlasting life, and that he may raise us up at the last day, for his dear name’s sake!

Amen.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Psalms 89:1-37](#), And [John 6:22-40](#).

Verses 22-59

[John 6:22-24](#). *The day following, when the people which stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was none other boat there, save that one*

whereinto his disciples were entered, and that Jesus went not with his disciples into the boat, but that the disciples were gone away alone: (Howbeit there came other boats from Tiberias nigh unto the place where they did eat bread, after that the Lord had given thanks:) When the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, neither the disciples, they also took shipping, and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus.

Everything looked very favorable, did it not? These people put themselves to considerable trouble in order to get where the Saviour was; they were not satisfied to be away from him; they were “seeking for Jesus.”

[John 6:25-26](#). *And when they had found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither? Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me not because ye saw the miracles but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.*

He did not gratify their curiosity by telling them how or when he came there, for that was no concern of theirs. Neither is it the business of Christ’s preachers to spin ingenious theories about the gospel, or to tell pretty tales to amuse their hearers. Their business is to deal faithfully with men’s hearts and consciences as their Master did when he said to these people “Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles.” They said that at first, no doubt. Christ’s miracles dazzled them so they sought him in order to see more miracles wrought by him. This was not the highest motive for seeking the Saviour, but they had found a still lower one; they were now following him because they “did eat of the loaves and were filled.” Yet the Master did not reveal them, and thus he teaches us that it is better to follow him from the lowest motive than not to follow him at all. Perhaps some of us have been too severe upon certain people. We have said that they come to our place of worship out of mere curiosity. What if they do? It is well that they come at all, so let us not cut even the spider’s web that links a man in any sense with Christ. That web may grow into a thread, that thread into a cord, that cord into a cable and there may yet be an unbreakable union between that man and Christ. That which begins in an inferior way may lead to something higher and better. Still, it is wise to let people know that they are not deceiving Christ, even though they deceive themselves as to their motive in seeking him. So he said to them, —

[John 6:27](#). *Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.*

They laboured hard in order to get the bread that perisheth, so Christ made them devote their energies to a better object. This is a very extraordinary verse if we regard the letter of it, and not the spirit. Christ told these people not to labour for that which they could only get by labour: “Labour not for the meat which perisheth.” Yet few men get their daily bread or meat without labouring for it. And then Christ told them to labour for that which nobody ever does get by labouring: “Labour for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life.” This is an instance of how the mere letter of the Word killeth. We must take the spirit of it, and then we understand that what the Saviour meant was this: “Do not be spending all your energies to get that which will melt away when you get it; but spend your time and strength in seeking after that which will last through all time, and be yours to all eternity.”

[John 6:28](#). *Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?*

They wanted to do the greatest of all works; for, by “the works of God” they evidently meant the most important, the most sublime, the greatest of all works: “What shall we do in order to work such works as these?”

[John 6:29](#). *Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.*

This is a wonderful statement, which is just as true now as when Christ uttered it in Capernaum. The greatest and best work that any of you can do is to believe on Jesus Christ; though, in another sense, this is not a work at all, but ceasing from your own works, and resting in the finished work of Jesus Christ. But if any man would do that which is most acceptable to the thrice-holy God, let him believe on Jesus Christ whom God hath sent.

[John 6:30](#). *They said therefore unto him, what sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work?*

This was a shameful question to put to Christ when they had so recently been miraculously fed by him, and so had received the best sign of his divine power in the multiplication of the loaves and fishes.

[John 6:31-34](#). *Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, he gave them bread from Heaven to eat. Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven, but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread.*

This would have been a good prayer if they had understood the meaning of the Saviour's words; but, as it was, it was a blind prayer. They did not know what Jesus meant when he spoke of the bread of God, which cometh down from heaven. They were thinking about the bread that perisheth, the bread for the body, so they prayed blindly when they said, "Lord, evermore give us this bread." Do you not think that many a prayer which children are taught in their childhood, and which men and women continue to pray for years, may be as blind a prayer as this one was? They know not what they ask, and the question very naturally arises as to whether it is a prayer at all.

[John 6:35](#). *And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."*

"I will take away his need by removing his hunger; I will take away his pain by removing his thirst."

[John 6:36](#). *But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not.*

See, then, how little there was of advantage in the mere sight of Christ. Many seem to think that it must have been much easier for people to believe in Christ if they had actually seen him, but it was not so. There were multitudes that saw him, and saw his miracles, and even ate the bread which came from his wonder-working hand, yet they believed not. Faith does not come in that way, for it does not come by sight, but sight comes by faith. Seeing is not believing, but believing often is seeing; it opens the eyes so that they are able to see what before was hidden from them.

[John 6:37](#). *All that the Father giveth me shall come to me;*

God's own elect shall surely come to Christ; they shall all believe in him, and be saved by him.

[John 6:37](#). *And him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.*

"Whoever he is that comes, I will never reject him. Whoever he may be that accepts me, and believes in me, he is mine, and I will never cast him away from me."

[John 6:38-44](#). *For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day. The Jews then murmured at him,*

because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven. And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven? Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, murmur not among yourselves. No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.

“I did not expect that you would receive me; I did not imagine that you would believe me. You have not yet been drawn to me by the Father, so I knew that you would not come unto me.” But he who is drawn by the Father will come to Christ, and Christ tells us what will be his future lot: —

[John 6:44-46](#). *And I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me. Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father.*

He corrects the notion into which they might have fallen that they could ever see the Father as he himself had seen him. Into that vision none of us can ever enter, for there is a peculiar divine relationship between Jesus and the Father which we cannot know.

[John 6:47](#). *Verily, verily, I say unto you, —*

Jesus uttered this great truth with very special emphasis: “Verily, verily, I say unto you,” —

[John 6:47](#). *He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.*

That text is worthy to be printed in letters of gold, and then the letters would be far inferior to the message itself. If it be written on all your hearts by the Holy Spirit, you will not need any other sermon than this divine text: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.”

[John 6:48-51](#). *I am that bread of life. Your Fathers did eat manna in the wilderness and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.*

Here we have the doctrine of the great atoning sacrifice by which sin is put away, and that is not merely Christ incarnate, but Christ yielding up his life, dying in the room and place and stead of guilty sinners. That is the food, whereof, if any man eat, he shall live for ever.

[John 6:52](#). *The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat?*

These Jews were still stumbling at the letter of Christ's words; still in their blind carnality misunderstanding Christ.

[John 6:53-56](#). *Then Jesus said unto them, verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.*

Do not any of you interpret this teaching of Christ as the Jews did, after a carnal fashion, and fancy that we literally eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ when we come to the communion table. The Lord's supper was not instituted at the time that our Saviour spoke these words, and he was speaking of quite another matter, the spiritual reception of Christ, the real and true feeding by faith with our spirit upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

[John 6:57-59](#). *As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever. These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught it in Capernaum.*

Verses 25-51

These people had crossed the Sea of Galilee, and gone to Capernaum, "seeking for Jesus." It seemed a very hopeful sign that they should be willing to make such efforts to find Christ, but see how the Lord Jesus himself regarded it.

[John 6:25-26](#). *And when they had found him on other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither? Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek; me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.*

What very plain talk this is! Our Lord does not try to gain popularity by the concealment of truth, but he tells these people to their faces, "You are only following me because of what you get out of me;" "Oh!" some worldly-wise man would have said, "that is a very imprudent speech; it will drive the people away." Just so; and Christ seemed to say, on more than one occasion, "If people will be driven away by the truth. let them be driven

away.” John the Baptist had declared that Christ; had his fan in his hand, and that he would thoroughly purge his floor; and if that floor is to be purged, there must be a driving away of the chaff Our Lord’s example should teach us to speak in his name nothing less and nothing more than the truth in all love and kindness. After thus pointing out the true motive which made the people seek him, our Saviour uttered a very singular paradox: —

[John 6:27](#). *Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.*

Is it not strange that Christ says, “Labour not for the very thing which you cannot get without labouring for it,” and then he says, “Labour for that which you cannot get by labouring for it”? He virtually tells us that it is so, by adding the words, “which the Son of man shall give unto you,” plainly proving that it does not come as the result of human labour, but as the free gift of the Son of God. He that is wise will spell out the meaning of the paradox; but he that is blind will stumble over the letter of it, and not discern the spiritual interpretation.

[John 6:28](#). *Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?*

“We want to do the best works, the noblest works, the most acceptable works in all the world; tell us what we: should do in order to perform a Godlike work.”

[John 6:29](#). *Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, “The highest and best work which you can accomplish is”*

[John 6:29](#). *That ye believe on him whom he hath sent.*

Faith is the noblest of the graces; it is the very essence of true worship; it contains within itself the germs of all excellence; and the man who believes in Christ has done that which is more pleasing to God than anything else in all the world.

[John 6:30-31](#). *They said therefore unto him, What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work? Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from, heaven to eat.*

Do you see the drift of their talk? They are still looking after the loaves and fishes; and, therefore, whatever Christ may say, they turn the discourse round that way. If they can get from Christ something to eat, they will believe in him; what groveling, earth-bound creatures they were!

[John 6:32-33](#). *Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.*

“The best and noblest bread,— the bread which has Deity in it,— the bread which can feed your souls, and sustain you with everlasting life, ‘the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.’”

[John 6:34](#). *Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread.*

They said this, not knowing what they said, and not understanding what he meant. Bread for the body was all that they wanted; their cry was, “Give us bread, and we are contempt;” they had no spiritual appetite for Christ, “the bread of God.”

[John 6:35-36](#). *And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not.*

These were the very people whom he had fed on the other side of the sea; yet they were craving for more. That kind of bread cannot stay their hunger for long. They had not received him as their Saviour, else they would have been well content with him, and would have asked for nothing more.

[John 6:37-39](#). *All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.*

Christ will not lose one whom the Father gave him, nay nor any part of one. He will not lose the body of any one of his people any more than he will lose the soul of one.

[John 6:40](#). *And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.*

Christ will never have finished his work upon believers till he has raised their bodies from the grave, and glorified them like his own resurrection body. He will never cease from the work which he has commenced on any one of his people till he has laid the topstone in the glorious perfections of heaven; and this truth is: the joy of our hearts even now.

[John 6:41](#). *The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven.*

They muttered, murmured, whispered, growled amongst themselves at this saying of Christ.

[John 6:42](#). *And they said, Is not this Jesus, the, son, of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven?*

This is just the way with men, they judge by outward appearances; and if the gospel comes to them as a thing beloved of poor men, if it be preached with much eloquence, if the service be without; the attractions of sweet; music or of gaudy attire, straightway they say there can be nothing in it. O blind bats, when God veils himself in human flesh, can it be otherwise?

[John 6:43](#). *Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves.*

“I never thought you would believe in me; I never imagined that I should win your confidence.”

[John 6:44](#). *No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him. —*

“You are not drawn unto me; therefore it is clear that you are not the subjects of divine grace. You think you are judging me, but in so doing you are really judging and condemning yourselves.” Whenever men sit in judgment on the gospel, they soon let us know what kind of spirit possesses them. It is not Christ who is on his trial, it is they themselves; and when they rail at him, they do but prove that the grace of the Father has never drawn them to him: “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him:” —

[John 6:44-46](#). *And I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the father, cometh unto me. Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father.*

“Do not suppose that, even when you are taught of God, you will know the Father as I know him, or see him as I have seen him.” That divine glance at, Deity is not for us.

[John 6:47](#). *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.*

This was how our Lord spoke straight to the face of those who had derided him, and said, “Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know ?” With the strongest asseveration which he was in the habit of using, he says, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life.”

[John 6:48-51](#). *I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh, down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.*

Verses 30-45

[John 6:30-32](#). *They said therefore unto him, What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work? Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat. Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.*

Jesus did not say to them, “I gave that bread to your fathers in the wilderness,” as he might truly have said. It was not Moses who fed their fathers in the wilderness, it was God who had fed them, and if they would but think, they would clearly see that it was so. But the Master took them on to another tack, and led their thoughts to a higher topic.

[John 6:33-34](#). *For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread.*

Not knowing the meaning of their own request.

[John 6:35-39](#). *And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not. All that the Father giveth me shall come to me, and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father’s will —*

Many want to pry between the closed leaves of God’s secret purposes, to see what his will is. Now this is it: “This is the Father’s will” —

[John 6:39-44](#). *Which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day. The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven. And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know! how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven; Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves. No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him:*

Note how that doctrine of sovereign grace is used by Christ. He seems to wave it, like a lighted torch, in the faces of his adversaries, as if he said to them, "I did not expect you to understand me; I did not expect you to receive me. Do not think that you surprise me by your action. Imagine not that you frustrate my eternal purposes by rejecting me. I knew that you would not receive me; and that, as you are, you could not come to me, for 'no man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.'"

[John 6:44-45](#). *And I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.*

May we so hear, and so learn of the Father, that we may come to Jesus Christ!

This exposition consisted of readings from [John 6:1-14](#); [John 6:30-45](#).

Verses 41-65

[John 6:41](#). *The Jews then murmured at him, —*

That is, at the Christ, —

[John 6:41-42](#). *Because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven. And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven?*

They did know his mother; but they made a mistake, which may have seemed a very slight one to them, when they said that they knew his father. Yet that is how nearly all great errors spring from some slight and apparently trivial addition to the truth. They did know Mary, but they did not know that Jehovah was the Father of the Christ.

[John 6:43-44](#). *Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves, No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day,*

Note the unflinching boldness of Christ. He did not say to these people, “Well, you have some cause for murmuring, and I will explain the matter to you.” On the contrary, he faced them with the doctrine of sovereign grace, and told them that he did not expect them to understand him, for they could not do so except the Father, who had sent him, should draw their hearts towards him.

[John 6:45](#). *It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.*

So, in street, he said to them, “You have not been taught of God; the Father has never drawn you, else would you have received me.” So does the brave Champion thrust the naked sword of truth into their very souls.

[John 6:46-47](#). *Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.*

Let me read those precious words again, catch at them, you timid and trembling ones: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath — now, in present possession, — “everlasting life.”

[John 6:48-49](#). *I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead.*

He does not say, “Our fathers.” He comes out, as it were, as much from the Jews as from the Gentile ungodly world, and he says, “Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead.”

[John 6:50-51](#). *This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat there, and not die. I am the living bread —*

Bread that contains life within itself, and is therefore most potent to sustain a life like itself: “I am the living bread” —

[John 6:51-52](#). *Which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat?*

I wonder if they perceived that this declaration of Christ involved his death, for he did not speak of giving them his living body, but his “flesh.” There are some who find their main comfort in the Incarnation of Christ; and,

certainly, that is a very comforting truth; but, without the death of Christ, it affords no nourishment for the soul. Atonement, atonement, —

there is the kernel of the whole matter. Christ must die, and then he can give us his flesh to eat.

[John 6:53-54](#). *Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.*

His soul shall live; his spirit shall never die; and though his body shall die, the force of the eternal life within the man shall quicken even his mortal body into an immortality like that of his spirit.

[John 6:55-60](#). *For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live forever. These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum. Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it?*

And a hard saying it really is until we are instructed of the Spirit of God to understand it. The Papist has made it into a gross and carnal saying, teaching men that they really, and actually, and corporeally, eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ, which is horrible blasphemy, and nothing less. But they who are taught of God see the inward meaning of the truth peeping up from behind the letter, and know what it is to receive into their hearts, though not into their bodies, — into their thoughts, though not into their mouths, — the very body and blood of Christ.

[John 6:61-63](#). *When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before? It is the spirit that quickeneth;*

—
The inward, Spiritual meaning gives life to the Word, and life to us also: “It is the spirit that quickeneth;” —

[John 6:63](#). *The flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.*

They are not carnal; they are not gross they have in them an inner sense which is full of life and spirit.

[John 6:64-65](#). *But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray*

him. And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.

“No man “ — no, not even an apostle, — not the one who ate bread with Christ, and was his familiar friend, — not even he could come without being drawn by God. And he did not come to Christ; in the sense in which our Lord used the Word, Judas never really came to him, but perished in his sin. The Father must draw us with cords divine, or else to the Son we shall never come.

Verses 41-66

[John 6:41-44](#). *The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven. And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven? Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves. No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him; and I will raise him up at the last day.*

Christ never retracted a truth or diminished its force because it was rejected, but he rather seemed to say, “You refused this truth. I knew you would. You need not murmur: you are none of mine. If you had been, the Father would have drawn you. You will not come. So are you set against truth that you cannot see it. So blind are your eyes that you do not behold it. No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him.”

[John 6:45](#). *It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.*

Beware, dear friends, of any learning Christ, except by divine teaching, for what we learn merely from the lips of our fellow-men will never be vitally learnt or really understood. We must be all taught of God; and so we shall be if, indeed, we be among these whom the Father draws towards Christ. All his teachings draw that way, and when they are taught into the inner man — not no much to the mind as to the soul and heart then do we know the truth indeed.

[John 6:46-47](#). *Not that any man hath seen the Father save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.*

One of the richest passages surely of all holy Scripture. It is all marrow and fatness, but here you seem to have the quintessence. We have eternal life if we are believers not shall have it, but have it now. We have a life

which is eternal. It is idle to talk of our losing it, because it would not be eternal if we did. We have a life within us which can by no possibility ever die, but must live on for ever. “He that believeth on me though he hath many tremblings — though he may be the subject of many infirmities, yet he that believeth on me hath everlasting life.” O my soul, exult in that glorious truth. Thou hast everlasting life as surely as thou hast faith in Christ.

[John 6:48](#) *I am that bread of life.*

The food on which that everlasting life lives — living bread for living souls.

O brethren, the dead letter is of no use to us. All the truth in the world, unto - “it be quickening, cannot feed our quickened natures. It in incarnate truth, even Christ that we must feed upon. “I am that bread of life.”

[John 6:49-50](#) *Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die.*

For that manna of theirs was corruptible. We read that it bred worms and stank, and though it was an angels’ food for a time, yet it was but temporary. It only fed a temporary life, and, like that life, it passed away. But Jesus Christ is incorruptible, and they that live on him live on incorruptible food, which nourishes the incorruptible seed which liveth and abideth for ever.

[John 6:51-52](#). *I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat?*

They misunderstood the Master. They tarried in the letter, and did not reach to the spirit — the meaning, and that letter killed them, for “the letter killeth: the spirit giveth life.” The inward meaning is that on which the Soul feeds. And so the unhappy Humanist believes that he can literally eat the flesh of Christ, which, if it were true, were monstrous and could be of no service to him. Of what value is one flesh more than another flesh, if it is carnally to be considered? He loses the inner meaning. Blessed are they who are drawn of the Father and taught of the Lord — who spy out what is, after all, so little concealed beneath the thin veil of the metaphor.

[John 6:53](#). *Then Jesus said unto them,*

What? Do you think he explained it? No, he did not explain to these Jews. They were given up to judicial blindness. They had so long refused to see, that now they must not see, for on them was come the curse that, seeing they should not see, and hearing they should not perceive. Oh! how terrible this is when this falls on a man, and I think I know some upon whom it must have fallen. They have indulged the philosophical vein, always spiritualizing and cutting out the soul of truth, and they are given up to spiritualizing as many of the great German philosophers evidently have been, who cannot now receive a plain statement, however simple be the words, but, from their natural habit of continually twisting and tearing to pieces, they do so with everything; and a man may be an unbeliever so long that it will never be given to him to be a believer again. God grant we may never make scales for our own eyes, and so plug up the soul's mental vision with the miry clay of sin, that henceforth, even though the eternal Christ flash the divine truth into our eyes, we shall only be dazzled by it into a greater darkness. So it was with these men. Jesus did not explain to them. He just repeated the truth more emphatically, and made it more offensive to them than before. May a preacher sometimes be offensive in his preaching? He must be. He must sometimes feel that such a truth will only move men's wrath if he preach it. Nevertheless, we are not to put truth to the verdict of a jury; neither is truth to be submitted to what is called the "inner consciousness" of a set of sinners whose consciousness is all defiled. As well make a company of highwaymen a jury about theft, as make unconverted men to be a jury about what is truth. It cannot be. Christ does not condescend to that. He tells them the truth more fully and more offensively than before.

[John 6:53](#). *Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood,*

Which he had not said before, and was more startling still.

[John 6:53-57](#). *Ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life: and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.*

You see here three living persons — the living Father, and the living Son, and the living believer, and, truly, these three live one life, which

comes from the Father by the Son into us, and we are made partakers of the divine nature, according to the apostle's wondrous language, "having escaped the Corruption which is in the world through lust." This is a great mystery which only he understands who feels it within himself.

[John 6:58-60](#). *This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever. These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum. Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying: who can hear it.*

It was not merely the blinded Jews, but even his disciples who did not understand. Now, brethren, the test of a true disciple of Christ is that he is willing to believe what he does not understand. If you will only follow Christ's words as far as you can comprehend them, the spirit of discipleship is not in you. You are the disciple of your own understanding. Christ is not master, but your judgment is master. But he that submits himself to the words of Christ often finds it profitable not to understand. Say you so? How is that? It is profitable to feel that we have come to the end of our own understanding. I have no doubt that a wise father's talk is good to his children, even though the child does not as yet understand him. He will lay it up in his memory: he will understand one of these days, but the child — the true child heart — says, "I believe thee, father, though thou dost puzzle me. Thou hast given me a paradox which I cannot grasp, but I believe thee: thou art true." We do say that of Christ; and may we have evermore that spirit of a little child, without which we cannot receive the Kingdom of God. The other spirit is very rife in the world — the spirit that maketh man, virtually, his own teacher. And, truly, I wonder not at it, because there was originally so much of submission of the judgment to the dictum of the church, or the dictum of the Pope, which is degrading, but to submit to Jesus and to his teaching — that is ennobling. May we have the same sacredly blind faith with regard to Christ which some have had to human authority, believing everything he speaks. But some of these disciples did not so.

[John 6:61-62](#). *When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?*

What will you say then?

[John 6:63](#). *It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.*

“You are not to take them as if they were flesh, and understand them carnally. They do but embody my words do but embody a living soul of meaning, which it will be for you to receive if you are indeed quickened, and then it will quicken you, and you will understand me, and live in me.”

[John 6:64](#). *But there are some of you that believe not.*

And if they do not believe, then they miss the whole soul of the thing.

[John 6:64-65](#). *For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.*

No, not even though he were an apostle — though he came so near to Christ as to pray to him and hear his secret and most private communications, and to see his singular and special miracles yet he would not understand, except the Father gave it as a special act of grace.

[John 6:66](#). *From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.*

Did he want them? I trow not He desired not to have around him a mass of chaff, but the pure winnowed corn. Consequently he used his own word as the winnowing fan. And I believe, brothers and sisters, that wherever Christ is faithfully preached, preaching is the best form of church discipline.

Somehow or other, carnal minds get weary of it, and they go away, and those that have not a longing and a love for the truth drop off of themselves; so they walk no more with him.

Verses 41-71

[John 6:41](#). *The Jews then murmured at him, —*

That is, at our blessed Lord: “The Jews then murmured at him,” —

[John 6:41-42](#). *Because he said, I am the bread which came down from heavens. And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven!*

There are always some who complain that the gospel is “too commonplace, too well-known.” They already know all that is to be known about it, just as these people knew the mother and father of our Lord Jesus. How could he, who was the son of the carpenter, have come down from heaven? But this ought to have commended him to them that though he was

divine, he became so truly human, and so perfectly took upon himself our nature as to be the son of Joseph, — one whose father and mother they knew; and ought we not to be glad of a gospel plain enough for a child to grasp, simple enough for the most ignorant to be saved by it? Let us not seek after signs and mysteries, but graciously accept the gospel which the Lord himself gives us.

[John 6:43-44](#). *Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves. No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and will raise him up at the last day.*

This was high ground for Christ to take; it was as much as to say, “You need not murmur; I did not expect that you would believe in me. I know that human nature is such that, without a divine work upon the heart, man cannot come to me, and will not believe in me. I am not disappointed, or deceived, when you murmur among yourselves, ‘No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.’”;

[John 6:45](#). *It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.*

Nobody else will come to Christ; there is no real Christian in the world but is of God’s making. A Christian is a sacred thing, the Holy Ghost has made him so. It takes as much of God’s omnipotence to make a believer as to make a world; and only he that created the heavens and the earth can create even as much as a grain of true faith in the heart of man.

[John 6:46](#). *Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father.*

The Divine Son hath seen the Father; you and I are to believe, we cannot see as yet.

[John 6:47](#). *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.*

He has it even now in possession; a life that can never die out is in the breast of every man who believes in Christ. Oh, what a joy is this!

[John 6:48](#). *I am that bread of life.*

Jesus is that bread which feeds the spiritual life, and sustains the everlasting life.

[John 6:49-50](#). *Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die.*

The bread that feeds the undying life is Christ Jesus himself, whom we do spiritually feed upon, and who is the nourishment of our souls.

[John 6:51](#). *I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.*

Christ — God incarnate — is the nourishment of faith, the spiritual food of the everlasting life. The new life which God puts into us is not natural, so as to be fed upon natural food, like bread and meat; but it is spiritual, and it must live upon spiritual food. That food is nothing less than Christ Jesus himself.

[John 6:52-56](#). *The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.*

These Jews would not understand Christ when he spoke very plainly. He did not therefore retract a single word that he had said, but as the first light had dazzled them, — and willingly were they dazzled by it, — he turned the lantern full upon their faces, and made them blind, for the excessive light of the explanation was too much for them. It was not Christ's intent to save them; he was making the light itself to be blindness to them, because they had already refused him, and now the time was come when the heart of these people must be made yet more gross, that they should not see with their eyes, or hear with their ears. May the Lord never give us up to such a fate as that! It is a dreadful thing when the light of the gospel becomes the instrument of blinding men, and it does so still After a certain degree of willful rejection of it, that which would have been a savor of life unto life can be turned into a savor of death unto death by men's closing their hearts against it. Yet I wonder and am astonished at our Lord and Master's course of proceeding, that here, when the men do not and will not see, he does but speak the truth the more boldly. Let no man think that Jesus was here alluding to the eating of the bread and drinking of the wine in the Lord's supper; that ordinance was not instituted at that time, and there could be no allusion to what did not then exist. It is quite in another sense, in a high spiritual sense, that our mind feeds upon the flesh and blood of Christ. That

is to say, the fact that God was made flesh, — the fact that Christ died for sin, — these are the food of our souls, and thereon our faith grows, and our spirit is strengthened.

[John 6:57-58](#). *As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.*

This is spiritual feeding upon spiritual truth.

[John 6:59-62](#). *These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum. Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it? When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?*

Let our Master teach us what he pleases, nothing ought to offend a disciple of Christ. It is ours to sit at his feet, and receive all his words without cavilling. But if we do not believe what he tells us upon some elementary points, what should we do if he were to reveal something more to us, and lead us into the higher and deeper doctrines of his Word?

[John 6:63](#). *It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing:*

That is to say, it is the meaning of Christ's words that gives life, not the words themselves; and if we stumble at the letter, and begin to ask, "How can we eat the flesh of Christ?" taking that expression literally, it will kill us. We need to get into the spirit of what he says, the true spiritual meaning of it, for that is where the life lies.

[John 6:63-64](#). *The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. But there are some of you that believe not.*

Could that be truly said of any here? "There are some of you that believe not." If so, you know what becomes of unbelievers; you certainly cannot attain the blessings promised to faith. May God grant that, ere this day is quite over, there may not be left one among you that believes not!

[John 6:64-66](#). *For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father. From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.*

So it seems that a man may be recognized as a disciple of Christ, and yet he may go back, and walk no more with him. Oh, that we may be real

disciples — disciples indeed! Oh, that we may be part and parcel of Christ, true branches of the true Vine, living members of the living body of Christ!

[John 6:67](#). *Then said Jesus unto the twelve,-The choice and pick of all his followers:*

“Then said Jesus unto the twelve,” —

[John 6:67-68](#). *Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter —*

Who was the ready tongue of the apostles: “Then Simon Peter” —

[John 6:68](#). *Answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.*

That was a very conclusive way of answering one question by another: “Will ye also go away?” “Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.” Brother, sister, if we wandered from Christ, where could we go? And how can we leave him when he has the words of eternal life?

[John 6:69-71](#). *And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God. Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? He spoke of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon : for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve.*

[JOHN CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 7

Verses 1-13

[John 7:1-5](#). *After these things Jesus walked in Galilee: for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him. Now the Jews’ feast of tabernacles was at hand. His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judaea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest. For there is no man that doeth anything in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, show thyself to the world. For neither did his brethren believe in him.*

It is a very painful truth, that those who were the near relations of the Saviour were not believers in his divine mission; — at any rate, at first. He was truly a prophet who was without honour in his own country, and among his own kindred; and, on this occasion, they half taunted him concerning his claims. In effect, they said to him, “If indeed you are a prophet, get out into the world, and prove it. We hear that you profess to work miracles, then, why do you hide yourself away in this country place down here in Galilee?”

Begone to Jerusalem, and perform your wonders before the crowds in the capital;” — half hoping, perhaps, that his claims might prove to be true, yet not, at that time, at any rate, being themselves willing to become his disciples. See how perverse is the human heart. These men might even live in close companionship with Christ, and even be nearly related to him after the flesh, and yet not be converted to him. So the best of men need not wonder if they have unconverted relations, and we may not feel certain that there is any fault to be found in their example if others are not converted by it; for, certainly, there was no fault in the example of Christ, yet “neither did his brethren believe in him.” Mark, also, that no earthly relationship is of any avail in the kingdom of heaven: “for neither did his brethren believe in him.” So that, although I may be the child of godly parents, and one born of a long line of saints, yet I am, because of that, no nearer to the kingdom unless I become myself a believer in Christ. Remember what Peter said on the day of Pentecost; you have often heard that passage of Scripture half-quoted, let me quote the whole of it to you; “For the promise is unto you, and to your children.” If you stop there, you do not get the true sense of it. “The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.” Therefore, that text teaches that there is no distinction between the children of believers and any other children. We must be called by the grace of God like the far-off ones, or else we shall not inherit eternal life.

[John 7:6-8](#). *Then Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come: but your time is alway ready. The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil. Go ye up unto this feast: I go not up yet unto this feast; for my time is not yet full come.*

Our Lord Jesus Christ did everything, as it were, by the clock. His life was an orderly one; it was all arranged in the eternal purpose of God. The very day in which he should go up to Jerusalem was marked down, and he took care that he did not go before the right time. Now, half the power of: a Christian life depends upon its being timely. The bringing forth of fruit in due season is one of the marks of the tree planted by the rivers of water; and one of the signs of the Son of man, who delighted in the law of the Lord, was that he said, “My time is not yet full come.” When it did come, then he went.

[John 7:9-10](#). *When he had said these words unto them, he abode still in Galilee. But when his brethren were gone up, then went he also up unto the*

feast, not openly, but as it were in secret.

Not with the great caravan that traveled, sometimes, with tens of thousands of people together going up to the feast, but with his own disciples in a quieter way.

[John 7:11-13](#). *Then the Jews sought him at the feast, and said, Where is he? And there was much murmuring among the people concerning him: for some said, He is a good man: others said, Nay; but he deceiveth the people.*

Howbeit no man spake openly of him for fear of the Jews. There was a general fear of violence that would come upon any who professed themselves to be his followers.

Now turn to Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews, the fifth chapter.

This exposition consisted of readings from [John 7:1-13](#); and Hebrews 5.

Verses 14-53

[John 7:14](#). *Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught.*

He was no coward, so he boldly showed himself in the midst of the throng in the temple.

[John 7:15](#). *And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?*

Or, "How knoweth he the Scriptures? How has he come to be an instructed man, having never learned of the Rabbis? He has never passed through our schools of learning, so what can he know?"

[John 7:16](#). *Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.*

"I am not the inventor of what I say; I am but a messenger, delivering the message of him that sent me."

[John 7:17](#). *If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.*

Any man, who is seeking after that which is right, and labouring to do that which is right, is a good judge of the truth. A practical life of godliness makes a man a far better critic as to what truth is than all the learning of the schools can do.

[John 7:18](#). *He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him.*

If you ever hear a man speaking about the priesthood, meaning himself and his brethren; and about the Church, again meaning himself and his

brethren; and about the sacraments, meaning certain performances by himself and his brethren; you may know at once that God did not send him. But he who speaks to the glory of God, and does not say, “Behold me; “but, “Behold the Lamb of God,” he it is whom God has sent.

[John 7:19](#). *Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law? Why go ye about to kill me?*

“Did not Moses say, ‘Thou shalt not kill’? Then, you do not keep his law, though you profess such reverence for him, for, if you did, you would not go about to kill me.”

[John 7:20-21](#). *The people answered and said, Thou hast a devil: who goeth about to kill thee? Jesus answered and said unto them, I have done one work, and ye all marvel.*

“I did it on the Sabbath day, and you are all stumbling at that.”

[John 7:22-23](#). *Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision; (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers;) and ye on the sabbath day circumcise a man. If a man on the sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath day?*

Surely, there was never a more triumphant answer than that.

[John 7:24-25](#). *Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment. Then said some of them of Jerusalem, Is not this he, whom they seek to kill?*

Perhaps some of the same people who had asked Christ, “Who goeth about to kill thee?” now enquired, “Is not this he, whom they seek to kill?”

[John 7:26-27](#). *But, lo, he speaketh boldly, and they say nothing unto him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ? Howbeit we know this man whence he is but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is.*

They had a notion—perhaps derived from that passage in Isaiah, “who shall declare his generation? “—that the birth of Christ would be hidden in mystery. At any rate, there was some cloudy idea floating about that it would be concealed.

[John 7:28](#). *Then cried Jesus in the temple as he taught, saying, Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am:*

“And yet you do not know me.”

[John 7:28-30](#). *And I am not come of myself, but he that sent me is true, whom ye know not. But I know him: for I am from him, and he hath sent me.*

Then they sought to take him: but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come.

Something seemed to hold them back. Enraged as they were against him, a mysterious and mighty awe was upon them, so that they dared not touch him.

[John 7:31-33](#). *And many of the people believed on him, and said, When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done? The Pharisees heard that the people murmured such things concerning him; and the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take him. Then said Jesus unto them, —*

As they came to take him;—perhaps to the very officers sent by the Pharisees, Jesus said,—

[John 7:33](#). *Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto him that sent me.*

“You may well let me alone now, for it will only be a little while, and then I shall be delivered into your hands, and you will no more be troubled with me.”

[John 7:34-35](#). *Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come. Then said the Jews among themselves, Whither will he go, that we shall not find him? will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles?*

That was always their fear. “Is he going to the Greeks? Will he be a teacher to them? Will he try to introduce them into the mysteries of our faith?”

[John 7:36-37](#). *What manner of saying is this that he said, Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come? In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried,—*

I think I see him standing up in the midst of the great throng. That congregation would soon be scattered, never to come together again; so he stood up in the most prominent place he could find, and, notwithstanding all their anger, and their desire to kill him, he cried,—

[John 7:37-38](#). *Saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly—*

Or, “out of the very midst of him”

[John 7:38](#). *Shall flow rivers of living water.*

What a glorious gospel sermon that was! It comes to us down through the ages, and is as true now as when Jesus spake it. Ho, thirsty ones, come

ye to him, and drink; and he will slake your thirst, and create in you a well of living water which shall bubble up for ever and ever.

[John 7:39-40](#). *(But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.) Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet.*

The Prophet about whom Moses spoke.

[John 7:41](#). *Others said, This is the Christ.*

The Messiah.

[John 7:41-42](#). *But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?*

This was blessed testimony even out of the mouth of Christ's enemies. They objected against Christ what was indeed the fact, for he did come of the seed of David, and from the town of Bethlehem. There was he born; and though they called him the Nazarene,—and he refused not the title,—though over his head Pilate wrote, “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews,” yet is he the Son of David, and his birthplace was at Bethlehem, though some of them knew it not.

[John 7:43-44](#). *So there was a division among the people because of him. And some of them would have taken him; but no man laid hands on him.*

He was immortal till his work was done. The hour for his death had not yet struck, and he must live on till the appointed time.

[John 7:45-46](#). *Then came the officers to the chief priests and Pharisees; and they said unto them, Why have ye not brought him? The officers answered, Never man spake like this man.*

The charm of his eloquence, the dignity of his person, his awe-inspiring demeanour, and a singular something,—they knew not what,—that Divinity that doth hedge about such a King as he was,—restrained their hands. They said, “Never man spake like this man.”

[John 7:47](#). *Then answered them the Pharisees, Are ye also deceived?*

“You sheriffs’ officers are generally hard-hearted enough; are you also deceived?”

[John 7:48](#). *Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?*

This was as much as to say, “If we have not believed on him,—we who are the great dons of the nation,—the rulers and the Pharisees,—why, then, there cannot be anything in his claims. Just as some people seem to think

that, unless there is a lord in a Society, unless there is an honourable somebody or other in the chair, there is nothing in it.

[John 7:49](#). *But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed.*

They regarded the poor, common people as ignorant and accursed, whereas they, probably, knew as much about the law and the real spirit of it as these learned teachers did.

[John 7:50](#). *Nicodemus saith unto them, (he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them,)*

Being a member of the council,—

[John 7:51](#). *Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?*

He only asked a question, that was all; and, timid Christian, if you are placed where you cannot say much for Christ, if you have too great a fear upon you to vindicate your Master at any considerable length, yet say what you can; and, perhaps, the simple asking of a question may suffice to defend him. Nicodemus did but rise, and ask, “Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?”

[John 7:52](#). *They answered and said unto him, Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.*

Which was a lie, for prophets had come out of Galilee. Still, they denied it; and they were indignant at having such a question put to them by Nicodemus.

[John 7:53](#). *And every man went unto his own house.*

It was like a bombshell exploding in the midst of them; and often, a few brave words dropped into the midst of an assembly of bad men will explode among them, and scatter them hither and thither. Nicodemus had accomplished what, perhaps, he thought he should never do. He was indeed like his name on that occasion,—one of the conquering people,—for “every man went unto his own house.” Nicodemus had scattered them all by his startling question. May each of us as bravely witness for Christ as we have opportunity!

Verse 30

[John 7:30-31](#). *Then they sought to take him: but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come. And many of the people believed on him, and said, When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?*

Well might they ask that question, for Jesus had wrought such marvellous miracles that they could not imagine anything greater. Surely this must be the Christ; or if he were not, when the Christ did come could he and would he do any greater miracles than this man had done?

[John 7:32](#). *The Pharisees heard that the people murmured such things concerning him; —*

Whispered these things, afraid to speak out boldly because of the Pharisees, and therefore they quietly said it among themselves, and, after all, there is no fire more to be dreaded than a smouldering fire.

[John 7:32-33](#). *And the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take him. Then said Jesus unto them, Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto him that sent me.*

That was a blessed way for Christ to describe his return to the heavenly world: “I go unto him that sent me.” Possibly he said this to the very men who were sent to take him.

[John 7:34](#). *Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come.*

No officers can arrest him now that he has gone up into his Father’s glory; there is no fear of any of them being there to catch him in his speech, or to drag him before the ecclesiastical and secular judges, as they did when he was here;

[John 7:35-36](#). *Then said the Jews among themselves, “Whither will he go, that we shall not find him? will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles? What manner of saying is this; that he said, Ye shall seek me and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come?”*

They appear to have had some intimation of that glorious love of Christ which was not to be confined within the bounds of the Jewish nation, yet they could not or would not understand his words.

[John 7:37](#). *In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, —*

Shouted, spoke with all his might; and he stood, although he usually sat to deliver his message. But now, as if his whole being was roused to it utmost energy, on account of the last day of the gathering having come, when perhaps the people would go home, and he would be unable thus to speak with them again, “Jesus stood and cried,” —

[John 7:37](#). *Saying, “If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.*

O blessed invitation, how sweet it should be to every thirsty soul! “If any man” — prince or pauper, “any man” — moral or utterly debauched, “if any man thirst, let him come unto me,” — not to ordinances, nor to human priests, “let him come unto me, and drink,” as much as he will “without money, and without price.”

[John 7:38](#). *He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.*

He will not only drink enough to satisfy his own thirst, but he will himself become a fountain, streams of grace shall be communicated to his fellow-men through him.

[John 7:39](#). *(But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)*

He was not given then; but later, on the day of Pentecost, he was given, and he has never been withdrawn.

[John 7:40-43](#). *Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet. Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was? So there was a division among the people because of him.*

It is still true that Christ is a cause of division, as he himself foretold that he would be.

[John 7:44](#). *And some of them would have taken him but no man laid hands on him.*

In the 30th verse of this chapter, and in the 20th verse of the next chapter, we are told why they did not take him: “His hour was not yet come.” And, like their Lord, saints are immortal till their work is done.

[John 7:45-48](#). *Then came the officers to the chief priest and Pharisees; and they said unto them, Why have ye not brought him? The officers answered, Never man spake like this man. Then answered them the Pharisees, Are ye also deceived? Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?*

They professed to be the spiritual leaders of the nation, and expected all to follow them.

[John 7:49-51](#). *But the people who knoweth not the law are cursed. Nicodemus saith unto them, (he that came to Jesus by night, being one of*

those,) *Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?*

Nicodemus asked a simple question, but they could not answer it without convicting themselves of disobeying that very law of which they pretended to be the exponents.

[John 7:52-53](#). *They answered and said unto him Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet. And every man went unto his own house.*

[John 8:1](#). *Jesus went unto the mount of Olives.*

Verse 53

[John 7:53](#). *And every man went unto his own house.*

[John 8:1](#). *Jesus went unto the mount of Olives.*

That is, as every man went to his own house to rest, so Jesus found rest in secret prayer on the Mount of Olives. There is a very striking contrast here; it is a pity to have brought the dividing saw right through the middle of such charming consecutive sentences.

[John 8:2](#). *And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them.*

That is always the posture in the East; the teachers sit, and the hearers stand. We may have to try that plan one of these days; it might be better for me, and also for you. There might be less drowsiness, perhaps, if the congregation had to stand to listen to the preacher's message.

[John 8:3-4](#). *And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, they say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act.*

They did this only to entangle the Saviour,— not because they wanted to learn anything of him, or to do this woman any good, or even to vindicate morality; but it was simply an effort to entrap him.

[John 8:5-6](#). *Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him.*

They could accuse him either way. If he sanctioned their stoning the woman, they would charge him with violating the Roman law; but if he said that she should not be stoned, then they would say that he differed from Moses, and set aside the law of God.

[John 8:6-7](#). *But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let Him first cast a stone at her.*

That sentence must have flashed like a drawn sword, keen as a razor, through the very midst of them. Here were men who had probably been living in abominable sin, yet they had brought this poor sinful woman to Jesus, and laid this accusation against her.

[John 8:8](#). *And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground.*

After he had fired that one red-hot shot, he waited until it had produced its due effect.

[John 8:9](#). *And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last; and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.*

They left her alone with Jesus in the midst of the place that the guilty crowd had forsaken in silent shame.

[John 8:10-11](#). *When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.*

He condemned the sin, his own pure and holy life was the best condemnation of that; but, as for the sinner, he had not come to condemn, but to forgive. His own declaration was, “The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

This exposition consisted of readings from [John 7:53](#); and [John 8:1-11](#).

[JOHN CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 8

Verses 12-39

[John 8:12-13](#). *Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. The Pharisees —*

These wasps were always stinging him; when he drove them away once, they quickly returned to attack him again: “The Pharisees” —

[John 8:13-15](#). *Therefore said unto him, Thou bearest record of thyself; thy record is not true. Jesus answered and said unto them; Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true: for I know whence I came, and whither I go; but ye cannot tell whence I come, and whither go. Ye judge after the flesh; I judge no man.*

He did not come for that purpose the first time; he will come, a second time, to judge all mankind.

[John 8:16](#). *And yet if I judge, my judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me.*

You see, brethren, how our Lord Jesus claimed to be God, for he put himself here in such a connection with God as would be quite inconsistent for any mere man. This is what Paul meant when he said that Christ “thought it not robbery to be equal with God,” he thought it ‘not a prize to be grasped, for it was already his.

[John 8:17-18](#). *It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true. I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me.*

He did that by the miracles which Christ wrought; and they proved that he was indeed sent of God.

[John 8:19](#). *Then said they unto him, Where is thy Father? Jesus answered, Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also.*

They thought they knew his reputed father Joseph; they thought they also knew all about Christ, the carpenter’s Son; but there is more in Christ, than carnal eyes can ever see. There is more in Christ than the most enlightened understanding, if it be but natural understanding, can ever perceive. These blind bats, the Pharisees, neither knew Christ nor the Father. If they had known him, they would have known the Father, for Christ is “the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person.”

[John 8:20](#). *These words spake Jesus in the treasury, as he taught in the temple: and no man laid hands on him; for his hour was not yet come.*

Like our Lord, every child of God is immortal till his work is done. This ought to divest us of every kind of fear. The enemy cannot lay hands upon a Christian until his Lord wills it: and when his hour has come, then it behoves not the child of God to resist the Father’s will.

[John 8:21](#). *Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come.*

Oh, what a terrible sentence is that! I pray that the Lord may never say that to any of us, “Whither I go, ye cannot come.” That would be the death — knell of all our hopes, and would make our life one long banishment. Blessed be his name, we who have sought him, and have found him, know that; we shall not die in our sins; and whither he has gone, we shall go also.

[John 8:22-23](#). *Then said the Jews, Will he kill himself? because he saith, Whither I go, ye cannot come. And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above:*

You are of a groveling nature; your thoughts rise out of the abyss where every evil dwells.

[John 8:23-24](#). *Ye are of this world; I am not of this world. I said therefore, of you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.*

If ye have no faith in Christ as the Son of God, “ye shall die in your sins.” What an awful thing it will be to die in your sins! What ceremonies for your eternal burial! What a robe of fire in which to lie down for your long sleep, and then to find no sleep because of it! “Ye shall die in your sins.” I should like this short, stern sentence to ring in the ears of every unbeliever. This is not my word, but Christ’s own word, — the word of the most loving and tender Saviour: “If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.”

[John 8:25-29](#). *Then said they unto him, Who art thou? And Jesus saith, unto them, Even the same that I said unto, you from the beginning. I have many things to say and to judge of you: but he that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him. They understood not that he spake to them of the Father. Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things. And he that sent me is with me:*

This made Christ’s life so calm, so deeply joyous amid all its sorrow. “He that sent me is with me.” Servant of God, canst thou say the same? If so, it is thy joy, thy confidence thy strength. God grant that we may each one of us realize that blessed presence of our Lord!

[John 8:29](#). *The Father hath not left me alone, for I do always those things that please him.*

Christ could truly say that. Oh, that it might be true of us, too!

[John 8:30-31](#). *As he spake these words, many believed on him, Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;*

“If you became my disciples because of what I said, will you believe what I shall yet say? Are you prepared to take in still further revelations, and to receive whatever I shall teach you? If so, ‘then are ye my disciples indeed’”

[John 8:32](#). *And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*

Some who heard this message of our Lord caught at it; they were always on the watch for anything to cavil at and contradict, and therefore —

[John 8:33-34](#). *They answered him, We be Abraham’s seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.*

Or, “the slave of sin.” There is the test of your position; if you do the devil’s dirty work, you are his servant. If you delight in sin then you can hear your fetters clank if the ears of your conscience are But open: “Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.”

[John 8:35-37](#). *And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. I know that ye are Abraham’s seed;*

“I know what a boast you make of that.”

[John 8:37-39](#). *But ye seek to kill me, because, my word hath no place in you. I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father. They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father.*

Jesus had admitted that, as a matter of temporal descent; but he denied it as a matter of real fact.

Verses 28-59

[John 8:28](#). *Then said Jesus unto them; —*

That is, to the Jews who were questioning and opposing him,-

[John 8:28](#). *When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.*

Blessed be God, there were many, after the crucifixion of Christ, who did. believe in him! Yet, alas! in others, the blindness of heart continued,

and they would not see the Messiah in him who was crucified. We, who believe in the uplifted Saviour, can see the Father in the Son; and to us, faith has become a most blessed thing; and we know that he does nothing of himself, and that, as the Father has taught him, so he speaks.

[John 8:29](#). *And he that sent me is with me:*

I commend that short sentence to all my Master's servants, for there is great comfort in it, Your Lord could say this, and so can you if you are truly employed in his service: "He that sent me is with me?"

[John 8:29](#). *The Father hath not left me alone;*

There is another precious motto for you. Jesus could truly say, "The Father hath not left me alone;" and, as he did not leave his only-begotten and well-beloved Son, so he will not leave any of his sons.

[John 8:29](#). *For I do always those things that please him.*

Let us labour earnestly to be able to say that. If there is anything which would not please God, let us have nothing to do with it; if it would not please God, it ought not to please us. Blessed shall that servant of the Lord be, who can sincerely say, "I do always those things that please him."

[John 8:30-32](#). *As he spake these words, many believed on him. Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*

There is such a thing as a temporary faith; beware of it, I beseech you. Men appear to believe in Christ for a little while, like that seed which was sown upon the rock, which speedily sprang up, and just as quickly withered away. God-given faith is not temporary, but permanent: "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed." God gives us the faith which is able to endure the fire of persecution, and which continues steadfast even when exposed to the evil example of an ungodly world. "He that endureth to the end shall be saved;" but temporary faith brings only delusion, and ends in destruction.

[John 8:33-34](#). *They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.*

Depend upon it, acts of sin breed habits of sin; and habits are the chains which slaves wear. How many there are who are bound to their lusts with

many fetters! Once, they seemed to enjoy the sin, and to hold it in subjection; but now it has bound them, and they cannot escape from it.

[John 8:35-36](#). *And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.*

If he sets you free from sin, you will never go back to its slavery again. There is no emancipation like that which Jesus brings, for it is eternal; when he snaps the fetter, he sets the believer free for ever.

[John 8:37-38](#). *I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you. I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father.*

It is a common characteristic of children to tell what they see; what they witness at home, they are sure to tell abroad. If you are a child of God, you will act and speak like your Father does; and if you are a child of the devil, you will act and speak like him. Our parentage may be discovered by our acts and our words: "I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father."

[John 8:39](#). *They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham.*

"That is, if you were the true spiritual children of faithful Abraham, you would act as he did."

[John 8:40-42](#). *But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham. Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God. Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me.*

If any man has a right idea of God, and really loves God, if he will study the character of Christ, he will see that Christ is the very image of God in human flesh, and he will fall in love with Christ. That result is inevitable. Men form wrong ideas of God; and then, when they read the life of Christ,

they see no likeness between the Christ and their conception of God; nor is there any. But if they would take their idea of God from God's own Word, then they would see that, in the person of the Man of Nazareth, the Divine character truly shines out, but it is toned down so as to meet the human eye without the excessive glare that would blind it. But it is the same

Light of Light, the same Love of Love, the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, “for in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily,” he is the express image of God, and he who truly knows God will know that Christ also is God, for Father and Son are one.

[John 8:43-47](#). *Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not. Which of you convinceth me of sin! And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.*

What a wonderful character was the character of Christ! We get a strange light cast upon it as we read this dialogue in which he endured such contradiction of sinners against himself. My brethren, in Christ there is all the tenderness of a woman; but do not think that he is effeminate, far from it. What masculine force, what vigor what power, there is in him! There are some people who, if we speak plainly against error, tell us that we are uncharitable, and that we have not the spirit of Christ. Is it so? Did there ever fall from any lips more burning words than those which we find here, when he is brought into conflict with his foes? The fact is, he is meek and lowly, but he is most courageous; he is genial and kind, but he is honest and true. He speaks with suavity and gentleness; but, at the same time, there is great force about every expression that he uses. He does not mince matters when he is dealing with sin. There is no velvet on his lips; he utters no honeyed phrases. Naked truth flashes, like a scimitar from its scabbard, when he has to deal with those who oppose the truth. “Because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not. Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.”

[John 8:48](#). *Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?*

You know this form of answer; it is an old trick, when there is no case, abuse the plaintiff. So, when there is no answer to what Christ has said, call him a Samaritan, and say that he has a devil.

[John 8:49-51](#). *Jesus answered, I have not a devil; but I honour my Father, and ye do dishonour me. And I seek not mine own glory: there is*

one that seeketh and judgeth. Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.

What glorious gospel brilliance Christ suddenly flashes upon these men! He promises even to them that, if they will keep his saying, they shall live for ever, they shall be partakers of an eternal, unquenchable life. It might have seemed to us to be like casting pearls before swine to proclaim that great truth to such hearers; but our Master's infinite wisdom does not permit us to think so.

[John 8:52-56](#). *Then said the Jews unto him, Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death. Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? and the prophets are dead: whom makest thou thyself? Jesus answered, If I honour myself, my honour is nothing: it is my Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God: yet ye have not known him,' but I know him: and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you: but I know him, and keep his saying. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.*

He will not answer their questions, for they do not ask that they may learn. They ask that they may cavil; so he multiplies his riddles. He lets the light blind them yet more, Now he speaks, not so much of the undying life of believers, as of his own eternal existence, long before the prophets and Abraham of whom they had spoken.

[John 8:57-58](#). *Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.*

Before there was any Abraham, there was this glorious Christ of ours existing as the Eternal I AM, in all the infinity of his glory. Now comes a thoroughly characteristic Jewish answer, —

[John 8:59](#). *Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them. and so passed by.*

They believed that he claimed to be God, as he certainly did, and therefore they tried to stone him; and there is no foothold for those who say that Christ was a very good man, but only a man. If he was not the Son of God, he was not a good man, for no good man would have left upon his followers, and upon his foes, too, the impression that he claimed to be God, if he was not; and no good man could have claimed to be God if he was not

really so. Rank him either amongst the grossest of impostors, or else as the Son of God, — one or the other. There is no halting-piece between the two. Blessed be thy name, O Son of Mary, thou art also the Son of the Highest, and as such we worship and adore thee!

Verses 29-59

Christ thus spake to his adversaries.

[John 8:29](#). *And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone: for I do always those things that please him.*

Brethren, what Christ could say, I trust many of his servants can also say in a like manner. “He that sent me is with me.” What power, what pleasure, must the presence of God give to his servants! “The Father hath not left me alone.” Oh! how blessed to feel that behind us is the sound of our Master’s feet, and that in us is the temple of his presence! We cannot, however, say, as Christ did, “I do always those things that please him,” for, alas! we have the remembrance of sin this morning, and have to confess it in his sight. But let us also remember that he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.

[John 8:30-31](#). *As he spake these words, many believed on him. Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;*

It is not a mere profession that makes a man a saint; there must be a continuance of well-doing. We bind lads apprentice for a little time, but no man belongs to Christ unless he belongeth to him for ever. There must be an entire giving up of one’s self, in life and unto death, to the Lord’s cause.

[John 8:32-34](#). *And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered him, We be Abraham’s seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.*

There is this in the original, “Whosoever maketh sin.” It is not exactly, “Whosoever committeth it,” because if so, all would be the servants of sin, and God would have no sons at all. But it says in the original “Whosoever maketh sin,” that is, whosoever makes it his choice, and makes it the delight of his soul, whosoever doth this is the servant of sin, and is no son of God.

[John 8:35](#). *And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever.*

He may be in the house, and have slender privileges for a time, but these soon go away.

[John 8:36](#). *If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.*

And give you the privileges of sons.

[John 8:37-38](#). *I know that ye are Abraham's seed, but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you. I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father.*

Men always act according to their natures. We shall find the polluted fountain sending forth filthy streams. We do not expect to hear sweet singing from a serpent, nor, on the other hand, do we expect hissing from the bird, but every creature is after its own kind. Christ, coming from the Father, reveals God: ungodly men, coming from the devil, reveal the devil.

[John 8:39-42](#). *They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham but now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham. Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him. We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God. Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me.*

You would see in me a brother; you would perceive in me the attributes of God, and, being made like unto God as his sons, would, love the God-head in me.

[John 8:43-44](#). *Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do.*

Christ doth not speak very gentle words at all times. A deeply-rooted disease needs a sharp medicine, and he gives it. He uses the knife sometimes, and if there be a deadly ulcer that must be cut away, he knoweth how to do it with all the sternness of which his loving heart is capable.

[John 8:44](#). *He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there was no truth in him.*

The first murder was committed by his suggestion. Cain was guilty of it, but Satan instigated it. He hath ever been a man-killer, and so Christ says that inasmuch as they sought to kill him, they were worthy sons of their parent. "There is no truth in him."

[John 8:44](#). *When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own:*

It is his own idiom. You may always know him by it.

[John 8:44](#). *For he is a liar, and the father of it.*

The father of all liars, and of all lies.

[John 8:45-46](#). *And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not. Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?*

Oh! matchless argument! Now were they silent indeed. His whole life was before them; he had not lived in secret and yet he could appeal to his whole life, from the first day even to this time, and say, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" It is this that weakens our testimony for God that we are so imperfect and full of sin. Let us seek to imitate the Master, for the more clean we are from these imperfections, the more shall we be able to shut the mouths of our adversaries.

[John 8:47-48](#). *He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God. Then answered the Jews and said unto him, Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil.*

Always abuse your adversary if you cannot answer him: this is always the devil's tactic. When he cannot overthrow religion, then he seeks to append opprobrious titles to those who profess it. It is an old and stale trick, and has lost much of its force. Our Saviour did not answer the accusation of his being a Samaritan, but inasmuch as what they said about his having a devil would touch his doctrine, he answered that.

[John 8:49-51](#) *Jesus answered, I have not a devil; but I honour my Father, and ye do dishonour me. And I seek not mine own glory: there is one that seeketh and judgeth. Verily, verily, I say unto you. If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.*

The sting of it shall be taken away; he may fall asleep; he will do so, but he shall not see death.

[John 8:52-56](#). *Then said the Jews unto him, Now we know that thou hast a devil Abraham is dead, and the prophets: and thou sayest, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death. Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? and the prophets are dead: whom makest thou thyself? Jesus answered, If I honour myself, my honour is nothing: it is my Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say that he is your God: yet ye have not know him; but I know him: and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you: but I know him, and keep his saying. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad.*

There is a great force in the original language here, “He was glad.” There was an excessive joy which holy men had in looking forward to the coming of Christ. I do not think that we give ourselves enough room for joy in our religion. There are some persons who think it the right thing to restrain their emotions. They have no burstings forth of joy, and seldom a shout of sacred song. But oh! my brethren, if there is anything that deserves the flashing eye, and the leaping foot, and the bounding heart, it is the great truth that Jesus Christ has come into the world to save sinners, even the chief. Let us be glad so often as we make mention of his name.

[John 8:57](#). *Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?*

Why, he was hardly thirty, but sorrow had made him appear old.

[John 8:58](#). *Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was I am.*

Here he claims his Deity to the fullest extent, and those who can read the New Testament, and profess to believe it, and yet not see Christ as a claimant of Deity, must be sinfully blind.

[John 8:59](#). *Then, took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.*

This is always the sinner’s argument against the right: first, hard words, and then stones.

This exposition consisted of readings from [John 8:29-59](#). [Mark 14:1-9](#). [John 12:1-7](#).

Verses 31-59

[John 8:31](#). *Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;*

For there were many, in Christ’s day, coming to him for a while, and then going away from him; professing to believe, and then stumbling when Christ proclaimed some doctrine which struck them as being strange and hard to receive. Our Lord Jesus tells them that constancy is necessary to true discipleship. It is of no use to start running in the race unless we continue in the course till the prize is won. We are not true pilgrims to heaven merely because we cross the threshold of our door; we must keep on, and on, and on, till we reach the golden streets of the New Jerusalem.

[John 8:32](#). *And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*

That is the result of being a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. With Christ, who is the truth, to be our Teacher, and the Holy Spirit to bless his words, we come to know the truth; and the operation of the truth upon the heart is to deliver us from the bondage of sin and of error.

[John 8:33](#). *They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?*

What a falsehood this was of theirs! They were at that very time in bondage to the Romans; they had been subdued and conquered: and, a little while after, they themselves confessed that they had no king but Cesar. Men are not very chary about telling falsehoods when they wish to resist Christ: they will do anything rather than believe on him.

[John 8:34](#). *Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.*

The man who habitually lives in sin is not a free man, for he is still a slave to sin. If he finds pleasure and delight in disobeying God, he has no right to talk about being a free man. His chains are rattling on his wrists; what can he know about freedom?

[John 8:35](#). *And the servant abideth not in the house for ever; but the son abideth even.*

A servant may be dismissed from the household, but a son may not. If we were only servants of God, we might fall from grace, and perish; but if we are the sons of God, we never shall. If we ever did, in truth, call God "Father," we shall always be able to use that blessed title, for the relationship of fatherhood is not a temporary one, sad cannot come to an end.

[John 8:36](#). *If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.*

If you have the freedom of sonship, you are free indeed. There are none so free in our Father's house as his children are.

[John 8:37-39](#). *I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you. I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father. They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham.*

The real descendants of "the father of the faithful" are themselves faithful; that is, believers. The father of believers has believers for his children: "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of

Abraham.” Our Lord had admitted that these Jews were Abraham’s seed according to the flesh; but he proved that they were not Abraham’s seed in the high and spiritual sense, since they were not like him whom they claimed for a father.

[John 8:40-41](#). *But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham. Ye do the deeds of your father.*

He had not told them who that father was; but as it is a standing rule that men do the deeds of their father, the genuineness of the descent which they claimed could be tested by their likeness to their father.

[John 8:41-42](#). *Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God. Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me:*

Any man who is born of God must love Jesus Christ. The purity of his motives, the loveliness of his character, the charms of his person, would all be sure to win the heart of a man who was truly born of God.

[John 8:42-43](#). *For I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word.*

“You are dull of comprehension, you are hardened in heart, you are proud in spirit, you are just the opposite of everything that is good, and therefore you cannot hear my word,” saith Christ; “and this is proof positive that you do not love God, and that you are not the children of God.”

[John 8:44](#). *Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do.*

Remember from whose lips these words fell, even from the lips of the gentle Jesus. Honest speech is the surest token of a loving heart; but, nowadays, if a man preaches the truth plainly and faithfully, men say that he is hard and unkind; but if a man glosses over the truth, and alters it according to his own idea of what will please men, then they say, “He is a kindly-disposed and large-hearted man.” I should be disposed to doubt whether he has any heart at all, if he will sooner see sinners damned than offend them by proclaiming the truth. I thank God that some of us care little about offending those who offend God. If men will not yield themselves unto the Lord, we want not their friendship, but we will strive to make them uneasy in their rebellion, and if they resolve to be lost, we will at least be clear of their blood.

[John 8:44](#). *He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.*

Falsehood is his natural element. When Satan deceives, he only acts according to his nature, which is blackened with falsehood through and through.

[John 8:45-46](#). *And because I tell you the truth, ye Believe me not. Which of you convinceth me of sin?*

What a grand challenge! None of us can speak like that, except in a very modified sense; but Christ, standing before his enemies, who gnashed their teeth at him, and would have given their eyes to be able to fix some fault upon him, yet boldly says to them, “Which of you convinceth me of sin?”

[John 8:46-51](#). *And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God heareth God’s words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God. Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil? Jesus answered, I have not a devil; but I honour my Father, and ye do dishonour me. And I seek not mine own glory: there is one that seeketh and judgeth. Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.*

This statement quite staggered them; yet it is true. To believers,— It is not death to die; they simply pass out of this world into a larger and yet more glorious life. They descend not to death, but they rise to immortality.

[John 8:52-53](#). *Then said the Jews unto him, Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death. Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? and the prophets are dead: whom makest thou thyself?*

“What dost thou pretend to be? Someone greater than Abraham and the prophets?”

[John 8:54-56](#). *Jesus answered, If I honour myself, my honour is nothing: it is my Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say, that he is our God: yet ye have not knownt him; but I know him: and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you: but I know him, and keep his saying. Your father Abraham —*

“As ye call him “—

[John 8:56-57](#). *Rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad. Then said the Jews unto him, thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen*

Abraham?

They allowed a wide margin in specking of our Saviour's age, for he was only thirty-three years old. It may be true that the sorrows of his life had so marred his countenance that he looked more like a man of fifty than one of three-and-thirty. I cannot tell, nor do I know whether that is what they meant; but it is singular that they should have said to him, "Thou art not yet fifty years old."

[John 8:58](#). *Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.*

They had asked him, "Whom makest thou thyself?" and now they have his answer: "Before Abraham was, I am," saith Christ. It is the very name by which God revealed himself to Moses at the burning bush, "I AM." Yet Jesus takes this title to himself: "Before Abraham was," — not, "I was;" notice that; but, "I am;" as if his life was one continued present existence, as indeed it is, for with God there is no past or future, but all things are ever-present to his infinite mind. When Jesus said, "Before Abraham was, I am," he claimed the Godhead, he declared that he was certainly God, self-existent from all eternity.

[John 8:59](#). *Then took they up stones to cast at him:*

They counted him a blasphemer, and so he was if he was not all he claimed to be. I have heard of some who reverence Christ, but do not believe him to be God; but how can that be? He evidently made himself out to be God, and this was the great charge the Jews brought against him. For this, indeed, they put him to death, because he made himself equal with God. If he was not equal with God,— if he was not really God,— he led men to think that he was; and if this was false, it was a great sin not consistent with the holy character of Christ. If he was not God, he was the grossest impostor who ever visited this world. But he was God, and nothing less; yet because he claimed this, the Jews took up stones to cast at him.

[John 8:59](#). *But Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.*

Glory be to his holy name for ever and ever!

Verses 37-59

We will read, from the Revised Version, two passages which record attempts made to kill our Lord before his time had come. You will see, from the sermon, why we read them. (See [Luke 4:16-30](#))

[John 8:37-59](#). *I know that ye are Abraham's seed; yet ye seek to kill me, because my word hath not free course in you. I speak the things which I have seen with my Father: and ye also do the things which ye heard from your father. They answered and said unto him, Our father is Abraham. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I heard from God: this did not Abraham. Ye do the works of your father. They said unto him, We were not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God. Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I came forth and am come from God; for neither have I come of myself, but he sent me. Why do ye not understand my speech? Even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and stood not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father thereof. But because I say the truth, ye believe me not. Which of you convicteth me of sin? If I say truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God heareth the words of God: for this cause ye hear them not, because ye are not of God. The Jews answered and said unto him, Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil? Jesus answered, I have not a devil; but I honour my Father, and ye dishonour me. But I seek not mine own glory: there is one that seeketh and judgeth. Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my word, he shall never see death. The Jews said unto him, Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest, If a man keep my word, he shall never taste of death. Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? and the prophets are dead: whom makest thou thyself? Jesus answered, If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing: it is my Father that glorifieth me of whom ye say, that he is your God; and ye have not known him: but I know him; and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be like unto you, a liar: but I know him, and keep his word. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad. The Jews therefore said unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am. They took up stones therefore to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple.*

This exposition consisted of readings from [Luke 4:16-30](#); and [John 8:37-59](#). (R.V.)

JOHN CONTENTS

CHAPTER 9

Verses 1-7

[John 9:1-7](#). *And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way before, and washed, and came seeing.*

I will not say anything now about this miracle, as it will form the subject of my discourse.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Mark 10:46-52](#); and [John 9:1-7](#).

Verses 1-14

[John 9:1-3](#). *And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents:*

That is to say, their sin was not the cause of his blindness.

[John 9:3-14](#). *But that the works of God should be made manifest in him. I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and said unto him, Go, wash in the Pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing. The neighbors therefore, and they which before had seen him that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged? Some said, This is he: others said, He is like him: but he said, I am he. Therefore said they unto him, How were thine*

eyes opened? He answered and said, A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight. Then said they unto him, Where is he? He said, I know not. They brought to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind. And it was the sabbath day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes.

This gracious act of Christ was made another occasion of complaint on the part of the Pharisees, and it is the sixth instance in which we are very specially and definitely informed that our Lord Jesus Christ wrought miracles of healing on the Sabbath-day. Oh, that he would do similar works in our midst even now in a spiritual sense, if not literally!

This exposition consisted of readings from [Luke 4:33-36](#); [Luke 6:6-11](#); [Luke 13:10-17](#); [Luke 14:1-6](#); [John 5:1-9](#); ND 9:1-14.

Verses 1-38

[John 9:1](#). *And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth.*

The man could not see Jesus, but sight came to the man from Jesus. If there are any here who cannot look to Christ as yet, our prayer is that he may look on them as he looked on this blind man.

[John 9:2](#). *And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?*

Beloved, if you had Christ with you, you could occupy your time better than in asking such questions as this; and I think that, when we go to Holy Scripture, we can do better than pry into things of small practical importance, or even into great mysteries. However, in this case, since the disciples were liable to fall into grave error, our Lord gave them instruction upon the matter that perplexed them.

[John 9:3](#). *Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.*

In other words, this man is not blind as the result of sin in himself, or in his parents. He is blind in order that God may have a platform for the display of his gracious power in healing him.

[John 9:4-5](#). *I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.*

Our Saviour felt that he was commissioned as a servant of his Father, sent here to do a certain work, and he must be doing it. It is well for God's

servants to feel a holy compulsion. It does not take away from them the freedom of their action, and their delight in the service of God; but still it exercises a powerful influence over a man when he feels, "Woe is me, if I preach not the gospel;" or when, like the Lord Jesus, he says, "I must work the works of him that sent me." Did the Well-beloved, the Prince of Heaven, come under compulsion? Did he put himself under that "must" which is for the king? Then you and I may well put ourselves under holy bondage for the Lord. Then, do not hinder me; do not tell me that I am too feeble in health; "I must work the works of him that sent me."

[John 9:6-7](#). *When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing.*

Our Lord often works miracles without means, and sometimes with means which appear to be quite inappropriate. It would seem to be more easy to blind a man with clay than to open his eyes with it; and there are some who assert that the gospel plainly spoken would lead men into sin, but it does not. It is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." If you go to work in the name of God, if you put the clay on the sinner's eyes, and bid him go and wash, you will see what will happen.

[John 9:8-11](#). *The neighbors therefore, and they which before had seen him that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged? Some said, This is he: others said, He is like him: but he said, I am he. Therefore said they unto him, How were thine eyes opened? He answered and said, A Man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight.*

Does he not tell his story well? If he had not been a blind man whose eyes had just been opened, he would have exaggerated somewhere or other. I never heard a man tell a tale with absolute correctness; it is not the way of people, they are sure to put in some little item by way of garnishing, for there is a bump of romance in most men's heads; but this shrewd, strictly honest man tells the story briefly, but leaves out no important particular.

[John 9:12-15](#). *Then said they unto him, Where is he? He said, I know not. They brought to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind. And it was the sabbath day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes. Then again*

the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. He said unto them, He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see.

That was short and sweet; and when you have to deal with Pharisees, do not give them much. They are not worth it, and they are sure to misuse it. When he spoke to the common people, he enlarged, and gave them details; but now that he comes to talk to these pragmatical professors, he cuts it down to as few words as possible.

[John 9:16](#). *Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath day. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them.*

Yes, and there is a division among the enemies of Christ always; they cannot agree among themselves. If they could always lay their heads together, and agree, they might have greater power; but the Edomites draw their swords against the children of Ammon, and they are sure to slay one another in the long run. There were also some among these Pharisees who had a conscience, men like Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathaea; and they asked, “How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles?”

[John 9:17](#). *They say unto the blind man again, What sayest thou of him, that he hath opened thine eyes? He said, He is a prophet.*

He must be a prophet. He could not have worked such a miracle as that if he had been a common man: “He said, He is a prophet.”

[John 9:18](#). *But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and received his sight, until they called the parents of him that had received his sight.*

You see, John gives to the Pharisees the name which they arrogated to themselves: “we are Jews.” But they were not true Jews. They called themselves Jews, and so John speaks of them as “the Jews.” It often happens that a certain clique or party will run away with a name which does not belong to them any more than it does to a great many who differ from them very widely. These Pharisees pretended that they would not believe the miracle. It was manifest before their eyes; but yet they would not believe it until they called his parents.

[John 9:19-21](#). *And they asked them, saying, Is this your son, who ye say was born blind? how then doth he now see? His parents answered them and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind: but by what means he now seeth, we know not; or who hath opened his eyes, we know not: he is of age; ask him: he shall speak for himself.*

This was very shrewd on their part; but I think that I must add that it was very cowardly to throw all the testimony on their son. There are some parents who, if their children do right, if they follow Christ, seem to leave them to take care of themselves.

[John 9:22](#). *These words spake his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue.*

Excommunicated; and they could not bear to be cut off from the respectable society which they had hitherto enjoyed.

[John 9:23-24](#). *Therefore said his parents, He is of age; ask him. Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner.*

Does it not sound pretty from their Pharisaic lips? Arch hypocrites pretending to teach a man who knew much better than themselves! “We know that this man is a sinner. You did not know it, but we know it and as we know it, and we are doctors, you must believe it.”

[John 9:25](#). *He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.*

He could not be beaten out of that. You cannot argue a man out of an experience of this kind; and if the Lord Jesus Christ has ever opened your eyes, dear friend, nobody can make you doubt that blessed fact.

[John 9:26-27](#). *Then said they to him again, What did he to thee? how opened he thine eyes? He answered them, I have told you already, and ye did not hear: wherefore would ye hear it again? will ye also be his disciples?*

He threw a little sarcasm into that last question. The man was a very remarkable person, a simple-hearted, honest man, but withal quite able to hold his own in any company.

[John 9:28](#). *Then they reviled him,*

It is a bad case, so abuse the plaintiff. There is nothing to be said for our side, so let us abuse the man who has had his eyes opened.

[John 9:28-30](#). *And said, Thou art his disciple; but we are Moses' disciples. We know that God spake unto Moses: as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is. The man answered and said unto them, Why herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes.*

Does not that manifestation of miraculous power show where he must have come from? Could he have come from anywhere but from God?

[John 9:31-33](#). *Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth. Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing.*

Well argued! The case is proven indeed.

[John 9:34](#). *They answered and said unto him, Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us?*

Cannot you hear them say it? “A blind beggar, who has just begun to see, ‘Dost thou teach us?’ — D.D.’s, men who are learned in the law, ‘Dost thou teach us?’” Well, brethren, if a man has only one eye, he may teach those who have not any, for the old proverb says, “In the realm of the blind, the man with one eye is king.” Yet there is another proverb on this subject, and that is, “In the realm of the blind, the man with one eye gets hanged.” That was likely to be the case here; the blind Pharisees could not bear the man who could see. He knew too much for them.

[John 9:34-36](#). *And they cast him out. Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?*

He wanted instruction. Christ may have done much for a man, but he may not as yet fully know the Lord. There may be some here tonight upon whom Christ has wrought a great deal, and yet you do not know him as you will know him: “Dost thou believe on the Son of God?”

[John 9:37-38](#). *And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.*

That is the way with a genuine believer, he worships Christ. Why? Because he believes him to be God. It would be idolatry to worship Christ if he were only man, and Christ would have been an impostor if he had allowed this man to worship him if he had not been God. But he was God; and we, believing him to be God, worship Christ as very God of very God, to whom be praise forever and ever! Amen.

Verses 1-41

[John 9:1](#). *And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth.*

Therefore the man could not see Jesus, but the more important matter was that Christ could see the blind man. And you, dear heart, may not yet have learned to look on Christ, but he can look on you in your blindness, and a look from him will speedily work a wondrous change in you.

[John 9:2](#). *And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?*

Many of Christ's disciples are still occupied in asking questions that serve no practical purpose, like this one, "Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?"

[John 9:3](#). *Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: That is to say, sin on their part was not the cause of his blindness.*

[John 9:3](#). *But that the works of God should be made manifest in him*

Human nature is a platform for the manifestation of divine work. The more in need you are, dear friend, the more room there is for God's mercy to operate upon you.

[John 9:4-7](#). *I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. When he had thus spoken, he Spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing."*

Christ used very simple means to cure this man's blindness, very unlikely means, apparently, to produce the desired effect. It might have seemed, indeed, that the man would have been worse in the dark than ever when his eyes were plastered over with clay, yet the Lord chose to work in that way.

And so, when the poor preacher feels as if he was nothing and nobody, and that his agency may rather hinder his Master's work than help him yet still his Lord can work through his weakness, and get to himself glory notwithstanding his servant's infirmities.

[John 9:8-9](#). *The neighbors therefore, and they which before had seen him that he was blind said, Is not this he that sat and begged? Some said, This is he: others said, He is like him: but he said, I am he.*

"There is no question about my identity, I am the same man whom you have seen sitting and begging, and I now come before you with my sight fully restored."

[John 9:10-11](#). *Therefore said they unto him, How were thine eyes opened? He answered and said, a man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight.*

It was only a short story, but it was very sweet to him, and he told it with no excess of detail, but with all its salient points. He was a sharp, shrewd man of few words, but those few words were weighty. Friend when thou tellest the story of Christ and his love to thee, do not embellish it with flowers of speech. There is enough in what Christ has done to make it shine without any fine words of thine. The beauty of Christ's work is such that it is most adorned when unadorned.

[John 9:12](#). *Then said they unto him, Where is he? He said, I know not.*

There are a good many things concerning Christ which you may not know, but if you know that he has opened your eyes, you may be well content with the knowledge of that until he shall be pleased to reveal more about himself to you.

[John 9:13](#). *They brought to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind.*

I am sure that this was a very distressing sight to them, for there was nothing that ever grieved their hearts more than for Christ's power to be displayed. They did not want to see the blind man whose eyes Christ had opened; if the miracle brought Christ any glory, it brought them just so much misery.

[John 9:14-15](#). *And it was the Sabbath day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes. Then again the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight.*

That seemed to be the principal question with them; they always wanted to know the manner in which Christ's cures were wrought.

[John 9:15](#). *He said unto them, He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see.*

That is shorter than his previous account of the miracle. When Pharisees ask a carping question, the shorter the answer the better; it is a pity to cast pearls before swine.

[John 9:16-17](#). *Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God because he keepeth not the Sabbath day. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them. They say unto the blind man again, What sayest thou of him, that he hath opened thine eyes! He said, He is a prophet.*

He was a brave man, who dared to say what he believed whether he offended or pleased. He did not know much, but what he did know he did know, and he was quite certain about it. There are some men whose breadth of knowledge is as remarkable as its shallowness. It is like water upon the meadows when a river overflows its banks, and covers a wide area, but there is scarcely an inch of depth. Give us the narrower river that is deep, and that can bear onwards to the ocean a noble fleet, rather than the wide expanse of useless, shallow water.

[John 9:18-21](#). *But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and received his sight, until they called the parents of him that had received his sight. And they asked them, saying, Is this your son, who ye say was born blind? how then doth he now see? His parents answered them and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind: but by what means he now seeth, we know not; or who hath opened his eyes, we know not: he is of age; ask him: he shall speak for himself.*

They were timid, but they were also shrewd enough to let their son speak for himself, as he was quite able to do.

[John 9:22-24](#). *These words spake his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue. Therefore said his parents, He is of age ask him. Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner.*

They thought they could get over him by giving him a little of what they called good advice: "Praise God, but be quiet concerning this man; depend upon it, he is a sinner."

[John 9:25-28](#). *He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see. Then said they to him again, What did he to thee? how opened he thine eyes? He answered them, I have told you already, and ye did not hear: wherefore would ye hear it again? will ye also be his disciple? Then they reviled him,*

—
Of course, that is the usual way with those who are in the wrong. Abuse the plaintiff when you cannot answer his case. "Then they reviled him," —

[John 9:28-30](#). *And said, Thou art his disciple but we are Moses' disciples. We know that God spake unto Moses: as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is. The man answered and said unto them, Why herein*

is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes.

Where could he have come from but from God? Who could have wrought such a miracle unless he had been sent from God?

[John 9:31-33](#). *Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth. Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing.*

That was very forcibly spoken. Oh, that all of us, whose eyes Christ has opened, would speak for him as bravely as this man did! Our cure has been quite as clear and quite as notable as his was, so let us not be ashamed to testify for him before gainsayers and opposers.

[John 9:34](#). *They answered and said unto him, Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us?*

“Such learned men as we are, with such culture and such penetration as we have, ‘dost thou teach us?’”

[John 9:34](#). *And they cast him out.*

It was a great mercy for him that they did excommunicate him, one of the greatest blessings that could come to him was that of being cast out of the synagogue, and being cast out of the society of such men as those Pharisees were.

[John 9:35](#). *Jesus heard that they had cast him out; —*

Jesus knew all that had happened to this man, but someone probably related the story to him; and our Lord knows all about each one of us, and he knows whether anyone here is suffering for his sake or for the truth’s sake. Jesus knew that they had cast him out; —

[John 9:35](#). *And when he had found him, —*

For he always finds those whom the world or false professors have cast out, —

[John 9:35-36](#). *He said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?*

He was a sensible man, and he had the sense to perceive that knowledge rightly used leads to faith. He desired to know in order that he might believe; and if you ever say that you cannot believe, but are anxious to do so, then make enquiry as to what is to be believed, examine the evidence concerning it, and so faith will come to you by the operation of God’s good Spirit.

[John 9:37-40](#). *And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him. And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind. And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also?*

“Are we blind?” It seemed impossible to them that it could be so. Jesus answered them with scathing words: —

[John 9:41](#). *Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth.*

“If what you have done had been done in utter ignorance, you would have been comparatively guiltless; but you have sinned against light and knowledge, with a most determined antipathy to the grace of God, and therefore your sin remaineth in all its scarlet hue to condemn you.”

[JOHN CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 10

Verses 1-18

[John 10:1-2](#). *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.*

The true Shepherd cares for the flock, the false ones are thieves and robbers who only care for the flesh or the fleece.

[John 10:3](#). *To him the porter openeth and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.*

John the Baptist was the porter who opened the door of Christ’s earthly ministry by bearing witness that he was the Son of God.

[John 10:4-5](#). *And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.*

Christ is the great Leader of his people, and they will never go astray so long as they follow him. The sheep of Christ recognize their Shepherd’s voice, and come at his call; but “strangers” call to them in vain.

[John 10:6-7](#). *This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them. Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.*

No one metaphor can fully describe our glorious Lord, for he is both Shepherd and Door to the sheep, and all else that they need.

“O my Saviour! Shield and Sun,
Shepherd, Brother, Husband, Friend, —
Every precious name in one,
I will love thee without end.”

[John 10:8-10](#). *All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.*

The thief came to take away life, but Christ came to give life, and that abundant life which shall last for ever and ever; but see what it cost him to give that life: —

[John 10:11-13](#). *I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep.*

Just now the contrast was between the Shepherd and the thief. Here it is between the Shepherd and the hireling. The hireling cares for himself; the Shepherd cares for the sheep and provides for them and cares for them even at the cost of his life.

[John 10:14-15](#). *I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.*

There is mutual knowledge between the Shepherd and the sheep, and between the Father and the Son.

[John 10:16](#). *And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice: and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.*

Or, more correctly, “one flock, one Shepherd.” The flock would never be complete without those “other sheep” which the Shepherd says he must bring into the fold, and which he says shall hear his voice. Not one of them

will be missing in the day when they pass again under the hand of him that telleth them.

[John 10:17-18](#). *Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.*

The voluntariness of Christ's sacrifice is its glory, and well may his Father love him because of it; and well may we, who are eternally to benefit by his death, also love him.

Verses 1-30

[John 10:1](#). *Verily, verily, I say unto you,*

Now we may be absolutely certain that there is something of the utmost importance wherever Christ uses the solemn asseveration of "Verily, verily," — the same word is "Amen, amen" and it has been well observed that if it were not for Christ's "Amens," our "Amens" would be of little value. It is because he who is the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, pleads in heaven that our "Amens" are accepted there. If, dear friends, Christ pays an earnest attention to our "Amens," how much more ought we to attend to his, specially when he doubles them — "Amen, amen, I say unto you."

[John 10:1-3](#). *He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.*

Here the people of God are compared to sheep. Their harmlessness and gentle character, their feebleness and quiet in the fold, their profitable uses, their defenseless state, requiring some one always to watch over them, the patience with which they are led to the shearer or to the slaughter, and the constancy with which they are associated with sacrifice, render sheep a most excellent symbol of the people of God. Doubtless the fold is the Church, within this fold all the saints of God are gathered, not always in the visible, but always in the invisible and indivisible Church of Christ. None may set up to be shepherds of this fold except those who come in a proper and fitting way, and that is not by a pretended apostolical descent, that is, not by a commission which they have received from their own assumption, but by a commission direct from Christ — coming in through him as by the

door. The great true Shepherd, the antitype of all shepherds is Christ himself. To him the porter openeth. All the prophecies, which, like porters, kept the gates, opened at once to Christ; all godly hearts, which, like the porters of the gate, were watching for the coming of the true Shepherd, opened at once to Jesus; whether it were Anna or Simeon, they at once confessed him. The sheep hear his voice, and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. We are told by Eastern travelers that in the large district folds into which the sheep-farmers put their different flocks, while they are all assembled in one common flock, the shepherd of any one flock has but to make his appearance and begin to speak, and his sheep at once recognize him. Though another person should dress up in his garments they would take no notice of him; they know their shepherd by his voice.

[John 10:4](#). *And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.*

The genius of the law is driving; the spirit of the Gospel is leading, and the joyful imitation follows.

[John 10:5](#). *And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.*

Heretics attract their companies, but the faithful followers of Christ never go after them. They cleave to the truth, which is the voice of Christ, and they will not be persuaded by the most marvelous lying wonders, nor by the greatest arrogance, to depart from him who is their all.

[John 10:6-8](#). *This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them. Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto ye, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them.*

They made loud professions of being the true Messias, and some of them gathered great multitudes, and rebelled against the Roman power, but the true sheep, who waited for the true Shepherd, did not hear them.

[John 10:9-14](#). *I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the*

sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.

This good Shepherd proves himself to be so by his actions. Remember, brethren, how carefully he watches his sheep from the tower of the flock, not one of them ever being absent from his eye for a single moment. How graciously he guides those sheep, leading them always by a right way that he may bring them to safety at the last. How plentifully doth he pasture his flock, making them to lie down in green pastures beside the still waters. And oh! how gloriously doth he defend his flock, dashing into the thickest of their foes, snatching the lamb out of the jaws of the lion and out of the paw of the bear. And we must not conclude this list of his deeds without remembering how readily he hath bought that flock, and how well he hath washed that flock, in blood flowing from his own veins, that he might present them all at the last, not one of them being wanting, nor one of them impure, but each of them like sheep that come up fresh from the washing. “I know my sheep.” It is not as if salvation was left to haphazard. He knew them before they were created. Having foreordained he did foreknow. He knew them when they did not know themselves, when they were wallowing in the mire like swine, he knew them still. He knows them now — unknown to fame, unregistered, perhaps, in the books of the visible Church “I know my sheep wherever they may be.” Then notice the next sentence, for this is the practical way by which you may judge whether you are his or not: “I am known of mine.” They know him as their only hope and trust, they know the sweetness of fellowship with him. They know the power of his arm, the efficacy of his blood, the faithfulness of his heart. They know the preciousness of his cross, and the glory of his crown.

[John 10:15-16](#). *As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.*

No recognition of free-will here. Christ speaks as one who has the hearts of men in his control. He knows who are his that as yet are not called. He does not say he hopes they will yield to hear his voice, but they shall. Oh, irresistible grace, what can stand against thee? The blood-bought shall all be blood-washed; the foreordained and foreknown shall yet know him who hath saved them by his blood. In this we ought constantly to rejoice. The feebleness of the minister is no barrier to the carrying out of God’s purpose,

nor is the hardness of the human heart any impediment to the completion of the divine degree. “Them also must I bring.” There is a heavenly necessity that all the chosen should be saved.

[John 10:17](#); [John 10:26](#). *Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father. There was a division therefore again among the Jews for these sayings. And many of them said, He hath a devil and is mad, why hear ye him? Others said, These are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind? And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter. And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon’s porch. Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly. Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the work that I do in my Father’s name, they bear witness of me. But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.*

Believing does not make them sheep, but being sheep by divine election proves them to be such.

[John 10:27-30](#). *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand. I and my Father are one.*

Happy are they, then, who have received the character of sheep, for thus they prove themselves to be the chosen of God, and in the hand of Christ, and in his Father’s grasp, they are eternally secure.

“If in my Father’s love,
I share a filial part.
Send down thy Spirit like a dove
To rest upon my heart.”

This exposition consisted of readings from [John 10:1-30](#) and [Hebrews 1:1-14](#).

[JOHN CONTENTS](#)

Verses 1-26

[John 11:1](#). *Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha.*

In God's book, towns are most remarkable for saints that dwell in them. "The town of Mary and her sister Martha." A day will come when a city shall be more illustrious for a saint than for a Caesar — be more renowned for deeds of faith than for deeds of battle. It was "the town of Mary and her sister Martha."

[John 11:2-3](#). *(It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick). Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.*

They did not say anymore. They felt that it was quite enough to tell him that Lazarus was sick, and they left it to the tender heart of Jesus to do whatever seemed good in his sight. Some prayers would be all the better if they were shorter — all the better if they did not so much declare our own will as declare our confidence in the good will of Christ. I like the omissions of Martha's and Mary's prayer.

[John 11:4](#). *When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.*

Our Saviour sneaks in a different style from us. He should have said that the sickness was unto death, but, ultimately, to the glory of God. But he who sees the end from the beginning streaks with a grandeur of style which could not be imitated by us. So the Lord speaks of things, not as they seem to be, nor even as they are in the present moment, but as they shall be in the long run. "Not unto death, but that the Son of God might be glorified."

[John 11:5](#). *Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.*

Yet Lazarus died. Jesus loved Lazarus, yet Lazarus was sick. Jesus was not of that cruel sort of people, of whom we have some in these days, who call themselves saints, and who attribute all sickness among God's people to their sin or to their want of faith. Not he. Here was one that was sick, but Jesus loved him just as much for all that.

[John 11:6](#). *When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was.*

Notice the connection. “Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus”; and yet when he had heard that Lazarus was sick, “he abode two days still in the same place where he was.” Sometimes true love may think fit to make us wait. It may be the truest love on God’s part to let us lie sick, and not to come post-haste to us to make us well. Ay, the truest love may demand that the sickness should turn to death, for out of the death he may bring the greater glory. The Lord acts not upon the scale of man, for he sees not as man sees. He sees the end as well as the beginning.

[John 11:7](#). *Then after that saith he to his disciples, Let us go into Judaea again.*

— and that because he loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. If that love in its wisdom made him tarry, yet that love in its sincerity at last moved him to seek the house of grief.

[John 11:9](#). *Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day?*

Is there not a time in which the sun will not go down — in which it is safe and right for men to work?

[John 11:9-10](#). *If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him.*

There is a singular turn, is there not, in that expression? We expected it to be “Because he seeth not the light of the world,” instead of which the Saviour says, “Because there is no light in him” — because in spiritual things our light not only comes from above, but it shines within; and without that inner light we are sure to stumble.

[John 11:11](#). *These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth: but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep.*

It is the Saviour’s way to use terms concerning his miracles, which, so far from exaggerating them, even appear to depreciate them. He is about to raise a man from the dead, but he says, “Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go that I may awake him out of sleep.” I am afraid that our tendency is always to describe our actions in the largest possible terms consistent with truth; perhaps, sometimes forgetting those last words. But the Saviour describes truthfully what he does, but still in terms which, like his humanity, seem to veil the glory. Wonderfully condescending is it of him to speak thus: —

[John 11:12](#). *Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well.*

It is considered to be a sign of getting better when a patient can sleep.

[John 11:13-16](#). *Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep. Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him. Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellow disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him.*

A singular mixture of faith and unbelief. He so believes his Master that he is willing to die with him. He so doubts him that, although the Saviour had plainly told him that he was immortal till his work was done, yet he is afraid that his Master and all of them will be put to death. Oh, the Lord knows us better than we know ourselves, and the Lord accepts us notwithstanding our infirmities.

[John 11:17](#). *Then when Jesus came, he found that he had lain in the grave four days already.*

So that he was probably dead as soon as the messengers arrived to tell the Saviour that he was ill.

[John 11:18](#). *Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off.*

Just a nice little walk which our Saviour had often taken in the evening after the toils of the day in Jerusalem. He had loved to make Bethany his quiet resting-place. "Fifteen furlongs off."

[John 11:19-20](#). *And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother. Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary sat still in the house.*

Because she had not heard that Jesus was come, or else, no doubt, she would have been there as soon as Martha.

[John 11:21](#). *Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.*

They had often said to one another, "Oh, we wish the Lord were come." They had sent for him. They felt sure that he would come. But, alas, their brother had died before the Master had arrived; and now this thought which was uppermost in their hearts is uppermost in their speech, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died."

[John 11:22](#). *But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.*

There is faith there, and there is unbelief too. She believes that Christ can have what he wills of God, but she does not recognize his own personal

Godhead — his own power to work resurrection.

[John 11:23-26](#). *Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?*

She looked upon the resurrection and the life as things that were to be in some dim and misty future. “No,” says Christ, “I am the resurrection and the life. Not only do I get these things by prayer from God, but I am these things.” And then he goes on to explain it. He says, “I am the resurrection. He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. I am the life. Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?” He has taken her out of the thought of this poor common animal-life into the thought of the spiritual and higher life, which is, indeed, to the soul what the resurrection is to the body. It was well for the Saviour thus to teach her higher truth than as yet she knew.

Verses 1-44

[John 11:1](#). *Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha.*

To many people, it may have seemed an event of no particular importance that “a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany,” but great consequences often depend upon what appear to us to be very minor matters, and we must not despise the least of the Lord’s people, nor think slightingly of anything that concerns them. When a king or an emperor is ill, the news is published in all the papers; but when a friend of the Lord Jesus, a man “named Lazarus of Bethany,” was sick, that event was recorded in the Bible because of something very remarkable which was to follow that sickness. Lazarus was a son of God, and grace makes greater distinctions than earthly rank and worldly honours ever can make.

[John 11:2-3](#). *(It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.) Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.*

So you see that those whom Jesus loves may be themselves ill, or may have dear ones who are ill; ay, and the illness may be sent by God as a token and testimony of his affection for them. Men polish gems, but they do

not take the trouble to polish common pebbles, and God sends affliction to his own beloved ones for their good and for his own glory.

[John 11:4](#). *When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death,-*

That was not to be the end of it; God had quite another purpose in view in allowing Lazarus to be sick: "This sickness is not unto death,"-

[John 11:4](#). *But for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.*

Jesus knew that Lazarus would die, but he also knew that his death would only be a kind of interlude; the great design of God was not to take Lazarus home at that time, but to glorify his Son in the resurrection of Lazarus from the dead.

[John 11:5](#). *Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.*

Happy was the family at Bethany of which it could be said that all the members of it were dear to Christ. Is it so with your household, Martha? Or is it only Mary who is thus loved? Has Lazarus been left out? Then pray for your brother as these gracious sisters sent to tell Jesus about Lazarus.

[John 11:6](#). *When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was.*

We cannot always understand what our Master does. It seemed a strange thing that, when Jesus heard that Lazarus was sick, he stopped where he was, yet there was a good reason for the delay, Christ was waiting in wisdom and in love. I think I see Mary and Martha, day after day wondering where Jesus could be; perhaps thinking hard thoughts of him, and saying, "He loved us, and he loved our brother, why did he not come directly we sent to him?"

[John 11:7-10](#). *Then after that saith he to his disciples, Let us go into Judaea again. His disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again? Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him.*

Christ felt that his day was not over, and that he could not die before his work was done, and therefore he did not fear the stones cast by unbelieving foes. So, my brother, at all risks go on with your God-given work; you will live through your twelve hours, and you will not live a moment longer. Be so much a believer in predestination that, even if duty calls you to risk your

life, you will bravely do it, knowing that you are in the hands of God, and that your life cannot end until your appointed twelve hours have expired.

[John 11:11](#). *These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth;-*

“Our friend.” Why, Lazarus was Christ’s friend. Yes; but those who are Christ’s friends are our friends too if we belong to Christ. I have recently met with a large number of persons from different countries; but, the moment we discovered that we loved the same Lord, we seemed to be as intimate as if we had been next-door neighbours for the last fifty years.

“Our friend Lazarus sleepeth;”-

[John 11:11-14](#). *But I go, that I may awake him out of sleep. Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. Howbeit Jesus spoke of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep. Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead.*

Let me remind you, my dear brethren who preach the gospel, that you will have to preach very plainly, for you see that even the apostles could not understand a figure of speech. When Christ said, “Our friend Lazarus sleepeth,” they mistook his meaning, so he had to say plainly, “Lazarus is dead.” That is how we must preach the gospel; not only so that our hearers can understand it, but so that they cannot misunderstand it.

[John 11:15-16](#). *And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe, nevertheless let us go unto him. Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellow disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him.*

Thomas always took a dark view of things, so he thought his Master was going to be killed; but he was a brave disciple, for he said to the other disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.” There are still many very timid despondent disciples, but they cling to Christ, and, if necessary, they would die for him, as Thomas was willing to die with him. God bless you, Thomas! There are worse men than you, and not many better.

[John 11:17](#). *Then when Jesus came, he found that he had lain in the grave four days already.*

You know that, in the East, they have to bury the dead almost immediately because of the heat of the climate; so that Lazarus was, not long after he was dead, put away in the family vault.

[John 11:18](#). *Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off:*

An easy walk of somewhere about two miles.

[John 11:19-20](#). *And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother. Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary sat still in the house.*

You will often hear people praising Mary at the expense of Martha, but although Mary is commended for sitting at Christ's feet, Martha here was the first to meet her Lord. The varying characters of different persons come out best at different times. Mary is best at sermon-time, she forgets the cups and the platters, but Martha is the more practical in the time of grief. She is active, and does not give way as Mary does. She is not so contemplative, and not so crushed as Mary is, so she is the first to go to meet her Lord.

[John 11:21](#). *Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.*

There seems to have been just a tinge of reproach in Martha's words, and Mary said exactly the same words to their dear Master and Friend a little later; and I have often heard Martha and Mary talk in this fashion: "Oh, if we had only had another doctor!" or, "If our dear friend had not gone to the seaside;" or, possibly, "If he had gone to the seaside, he might not have died." Well now, beloved friends, you have grief enough in having lost your relative or friend without adding to it by these unwise suppositions about what might have happened if you had done something else. Do not fall into that mistake and wound yourselves and grieve your best friend by unnecessary and useless regrets.

[John 11:22-24](#). *But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee. Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.*

She could not believe the joyful meaning that Christ meant to convey to her when he said, "Thy brother shall rise again."

[John 11:25](#). *Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection,-*

Note that our Lord did not say, "I am he who raiseth the dead;" but, "I am the resurrection,"-

[John 11:25-27](#). *And the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this? She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.*

Will not many of you make Martha's grand confession of faith your own? Believe in Jesus, and then you will be able to believe anything and every thing that he says.

[John 11:28](#). *And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee.*

Martha's title for Christ might be rendered, "The Teacher, The authoritative Teacher," yet I am glad our translators put it "The Master."

[John 11:29](#). *As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly, and came unto him.*

The coming of Christ had such an effect upon her that she arose from amid the ashes of her sorrow, and went out to meet her dear Lord and Master.

[John 11:30-31](#). *Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha met him. The Jews then which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, She goeth unto the grave to weep there.*

It is significant that these mourners did not follow Martha when she went to meet Jesus, but they did follow Mary. Sometimes, sinners who are not converted by listening to one preacher, are blessed by the testimony of two. One sister may not be able to lead her brother to Christ yet God may enable two to do it. Jesus sent out his seventy disciples "two and two," and the apostles are usually mentioned in pairs, -Simon and Andrew, James and John, Phillip and Bartholomew and so on; and we shall find that two Christians can often accomplish what one alone could not do.

[John 11:32-33](#). *Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled,*

His heart was full of sympathy; he felt the grief of these mourners, and sorrowed with them.

[John 11:34-35](#). *And said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept.*

In the original, a very blessed and expressive word is used here concerning Christ's weeping; quite a different word from that used to describe the weeping of Mary and the Jews. It should be a constant comfort to the sorrowing Church of God that "Jesus wept."

[John 11:36-39](#). *Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him! And some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died? Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days.*

“Wilt thou expose that corrupt corpse to the air? “Ah, me! what poor foul creatures we are through the Fall! See what we may, any of us, become in a few days, so that even the one who loves us best will have to say of us, “Bury my dead out of my sight.”

[John 11:40-41](#). *Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God? Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.*

That groaning in spirit was Christ’s prayer to his Father, that inward tumult of his soul was his earnest supplication; and now he thanks his Father that he has heard him. Yet Lazarus was still dead, and lying, a mass of corruption, in the grave. Oh, for faith to bless God for the mercies that are on the way to us!

[John 11:42](#); [John 11:44](#). *And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me. And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave clothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.*

See what wonders our Lord can work, and ask him to work similar miracles in the spiritual realm, and to raise to life those who are dead in trespasses and sins.

Verses 27-46

Our Lord’s greatest miracles were ever the reward of faith.

[John 11:27](#). *She saith unto him, Yea, Lord I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come unto the world.*

By which she as good as said, “I believe that, and I believe everything else. I have an implicit faith in thee. Whatever thou sayest, whatever thou hast said or shalt say, I am prepared to believe it all. for I believe in thee. I

believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.”

[John 11:28](#). *And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly,*

Because she knew that the Jews hated the Saviour, she could not tell what would come of it if they knew of his coming, so she whispers to her:

[John 11:28-30](#). *Saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee. As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly, and came unto him. Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was at that place where Martha met him.*

Their cemeteries were outside the town, and probably the Saviour was near the very grave where Lazarus slept.

[John 11:31-32](#). *The Jews then which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, She goeth unto the grave to weep there. Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died*

Her thought was just the same as the thought of Martha, but she did not say so much as Martha. She never did. Martha had a dialogue with the Saviour, but Mary bowed at his feet.

[John 11:33](#). *When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, and said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord. come and see. Jesus wept. Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him! And some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died? Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave.*

Many have asked why Christ groaned. Why, brethren, it is the way in which he gives life — by his own death. We say sometimes of one who does a great action, “It took so much out of him.” So it did out of the Saviour. He must groan that Mary, and Martha, and Lazarus may rejoice. It is not without the stirring of his very life that he gives life to the dead.

[John 11:38-39](#). *It was a cave and the stone lay upon it. Jesus said, Take ye away the stone, Martha, the sister of him that was dead, said unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days.*

“It were a pity to roll away the stone.”

[John 11:40-41](#). *Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God? Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou has heard me.*

That is grand praying, is it not? Sometimes we ought to say, “Just so.” “Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.”

[John 11:42-44](#). *And I knew that thou hearest me always. but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me. And when he had thus spoken he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave clothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin.*

He probably slipped himself off from the ledge in the tomb upon which he been laid, and there he appeared before them bound so that he could not move farther.

Verses 45-57

Lazarus had been publicly raised from the dead. A great number of persons saw the miracle, and there was never any question about its having been wrought.

[John 11:45-46](#). *Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him. But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done.*

We could hardly have conceived it possible that men would have been guilty of such conduct as this to post off to Christ’s enemies, and lay it as an accusation against him, that he had raised a man from the dead.

[John 11:47-48](#). *Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation.*

They pretended that if Jesus Christ gathered to himself a great party, the Romans would take umbrage at it — pounce upon the whole nation and destroy it, for fear of its revolting from under their sway. A gross falsehood throughout.

[John 11:49-50](#). *And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all. Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, And that the whole nation perish not.*

That was his advice. You are, none of you, up to the mark. You do not handle this thing rightly. Let us kill this man. Let him be put to death — not that he deserves it, but that it is expedient that it should be, lest our nation should be destroyed; and this is the way that governors and kings have been accustomed to think — not “Is it right?” but “Is it expedient “and we may always pray to God that we may have a Government that will do that which is right, and not be guided by the evil direction of that which is expedient. One has well said that if the death of a righteous man would save ten thousand, yet it would be an atrocious thing that he should be put to death unwillingly for the saving of any. The right is, after all, expedient. Yet Caiaphas did not know what he said. He was speaking a great truth.

[John 11:51](#). *And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation:*

He did not understand his own words. He was saying a great deal more than he meant to say — for it was expedient — blessedly expedient — that Jesus should die willingly and of his own accord, giving himself up to death for the sake of his people.

[John 11:52-53](#). *And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death.*

One bold wicked man can often sway the counsels of men who are equally bad, but more cowardly. It had not yet come to this — that they would hurt him to the death; but now they take counsel to put him to death.

[John 11:54](#). *Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews; but went thence unto a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with his disciples.*

We do not find that he wrought miracles there or preached, but in a holy and devout retirement, it may be, he prepared his mind for the last great week — the week of his passion and his death. It is generally best for us to imitate him in this; and when we have some great work to do — something that will need all the grace that we can get, it is well to make a retreat — get into retirement, and school the heart, and seek to drink in fresh strength that we may be prepared for that which lies before us.

[John 11:55-56](#). *And the Jews' passover was nigh at hand: and many went out of the country up to Jerusalem before the passover, to purify themselves. Then sought they for Jesus, and spake among themselves, as they stood in the temple, What think ye, that he will not come to the feast?*

They had heard much of him in the country. Country people coming to town want to hear the great minister — to see the great Prophet: so that is their question, “Will he come to the feast?”

[John 11:57](#). *Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment, that, if any man knew where he were, he should show it, that they might take him.*

They could not deny the miracle: they could arrest and punish the miracle-worker.

[JOHN CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 12

Verses 1-7

[John 12:1-2](#). *Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. There they made him a supper;*

It was in the house of Simon the Leper; a near acquaintance, perhaps a relative of this beloved family, for we find that Martha served, but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him. The two families had coalesced for this festival, and well they might, for one case someone had been healed of leprosy, and in the other case Lazarus had been raised from the dead. It was a holy, happy feast.

[John 12:2-3](#). *And Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him. Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus.*

The other evangelist said “anointed his head.” And they are both right. She anointed his head and his feet.

[John 12:3](#). *And wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment.*

Everybody perceived and enjoyed it, and understood what costly ointment it must be which loads the air with so delicate a perfume.

[John 12:4](#). *Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, which should betray him.*

I wonder whether he was son of that Simon the Leper, and whether a spiritual leprosy did cleave to him. That, we know, was the case.

[John 12:5-6](#). *Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief and had the bag, and bare what was put therein.*

Observe that the sharpest critics of the works of good men are very often no better than they should be. This Judas is indignant with what Mary does, and claims that he cares for the poor, but all the while he is thief. Whenever a man is very quick, condemning gracious men and women, you may be quite as quick in condemning him. He is a Judas usually.

This exposition consisted of readings from [John 8:29-59](#). [Mark 14:1-9](#). [John 12:1-7](#).

Verses 1-8

[John 12:1-2](#). *Then Jesus, six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. There they made him a supper, and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him.*

Martha served: she had not given that up. She was a wondrous housewife, and she did well to keep to her occupation. Lazarus had been dead, and had been raised again. But he was not the center of interest: "He that raised him up was there."

[John 12:3-7](#). *Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief and had the bag, and bare what was put therein. Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this.*

Somebody or other always seemed to object to Mary. If Martha does not do it, Judas will. To be found guilty of excess of love to Christ is such a blessed criminality that I wish we might be executed for it. It were sweet to be put to death for such a crime. It was that that Christ died of. He was found guilty of excess of love.

[John 12:8](#). *For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always.*

It is not every day that you can do something personally and distinctly for Christ himself, and therefore, whenever the occasion serves you be sure to be there to avail yourself of it. True, you can serve him indirectly by

aiding his poor saints. Still, something for him — for him himself — should often be devised as Mary devised this service that day.

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 63.; [Luke 10:38-42](#); and [John 12:1-8](#).

Verses 1-43

[John 12:1](#). *Then Jesus six days before the Passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead.*

The days Christ was to spend upon the earth were getting to be very few so he paid another visit to that Bethany home where he was always so welcome, and more so than ever since he had raised Lazarus from the dead.

[John 12:2-3](#). *There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him. Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.*

All the members of the re-united family were present, Martha busy as usual with the domestic duties which fell to her share, Lazarus in close attendance upon the Master who had wrought so great a miracle upon him, and Mary in her own sweet and gracious way pouring out the wealth of her affection in honour of the Master.

[John 12:4-6](#). *Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein.*

The question of Judas was a most unworthy one, but the motive that prompted the question was worse still. Little did he care for the poor; but if he could have had the selling of that very costly ointment of spikenard, he would have made that an opportunity of enriching himself.

[John 12:7-8](#). *Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this. For the poor always ye have with you: but me ye have not always.*

Christ was himself ever caring for the poor, so he would not discourage any effort on their behalf, but just then, one of his most devoted disciples desired to render to him special honour, and he would not let her be rebuked; but on the contrary, he pointed out the deep symbolical meaning of her loving action.

[John 12:9](#). *Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there: and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead.*

Their curiosity was but natural, for few of them could have seen anyone who had been raised from the dead. It is well when a saved soul, who has been spiritually raised from the dead, becomes a center of attraction together with the Lord who has wrought such a miracle of mercy upon him.

[John 12:10-11](#). *But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death; Because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus.*

They would have committed a double murder if it had been possible, and would have put to death both Jesus and Lazarus, who was a living witness to the wonder-working power of the Christ whom they would not receive as the promised Messiah. When men hate Christ, they also hate those whom he has blessed, and will go to any lengths in seeking to silence their testimony.

[John 12:12-13](#). *On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, Took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord.*

It is significant that John is the only one of the four Evangelists who mentions the palm fronds that were carried by the people in this triumphal procession in honour of Christ, and it was to John that the vision was given of the “great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues,” who “stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands, and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.”

[John 12:14-16](#). *And Jesus, when he had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written, Fear not, daughter of Zion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt. These things understood not his disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him.*

It is strange that Christ's own disciples did not at once remember this plain prophecy when it was so literally fulfilled, yet, before we condemn them, let us recollect how “slow of heart” we also have been “to believe all that the prophets have spoken.”

[John 12:17](#). *The people therefore that was with him when he called Lazarus out of his grave, and raised him from the dead, bare record.*

They could not help testifying in his favor after they had seen him work such a notable miracle as the raising of Lazarus from the dead.

[John 12:18-19](#). *For this cause the people also met him, for that they heard that he had done this miracle. The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? Behold, the world is gone after him.*

When they saw our Lord riding in state through the streets, and the people waving palm branches and shouting in his honour, they said, "The world is gone after him." That was only very partially true, and for a very short time; but the day will come when the whole world shall go after him Christ's divine attractions shall be felt throughout the earth, and all the Pharisees then in the world will not be able to prevent the people from going after him; and-

"Come what may To stand in the way That day the world shall see."

[John 12:20-21](#). *And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast: The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus.*

They were proselytes, who had learned to worship Jehovah. Something more than mere curiosity must have moved them to want to see Jesus. Having heard of his raising the dead, they had a desire, and a very proper desire, to know more of him, so they asked to be introduced to him by one who, though not a Greek, had a Greek name, and who may therefore have served as a kind of bridge for these Greeks to reach the Saviour.

[John 12:22-23](#). *Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus. And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified.*

Christ's passion and death were getting very near when these Gentiles came to him, and he saw, in that company of Greeks, the vanguard of that great army that shall yet come to him out of every nation under heaven. In the prospect of that great ingathering, he looked beyond the impending shame and suffering, and spoke even of the hour of his death as the time when he should be glorified.

[John 12:24](#). *Verily, verily, I say unto you. Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.*

This was Christ's way to glory, and it must be our way to glory too. The grain of wheat must fall into the ground, and die, or else it cannot bring forth fruit. Just so must it be with you and with me, and in proportion as we learn to die to self we shall live to the glory of God.

[John 12:25](#). *He that loveth his life shall lose it.*

If you keep yourself to yourself, you will lose yourself.

[John 12:25](#). *And he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.*

Brethren and sisters in Christ, if we are really to glorify Christ on the earth, we must be willing to lose our reputation, our good name, our comfort, and indeed everything that we have, for Christ's sake. This is the only way truly to live. If, for your own sake, you begin to keep back anything from Christ, that is the way to die. You would then be like the grain of wheat that is laid by, and preserved, and which, therefore, can never grow or multiply. Surrender yourself; be willing to be nothing; be willing to die if only the truth may live. Care nothing about honour and glory for yourself; care only about the honour and glory of your Master. Learn the meaning of the Master's paradox. As you bury yourself, you will multiply yourself. As you are put out of sight, like a grain of wheat that is sown in the ground, you have your only opportunity of growth and increase; heavily-laden ears of corn shall spring up from the grain which has been buried in the earth.

[John 12:26-28](#). *If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my father honour. Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name.*

In the 27th verse, our Saviour asked himself the question, "What shall I say?" here he gives his own answer, "Father, glorify thy name." When you know not what to pray for, you can always safely pray, "Father, glorify thy name." As you stand where the cross-roads meet, and you ask, "Which way shall I choose?" pray, "Father, glorify thy name." This incident seems like a rehearsal of Christ's passion. Here we see that natural fear of death which came across the Saviour's mind because he was so really and truly man. If his pains had not been real pains, but had been pleasant and congenial to him, there would have been no self-sacrifice in his suffering; but the fact that they cast upon his spirit the dark shadow of death only proves to us

what sharp pains they were; but instead of asking for a way of escape from them, he surrendered himself to them, gave himself up as a willing victim with this prayer upon his lips, "Father, glorify thy name." And now see what happened.

[John 12:28-29](#). *Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again. The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to him.*

This was one of the three occasions on which testimony was openly borne to Christ by his Father; first at his baptism, then at his transfiguration, and now here at the rehearsal of his great sacrifice. We learn, from this narrative, that the voice of God is not understood by everybody. Some of those that stood by said that it thundered, and others said that an angel spake to him. It is necessary that you should be a child of God if you are to know your Father's voice. Though God is speaking, at this moment in the clearest tones, none will recognize his voice, or understand his words, but those who are taught by his Holy Spirit.

[John 12:30-31](#). *Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes. Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out.*

See how the eye of faith reads things differently from the eye of sense. You and I would have said, "Now is Christ coming to his lowest point. Now is his name to be cast out from among men, and his cause to be crushed as the result of his death." But Christ reads the signs of the times very differently. "Now," saith he, "in the hour of my shame, and suffering, and death, is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out." It was only by Christ being apparently conquered that Satan could be really vanquished, and there is often no way of victory for a saint except through defeat. When self is slain, then do we truly live.

[John 12:32-33](#). *And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die.*

The Pharisees said, "The world is gone after him;" but Jesus says, "No not while I am riding in state through the streets of Jerusalem; but when I am lifted up, and hung upon the cross, then shall it indeed be true, 'I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.'" The crucified Christ of Calvary is the mighty magnet that is to attract multitudes of trembling, doubting, ruined sinners, who by grace shall be drawn unto him, and find eternal life in him.

[John 12:34-35](#). *The people answered him, We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever: and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? who is this Son of man? Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth.*

What a sad condition to be in, not to know where you are going! Are there not some of you, whom I am now addressing, who do not know where you are going? Yet, if you would but take the trouble to look, you might easily know that, so long as you continue in the paths of sin, you are going down to the chambers of death. Oh, that God's Holy Spirit would give you sufficient light to enable you to see where you are going! You surely do not want to take "a leap in the dark." Oh, that you may have the grace to turn from the downward way, and to seek the heavenward road!

[John 12:36-41](#). *While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them. But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.*

You know that wonderful sixth chapter of Isaiah's prophecy, and you know how wonderfully he has spoken there of the glory of Christ; but what a terrible thing it is that even Christ should be driven to blind men's eyes, to take the light away from them because they proved themselves unworthy of it! May that never be the case with any of us; but while we may see, let us see; and may God give us more light!

[John 12:42-43](#). *Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.*

What a shameful thing that was! Yet you will still find that there are many persons who, even though they believe the truth, dare not own it, but must hide in obscurity until the times grow easier. However, Christ's death fetched out many who had been his disciples in secret. Joseph of

Arimathaea and Nicodemus could not keep in the background any longer and, doubtless, the thoughts of many other hearts were then revealed.

Verses 12-36

[John 12:12-15](#). *On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, Took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord. And Jesus, when he had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written, Fear not, daughter of Zion · behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt.*

Even in the little glory of a temporal kind, which was given to the Lord Jesus Christ when he was “here among men” as Mrs. Luke’s hymn puts it, his humility and meekness were very manifest, thus fulfilling the prophecy recorded in [Zechariah 9:9](#) : “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee; he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.” Oh, that all his people would always be of such a lowly spirit, not seeking great things for themselves, but condescending to men of low estate, remembering that it was their Master who said to his disciples, “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls.”

[John 12:16](#). *These things understood not his disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him.*

I wonder whether, when Christ comes back to earth, in the glory of his Father with the holy angels, we also shall not understand a great many things which are complete mysteries to us now. Peradventure, it will be said of us then, “These things understood not his disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him.” That first glory of his ascension to heaven shed a flood of light upon the life of Christ, as doubtless the greater glory of his second advent will shed a yet brighter light upon our understanding of the things of Christ which quite surpass our comprehension now.

[John 12:17-19](#). *The people therefore that was with him when he called Lazarus out of his grave, and raised him from the dead, bare record. For this cause the people also met him, for that they heard that he had done this*

miracle. The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold, the world is gone after him.

No doubt many of his disciples thought so too, yet how mistaken were both the friends and the foes of Christ, for you recollect, brothers and sisters, that Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem was followed, within less than a week, by a far different scene, when the same crowd that cried "Hosanna!" shouted "Away with him, away with him, crucify him!" The world, that was supposed to have gone after him, nailed him to the cross; so short-lived is human popularity. So short-lived also is the admiration of Christ by carnal minds, for they do admire him after a fashion, they cannot help doing so. There have been written lives of Christ, which have been full of admiration of him, yet equally full of opposition to his Deity. We must not always regard it as an encouraging sign when men praise Christ; for very soon, if the root of the matter be not in them, and they do not accept him as their Lord and Master, they will change their note, and instead of "Hosanna!" it will be "Away with him, crucify him!"

[John 12:20-21](#). *And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast: The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir we would see Jesus.*

I do not know why these Greeks went to Philip, who was of Bethsaida of Galilee, unless it was because he had a Greek name. Yet Andrew and Peter also had Greek names. If I went to Paris, and wanted to see the President, and knew that there was somebody in the cabinet who had an English name, I should probably say, "Well, either he is an Englishman, or he comes of English parentage, so he may take an interest in me, and get me the introduction I want." Perhaps that was the reason why these Greeks came to Philip. I cannot think of any other; but I know that, if you want to get to Christ, you will always find some way of doing it, and that the reason why so many people do not get to him, is because they do not want to do so. You may all come to Jesus Christ if you will. But, alas! until his grace controls it, and changes it, your will inclines you to stay further away from Christ rather than to come to him.

[John 12:22](#). *Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus.*

Andrew and Philip appear to have been staunch friends and fellow-labourers; and it is always well when Christian men can work for Christ with congenial companions. My poor perplexed brother, if you cannot get

to Jesus Christ by yourself, it will be a good thing for you to say to some Philip, “Sir, I would see Jesus.” Perhaps Philip will tell his friend Andrew, and then Philip and Andrew will go together, and tell Jesus, and so you will get to him. It is a great help in prayer, when you are yourself unable to pray, to get someone, whom you know to be a Christian, and who has sympathy with you, to come and pray with you.

[John 12:23-24](#). *And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, —*

“Amen, amen,” —

[John 12:24-25](#). *I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit He that loveth his life shall lose it;*

Or, as it should be rendered, “He that loves his life loses it “ That is not the true way to live; and in his selfish attempt to live to himself, he is losing his life.

[John 12:25-26](#). *And he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me;*

The best service you can render to Christ is to imitate him. If you want to do what will please him do as he did.

[John 12:26](#). *And where I am, there shall also my servant be:*

You cannot expect better lodgings than that; so, as Christ had to live here amid sorrow, and sin, and shame, you must be willing to do the same; but, as Christ was afterwards exalted to indescribable honour, so shall it be with you if you are his true servant

[John 12:26](#). *If any man serve me, him will my Father honour.*

For such is the Father’s love to his Son, that he delights to honour all those who become his Son’s faithful servants.

[John 12:27](#). *Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour.*

There was a conflict in the Saviour’s heart, — the weakness of his true manhood — striving with the strength of his infinite affection to his people, and also to his Father. We must never forget that He “was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” If it had been no pain to him to die as the Substitute for sinners, there would have been no atoning sacrifice in his death; and if no dread had overtaken him at the thought of death, it would have proved that he did not die as we do; and, therefore, he would not have been able to take our place as he did. Notice how the Saviour

speaks of the struggle that was going on in his soul. “What shall I say?” Do you ever have to ask that question when you are trying to pray? If so, do not be astonished, for even your Lord and Master said the same. “What shall I say?” — as if he paused to consider what form his prayer should take, — “shall I say, Father save me from this hour? No; but I will say, For this cause came I unto this hour.”

[John 12:28](#). *Father, glorify thy name.*

That is a grand answer to the Saviour’s question, “What shall I say?” And, when you do not know how to pray, you may always present that petition, “Father, glorify thy name.” You have some dear one at home very ill; you would be glad if the precious life might be spared, yet you are not sure whether you may ask for it? Well then, say, “Father, glorify thy name.” Possibly, you are passing through a great trial, and you would be glad to escape from it; yet you do not know whether it is the divine will that you should do so. Well then, you may, at any rate, put up this prayer, “‘Father, glorify thy name.’ Whatever is most for thy glory, let that be my will as it is thy will.”

[John 12:28](#) *Then came there a voice from heaven, —*

An audible voice, for those who stood by could hear it: “There came a voice from heaven,” —

[John 12:28-30](#). *Saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again. The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to him. Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes.*

“You needed to be strengthened as to the divine character and authority of my mission; you required to be comforted with the full assurance that I shall indeed be glorifying my Father even when I die upon the cross of Calvary.”

[John 12:31](#). *Now is the judgment of this world:*

This is a wonderful sentence, — as if, in Christ’s death, the world was judged, and condemned; and so it was; nothing ever so convicted the world of high treason against God as when men said of the Lord Jesus Christ, God’s well-beloved Son, “This is the Heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours.” The shedding of the blood of Christ upon the cross is the crimson evidence of the deep transgression of human nature: “Now is the judgment of this world.” There is another rendering of this text, retaining the Greek word, “Now is the crisis of this world

[John 12:31](#). *Now shall the prince of this world be cast out.*

Thank God for that! His throne was shaken to its fall when Christ died on Calvary. All the powers of darkness suffered eternal defeat in the hour that men and devils fancied they had gained the victory.

[John 12:32-33](#). *And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die.*

Yet they did not understand it, even then, clear as it now appears to us that he spake concerning his lifting up upon the cross.

[John 12:34-36](#). *The people answered him, We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever: and how sayeth thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? who is this Son of man? Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them.*

Verses 19-43

Our Lord raised Lazarus from the dead; and this miracle made a great sensation among the people. They came to meet Jesus, waving palm branches before him, and all Jerusalem was on a stir.

[John 12:19-22](#). *The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold, the world is gone after him. And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast: The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus. Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus.*

These were probably Gentiles, who were staying at Jerusalem; perhaps, proselytes who had come up to the feast. They were touched by the common feeling; they desired to see this wonderful Man who had raised to life one who had been dead four days. They proceeded courteously; they went to one of Christ's disciples who, coming from Galilee of the Gentiles, would be likely to sympathize with them, and they sought an introduction to Jesus. This Philip obtained for them with the help of Andrew.

[John 12:23](#). *And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.*

He knew that the hour was come when he must die. Looking through the dark glass of death, he saw what its result would be, and he called it glory.

These few Greeks were the advance guard of the great Gentile army of the Lord; he regarded their coming in that sense.

[John 12:24](#). *Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.*

Telling them that the source of his glory would be his death. The reason why the people would hear of him, and come to him, was that he would be hanged on the cross. The grain of wheat, when put into the ground, if it remains as it is, will never increase; it must die if it is to bring forth fruit. What is death? The end of existence? None but thoughtless persons imagine that. Death is the resolution of any living substance into its primary elements. It is the division of the soul from the body; originally, it was the division of the soul from God. In a grain of wheat, death is the separation of the particles of which it is composed, that the life-germ may feed upon that which was provided for it. "If it die," in the true sense of the word, in being separated into its constituent elements, then "it bringeth forth much fruit." Christ's way to glory was through the grave he must go down that he might mount to the throne.

[John 12:25](#). *He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.*

Live for this world, and you shall lose this world and the next, too; live for the world to come, and you shall in the highest sense gain both worlds.

[John 12:26](#). *If any man serve me, let him follow me;*

That is the best kind of service; to do what Christ did, and to do what Christ bids you do: "If any man serve me, let him follow me."

[John 12:26](#). *And where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.*

Follow Christ, then, to the cross; follow him to the grave; follow him in his humiliation; and then the Father will honour you even as he honoured his Son.

[John 12:27](#). *Now is my soul troubled;*

Or, puzzled. This hour of his glory was the hour of his passion, too.

[John 12:27](#). *And what shall I say?*

Such sorrow was in his heart that he asked, "What shall I say?" Great trouble brings astonishment, amazement, bewilderment with it; and the human soul of Christ felt as ours feels when in great agony.

[John 12:27](#). *Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour.*

Nature suggests the cry, “Father, save me from this hour.” Grace comes behind the flesh, being a little slower to speak; but it corrects the errors of the flesh, and says, “For this cause came I unto this hour.”

[John 12:28](#). *Father, glorify thy name.*

What a prayer! Jesus swallows up his temptation to escape the cup by this all-absorbing petition, “Father, glorify thy name.”

[John 12:28-29](#). *Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again. The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered:*

They only heard the sound, and it was like thunder in their ears.

[John 12:29](#). *Others said, An angel spoke to him.*

They distinguished the sound of some one speaking; but they did not recognize the voice of God.

[John 12:30](#). *Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes.*

“To make you believe that God is with me, and that I am his Son.”

[John 12:31-34](#). *Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die. The people answered him, We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever: and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? who is this Son of man?*

As if it could not be true that Christ, in his divine nature, abides for ever, and yet, as Man, could be lifted up to die. It was a sneering question, “Who is this Son of man?” Our Lord did not answer it, thus teaching us that some people are not worth answering. Instead of replying to their question, Jesus gave them a practical admonition.

[John 12:35-36](#). *Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them.*

When people determine to reject Christ, he leaves them; why should he tarry where he is rejected? He “departed, and did hide himself.”

[John 12:37-41](#). *But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him; That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.*

Christ is in the Old Testament in many places where, as yet, even we have never seen him. I doubt not that he lies hidden away in many a Psalm, and many a prophetic utterance that has not yet been fully expounded, or even comprehended by our finite minds. Oh, for eyes to see him where he sits in his ancient state: What a solemn fact this is, though, that God does allow men to be given over to blindness of eyes and hardness of heart! I sometimes fear that it is so with this age. Men will not see; they will not believe; they are desperately set on skepticism. It has become a fashion with them. Like a torrent, it sweeps through the very churches that bear the name of Christ. My fear is God in his wrath may give up our land to this curse, and then where will our hope be?

[John 12:42-43](#). *Nevertheless among the chief riders also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the praise of men more than, the praise of God.*

I wonder whether in this throng there are any of this kind, who do believe in Christ, and yet never come out and confess him because they love the praise of men more than the praise of God. If so, I venture to say that they are found among what are called the more respectable people, the men of light and leading, the chief rulers. Among the common people there is very little of this evil. They will generally confess what they believe, and bravely come forward to declare that they belong to Christ. It is the chief rulers, the gentlemen of the Sanhedrim, who, if they believe in Christ in their hearts, do not confess him, lest they should be put out of society, for they love the praise of men more than the praise of God.

Verses 20-41

Our Lord had raised Lazarus from the dead, and this miracle had excited great attention in Jerusalem. In consequence of this, the people had led him

in triumph through the streets, and everywhere there was great excitement. Everybody was speaking of the wonderful miracle which he had wrought.

[John 12:20-21](#). *And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast: the same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus.*

There is no doubt that these men were Gentiles, — probably proselytes. They had come up to worship at the feast, and their curiosity had been excited, and their interest had been awakened, by what they had seen and heard about Jesus. There appears to have been at least some measure of reverence for him in their minds. Hence they addressed one of his disciples, whose purely Greek name may lead us to suppose that he had some Greek relatives. They said to Philip, “Sir, we would see Jesus.”

[John 12:22-23](#). *Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus. And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.*

They did not expect him to say that. Surely, the coming of a few Greeks to see him was not very much in the way of glorification. But, to him, the coming of these Greeks was a sort of prophecy of the myriads of other Gentiles who would, by-and-by, come to his feet; and, therefore, he looked forward to that death which should be the means of their salvation. Christ came into the world to preach the gospel, but he came on a greater errand than that, namely, to provide a gospel that could be preached; and he knew that the time was approaching when he must provide that gospel by dying upon the cross. See how he proceeds: —

[John 12:24](#). *Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.*

The preservation of the corn is the prevention of its increase; but the putting of it into the ground, the losing of it, the burial of it, is the very means of its multiplication. So our Lord Jesus Christ must not care for himself, and he did not. He surrendered himself to all the ignominy of the death of the cross, he died, and was buried in the heart of the earth, but he sprang up again from the grave, and ever since then myriads have come to him through his death, even as these Greeks came to him in his life. Now, as it was with Christ, so is it to be with us; at least, in our measure.

[John 12:26](#). *He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in, this world shall keep it unto life eternal.*

His love is ruinous to his true life; but to destroy self-love, to make a sacrifice of ourselves, is the truest way really to preserve ourselves.

[John 12:26-27](#). *If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour. Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour.*

This seems to be a sort of rehearsal of the dread scene soon to be enacted in Gethsemane. At the sight of these Greeks, our Saviour seems to have been led specially to think, as we have already said, of that death by which they, and multitudes like them were to be redeemed. Thinking of it, he enters so fully into it, by a sort of foretaste, that he feels something of the same shiver and throes of anguish which came upon him in Gethsemane. He seems to say here, “Father, save me from this hour,” just as he said there, “If it be possible, let this cup pass from me.” Yet he says here, “But for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name,” — just as he afterwards said in the garden, “Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.”

[John 12:28-29](#). *Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again. The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, an angel spake to him.*

This was the third time that mysterious voice had been heard; — first, at his baptism; the second time, on the Mount of Transfiguration; and, now a few days before he died upon the cross. The voice of God had been heard on a much earlier occasion, — at Sinai; and then it was attended with thunder, as it was here. Those who had not ears to understand the voice of God only perceived the loudness of its thunder peals; but there were others, like John himself, who understood what the Lord said: “I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.”

[John 12:30-31](#). *Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of me but for your sakes. Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.*

The old Roman empire seemed to stand as fast as the eternal hills, but God had come to judge the whole state of affairs as it was then in the world; and, inasmuch as Christ the pure and perfect Son of God was condemned to die, that action condemned the society of that period. Yea, the whole of the ungodly world, in taking its part in crucifying Christ, bore evidence against itself, and pronounced sentence upon itself as being guilty of the death of

the Christ of God. “Now shall the prince of this world be cast out.” The overthrow of the usurper began from that time, and that overthrow of the devil is still going on; and, blessed be God, it will reach its completion one of these days, and we shall yet rejoice in a new heaven, and a new earth, on which the trail of the serpent shall never be traced.

[John 12:32](#). *And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.*

Christ on the cross draws all men up to himself. I have heard this text quoted as if it referred to Christ being extolled in preaching. Well, it is true that, when Christ is lifted up in the ministry, there is an attractive power; but that is not the first meaning of the text. Let us read on: —

[John 12:33](#). *This he said, signifying what death he should die.*

He alluded to his crucifixion, which is the great attractive center of mankind.

[John 12:34-35](#). *The people answered him, We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever: and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? who is this Son of man? Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light.*

It is always well to use the light that we already have. If any man will use the light he already has, God will be sure to give him more. That is a good saying of an old Puritan, “If thou hast starlight, thank God for it, and he will give thee moonlight; and when thou hast moonlight, give thanks to God for it, and he will give thee sunlight.” And so it shall be. Nothing is worse than sinning against light. If it is only the light of conscience, even if you know it is not perfect, yet, nevertheless, never sin against it; for, if you do—you will quench it, and to quench the light you have, is the way to effectually prevent your having any more: “While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light.”

[John 12:36-41](#). *These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them. But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with*

their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.

There is such a thing as judicial blindness. If men can see, and yet will not see, God is at last so provoked by their wickedness that he takes away the light altogether, and removes from them the very faculty of sight. It is not surprising that it should be so, for it was so with the generation in which Christ lived. They had so long rejected the true prophet, — so long refused to listen to the voice of God, that, at last, he abandoned them to their own ways; and nothing worse can happen to a man than to be abandoned of God. If God casts thee off, thou art lost indeed.

Verses 20-50

Our Lord had gained a sudden popularity through raising Lazarus from the dead, and the people had attended him with great enthusiasm as he rode through the streets of Jerusalem. For the time, things looked very bright with him, but he knew that he was soon to suffer and to die, and the overshadowing of that great eclipse was already upon his heart. Note how he looked forward to it, and how he spake concerning it.

[John 12:20-22](#) *And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast: The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus. Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus.*

Probably these persons were proselytes to the Jewish faith. They had renounced their idols, and they had come to worship the only true God; and now they had a wish to see Jesus,—not out of idle curiosity, but because they felt a certain degree of respect for him. They wanted to know more of his teaching, and to learn whether he was indeed the promised Messiah. The disciples encouraged these seekers; they would not have brought mere curiosity-mongers to their Master, but they saw that there was something better in these Greeks; so they consulted together, and their opinion was that they must tell Jesus about them.

[John 12:23](#). *And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour has come that the Son of man should be glorified.*

He was about to die, yet he speaks of his death as being glorified. For the joy that was set before him, he seems to overlook the intervening humiliation in the prospect of the glory that would come of it through the salvation of multitudes of strangers from the very ends of the earth. He looks on these Greeks as the vanguard of a great army of Gentiles who

would continue to come to him, and pay him homage. Hear what he says next:-

[John 12:24](#). *Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.*

He knew that he must die, for his living, and preaching, and miracle working would never produce such results as his death would accomplish. He must go down into the ground, out of sight, and there must lie like a buried grain of wheat, that out of him there might spring a great harvest to the glory of God; and these Greeks were like a first handful, a wavesheaf unto God, a promise of the great harvest that would be the result of his death: "If it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

[John 12:25-26](#). *He that loveth his life shall lose it: and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.*

It is an honour to be allowed to serve Christ, but God will bestow still further honour upon those who faithfully serve him.

[John 12:27-29](#). *Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again. The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to him.*

How ready they were to find an explanation for that "voice from heaven" which they could not comprehend! Some "said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to him." But here is Christ's own interpretation of the mystery:--

[John 12:30-31](#). *Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes. Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.*

Satan may have thought that he had triumphed when Christ was crucified, but that death upon the cross was the death-blow to the devil's usurpation.

[John 12:32-33](#). *And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die.*

There is no magnet like the death of Christ. He is able still to draw men unto him because of the attractive force of his atoning sacrifice.

[John 12:34-36](#). *The people answered him, We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever: and how sayest thou, the Son of man must be lifted up? who is this Son of man? Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them.*

At first sight, this may not seem to have been an answer to their question, “Who is this Son of man?” Yet it was a very direct answer, for he was “the Light of the world;” and as the light was soon to be withdrawn from them, there was all the greater need of Christ’s injunctions, “Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you.. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light.”

[John 12:37-41](#). *But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.*

Isaiah was sent upon a painful errand, to tell the people that they should hear, but they should not understand; that they should see, but they should not perceive; and so it happened to Israel as a nation, and to this day Israel rejects the true Messiah. Oh, that none of us may imitate their evil example by negligence and contempt of the revelation of God, lest after playing with Scripture, and trifling with the Christ of God, the Lord should at last in anger declare that we should see, but should not perceive, that we should hear, but should not understand.

[John 12:42-43](#). *Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.*

Are there any here who believe in Christ, but who have never confessed him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue, and lose the praise of men? Are you afraid of your family, your father, or your husband; or is there some friend who would be angry with you if you confessed Christ? If

so, be no longer such a coward, I pray you, but come out boldly, and confess him who will not be ashamed to confess you before his Father and the holy angels.

[John 12:44-50](#). *Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me. I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness. And if any man hear my word, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken of myself, but thy Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.*

Verses 37-50

[John 12:37](#). *But though he had done so many miracles before then, yet they believed not on him.*

They had an opportunity of seeing with their eyes; what the Christ could do. He had even raised the dead in the midst of them, and yet this is the sorrowful statement.

[John 12:38-40](#). *That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.*

This passage is very frequently quoted in the Old Testament: it was so exceedingly apropos to the condition of the unbelieving Jews. They were wilfully blinded. They could see it; they were forced to hear it; there was much that even touched their hearts; but they hardened their heart against it, and to this day they remain the same.

[John 12:41-43](#). *These things said Esaias, when he was his glory, and spake of him. Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.*

And this is a common disease to this day. There are many who know the truth, who, nevertheless, keep very quiet about it. They do not like to be despised; they cannot endure to seem to be separate from their fellowmen; it is not respectable to be decided for Christ, and to come out from among them, so they love the praise of men more than the praise of God.

[John 12:44](#). *Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me.*

Faith in Christ is faith in God, he that trusts the Son hath accepted the witness of the Father.

[John 12:45](#). *And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me.*

Wonderful expression. Perhaps, we never fully realize it. Christ is seeable. God is not, but when we see the Christ, we do virtually see all of God that we may desire to see: the Invisible hath made himself visible in Christ — in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

[John 12:46](#). *I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness.*

True faith in Christ sheds light on everything concerning which light is desirable. You shall understand things when you have come unto the right standpoint, when you have gotten to believe in Christ. I wonder not that those who doubt concerning him, doubt about everything; if they will not have this light, how shall they see?

[John 12:47](#). *And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for came not to judge the world, but to save the world.*

Under this present dispensation, it is not the time of judgment. The Lord leaves you that are unbelievers to yourselves. He does not come as yet to judge you; there is a second coming, when he will be both judge and witness, and condemner, of those who have rejected him; but at present it is a dispensation of pure mercy. “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him.” There is a great God above who reckons this to be among the greatest of all human crimes, that they reject his Son. We speak of unbelief very lightly, and there are some who trifle with it as if it had no moral quality at all, but God doth not so.

[John 12:48](#). *He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.*

Look, ye, to that, the gospel which you refuse will judge you at the last day. We know that the Lord Jesus Christ shall judge the world, saith Paul,

“according to my gospel,” and he that sins against the gospel of love will certainly involve himself in the most solemn condemnation. He perishes that sins against the law, he dieth without mercy at the mouth of one or two witnesses. Of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy that sins against love, and rejects the Saviour?

[John 12:49](#). *For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak.*

God at the back of Christ. Omnipotence supporting love. The expostulations of Christ, not left to our will to do as we like with them, but solemnly sanctioned by the royalties of God, so that to refute them is treason against the majesty of heaven.

[John 12:50](#). *And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.*

The eternal authority of God is at the back of the testimony of Christ. Oh! that men would not be so unwise as to reject it Now in our reading at the 41st verse we met with these words: “These things, said Esaias, when he saw his glory and spake of him.” Now let us read the passage which gives us an account of Isaiah’s seeing the glory of Christ.

This exposition consisted of readings from [John 12:37-50](#); Isaiah 6. [John 12:37-50](#).

[JOHN CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 13

Verses 1-17

[John 13:1](#). *Now before the feast of the passover, —*
Or, just as it was about to begin, —

[John 13:1](#). *When Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.*

That is a very beautiful description of Christ’s death: “His hour was that he should depart out of this world unto the Father,” — just as though he was merely going on a journey, leaving one land for another; and if this be a fair description of such a stormy passage as that of our Lord Jesus, who died for our sins upon Calvary’s cross, it must with equal truth describe the death of

any of the children of God. There is also an appointed time for us to depart, and to be with Christ which is far better than remaining here. The loosing of the cable, the spreading of the sail, the crossing over the narrow sea, the coming to the eternal haven, and the abiding there, — what Christian heart needs to dread this? How much better is it even to look forward to it with ardent anticipation! Think much of the abiding love of Christ: “Having loved his own” — his by election, his by redemption, for he regarded that as already done which was about to be accomplished, — “Having loved his own which were in the world,” — not yet in heaven, but still in the midst of trial, still imperfect, even as you and I are, — “ he loved them unto the end,” or “unto the perfection,” as it might be rendered. The Alpha of his love, which we find in eternity, bids us believe that we shall find the Omega of it nowhere but there.

[John 13:2-4](#). *And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, to betray him; Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself.*

Notice the wonderful contrast revealed to us in these verses. Our Lord Jesus Christ had a very vivid realization that he had come from God, and was going back to God, and that all things had been given into his hand; yet, while he knew that, and had a more than ordinary consciousness of his own dignified nature and position, he condescended to wash his disciples feet. Though many years elapsed between the event and the time when John recorded it, all the details seem to have been still present in his memory so that he distinctly mentions each separate act: “he riseth from supper, and layeth aside his upper garment, and taketh a towel, and girdeth himself.”

[John 13:5](#). *After that he poureth water into a bason,*

The one that ordinarily stood in the guest-chamber for the washing of the hands and feet of the guests.

[John 13:5-6](#). *And began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet?*

You must lay the stress on the pronouns in order to get the full force of the original. “Lord, dost THOU wash my feet?” The contrast is between Peter’s Master and himself.

[John 13:7-8](#). *Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter. Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet.*

That is, Never, as long as I live, shalt thou do such a thing as that.”

[John 13:8-10](#). *Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all.*

We have often, in commenting, noticed Peter’s fault; perhaps we have noticed that too much. Let us now notice Peter’s excellence. I admire his humility in thinking it too mean an office for Christ to wash his feet; it seems to me to be a most proper feeling which prompted him to ask, “Dost thou wash my feet?” It seemed an overwhelming condescension of love which he could scarcely permit. No doubt he spoke too positively when he said to Christ “Thou shalt never wash my feet;” but, still, his motive in speaking thus was a good one. It was because he could not allow his Lord to stoop so low; he thought it ill manners to permit such an one as Christ to wash the feet of such an one as the poor fisherman, Peter. I have already said that there was something that was not right, and yet that was perfectly natural to this “rock” disciple, and this “dove” disciple, who was such a strange mixture of boastfulness and fickleness, yet do not forget how much good there was in him. I wish all of us were half as good as Peter. That was a grand utterance, “Wash not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.” He meant, “Lord, let me have all the cleansing I can, not only such as the washing of my feet would bring, but such as the washing of my head and my hands also would bring. Let me be clear of everything which would prevent full fellowship with thee, for I long to be one with thee altogether.” Then our Saviour meekly, gently, quietly explained that there was no need for the washing of his head and his hands, for his whole being had already been renewed by the one great act of regeneration; and as he had been cleansed from sin by the free gift of pardon at the time when he first believed, there was no need of any repetition of the spiritual bathing, all that was required was the washing of his feet, — a beautiful distinction always to be observed. He that believeth in Christ is fully forgiven. He is like a man who has gone into the bath, and washed, but, when he steps out of the bath, and put his foot on the ground, he often soils it, so that, before he robes himself, he needs to wash his feet again. That is our condition as

believers in Jesus; we are washed in his precious blood, and are whiter than snow; but these feet of ours constantly touch this defiling earth, so they need every day to be washed. Christ our Lord Jesus said to Peter, “He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all.”

[John 13:11](#). *For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean.*

They were all washed so far as their feet were concerned, but not all of them had been cleansed in the saved bath which removes the stains of sin.

[John 13:12-17](#). *So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know, ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, you Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.*

Blessed are they who, when they understand the meaning of Christ's example, imitate it in their own lives.

Verses 1-19

[John 13:1](#). *Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.*

Our Lord Jesus Christ had a clear foresight of all he had to endure. Future things are happily hidden from our eyes. We do not even know the moment when we shall die, nor how it will be. It is well that it is so but our Lord was able to anticipate his sufferings, by knowing all about them: “Jesus knew that his hour was come.” It was all appointed, and nothing happens to any of us by accident, chance is banished from the believer's creed. There is an appointed “hour” for each one of us, and it will come in due season. “Jesus knew that his hour was come, that he should depart out of the world unto the Father.” What a beautiful way of describing death! Christ's death was certainly a more trying one than ours will be, so that this description may apply to ours as well as to his.

[John 13:2](#). *And supper being ended,*

I suppose that was the Paschal supper.

[John 13:2](#). *The devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him;*

What a horrible purpose for Satan to put into the heart of Judas even in the presence of Jesus! I hope that the devil will not put any such purpose into your hearts or into mine while we are in this house of prayer, but no place is sacred from his intrusion, he will come in anywhere. Even where Christ himself is at the head of the table, Judas may be sitting at that same table, and Satan may then and there put into his heart the horrible purpose of betraying his Master.

[John 13:3-4](#). *Jesus knowing that the Father given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God, He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself.*

Notice those words, "Jesus knowing,... he took a towel, and girded himself." If he had not known how great he was, there would not have been such condescension in his action, but he knew who he was, and what the Father had entrusted to him: "The Father had given all things into his hands." You might suppose that he would rise up, in a very dignified manner, and put on a purple robe and a golden girdle, but, instead of that, he rose from the supper table, laid aside his garments, and took a towel, and girded himself. He knew that he had come forth from God, and that he was going back to God, and he performed this action on the way home to his Father. O dear brothers and sisters, if Christ thus stooped, how humble ought we to be! No office should be counted too lowly, no work for his servants should seem to be too humiliating, since Jesus "took a towel, and girded himself."

[John 13:5](#). *After that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.*

You see that Jesus does his work well. He omits none of the details of it. He puts himself in the place of a slave, and he performs a slave's duty very thoroughly. I am afraid that, sometimes, we do our work for him in a slovenly way, but Jesus was not satisfied with simply washing his disciples' feet, he must do the wiping, too. I do bless him that he did so for this is a picture of what he has done for us. He has washed our feet, and he often repeats the gracious act. The feet that Jesus washes he will wipe; he has not begun his task without intending to finish it. I know that he will complete in my soul the work which he has undertaken, for he fulfilled on the feet of his

disciples the office he had undertaken: “ He began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.”

[John 13:6](#). *Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet?*

I do not wonder that he said that; would not you have been equally astonished had you been there? Peter had some faint idea who Christ was, he had confessed him in such a way that Jesus had said to him “Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.” Knowing so much about Christ, Peter did marvel at his action; he felt so astonished that he asked “Dost thou wash my feet?”

[John 13:7](#). *Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do those knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.*

I have heard this saying of our Lord applied to affliction; and it is very true that what Jesus does we do not at present understand, but we shall know by-and-by. I do not think, however, that this sentence is very applicable that way, for there was no affliction in having the feet washed. The fact is, brethren, though it is a very humbling thing to say, we do not understand that which Jesus does, even his simplest actions are a mystery to us, we have never gone into the very depths of them so as to comprehend them. “What I do, — even though I only wash thy feet, plain and simple operation as that is, — thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.” Our knowing times, dear friends, are to come. We need not be so very anxious to know at present, this is the time of love. I would forego the filling of my head for a while if I could have my heart full; but, alas, we are generally so busy trying to attain merely head knowledge! My most intense longing is for a growing heart, a heart that truly loves the Saviour. That is the way for the head to learn, for knowledge that comes by the way of the heart, and so enters the head, is the best of knowledge. Jesus said to Peter, “What I do thou knowest, not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.”

[John 13:8](#). *Peter saith unto him, Those shalt never wash my feet.*

That is just like Peter. If John had not told us who it was that said this, we should have known that it was Peter. He was always in such a hurry, and he spoke so quickly, that he made many mistakes, yet he was always so honest and so true that his Master forgave his faults, and helped him to correct them.

[John 13:8](#). *He answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.*

If Christ does not cleanse us, we do not belong to him. If he does not, day by day, exercise a purifying influence over us, we are not his.

[John 13:9](#). *Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.*

How that pendulum swings to and fro! It went this way just now: “Thou shalt never wash my feet.” Now it goes right away to the other extreme: “Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.” Go more gently, Peter, be more quiet. Why do you go so far in one direction and then rush off so far in another way? Thy Master knows better than thou knowest what is right for thee.

[John 13:10](#). *Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all.*

Dear friends, when we believe in Christ, we are washed in the fountain filled with blood, and we are clean; but this world is such a sinful place that we cannot walk through it for even a day without some of its mire and dust clinging to us. Besides, God’s lilies are so pure that they are hardly fit to bloom in such a defiling atmosphere. Oh, how we need that the dew should wash the lily when the night comes on! How greatly we need to have the foot-washing administered to us every day! We need not repeat the first great washing, the bath by which our sins were cleansed; when that was done, it was done once for all. Our sin was pardoned as before a Judge; but we want it to be taken away as before our Father, for we are now under his loving discipline. Christ further said to his disciples, “Ye are clean, but not all.” Does he say that to us at this time? “Ye are clean, but not all.” Where sits the man, in this house of prayer, who is not clean, the sinner who has not yet been washed by Jesus Christ? Where sits the woman who is not clean? The Lord have mercy upon you, dear friends! You know that, in the olden days, they put a red cross on the door of the house where the plague was. We cannot put a cross upon you; but I pray you to consider yourselves as marked men and marked women in the sight of God, and I pray the Lord to take that mark away by causing you to be washed, that you may be clean every whit. How quickly he can wash the foulest sinners! He that believeth in Jesus is washed in the precious blood, and he is clean. God cleanse us all for his great name’s sake!

[John 13:11-15](#). *For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean. So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.*

Christ's actions are the pattern for us to imitate! Oh, that we followed them more closely!

[John 13:16](#). *Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him.*

Sometimes, we think that we are a deal too great to wash anybody's feet; we should like to see a person propose it to us, such big people as we are! If we talk like that, there is great need that we should be taken down. That would be the true way to rise in the likeness of Jesus. Oh, that we were lowlier in humility! We should be higher in grace if we were.

[John 13:17](#). *If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.*

Peter wanted to know them; Jesus would have us do them.

[John 13:18](#). *I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen:*

Christ has a chosen people, though some will not believe it. Yet it is so, for he says, "I know whom I have chosen."

[John 13:18-19](#). *But that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me. Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he.*

"That I am." So, you see, even the great trouble of the early Church the betrayal by Judas, was used by Christ for the strengthening of his disciples' faith. He foretold that it would be as it came to pass. So, dear friends, in these latter days, many forsake the gospel, but Jesus told us that it would be so. He taught his servants to write that there would be a falling away, and that in these last days there would be scoffers; and as we read the prophecies, and compare them with the fulfillment, even the doleful fact itself confirms our faith in our Lord. God bless to us this brief reading of his own Word! Amen.

[JOHN CONTENTS](#)

Verses 1-12

[John 14:1](#). *Let not your heart be troubled:*

This is one of those verses that you may read as slowly as you like, and spell out every letter, and find honey in it all.

[John 14:1](#). *Ye believe in God, believe also in me.*

As Jews, they had already known and seen the power of God. They were now to rise to the faith of Christians, and to believe in Jesus their Saviour.

Even though they should see him die, they were not to doubt him: “Ye believe in God, believe also in me.”

[John 14:2](#). *In my Father’s house are many mansions:*

So there is room for many, there are homes for many, there is wealth for many; “In my Father’s house are many mansions:”

[John 14:2](#). *If it were not so, I would have told you.*

The Saviour seems to say to his disciples, “I keep nothing back from you; had there been some sorrowful fact to be revealed to you, I would at length have told you of it.”

[John 14:2](#). *I go to prepare a place for you.*

“There must be a heaven, for I am going there myself, and I am going on purpose to make it ready for you.”

[John 14:3](#). *And If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.*

That is the first and simplest idea of heaven, to be with Christ; and I think it is the last and sublimest idea of heaven, too,—to be with Christ: “that where I am, there ye may be also.”

[John 14:4-5](#). *And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?*

The apostles blundered, and lost themselves in the words of their Master, instead of entering into the spirit of what he said; so we must not wonder if we often do the same. Unless we wait upon God to be instructed by his Spirit, even the plainest passages of Scripture may be obscure to us.

[John 14:6-7](#). *Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also. And from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.*

Jesus had been talking about the many mansions, and now he talks about the Father. Is the Father, then, the same as heaven? Ay, indeed; to come to the Father is to come to perfect blessedness, to know the fullness of his eternal love, and to enjoy it in face-to-face communion;—this is heaven.

What higher bliss can we desire?

[John 14:8-9](#). *Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?*

Do we, then, see the Father when we see Christ? And is the Father's presence heaven? Then, Christ is heaven; and to be with him is heaven. It is even so. He is the way to heaven, the truth of heaven, the life of heaven. He is heaven's everything.

“His track I see, and I'll pursue
The narrow way, till him I view;”

And when I view him, shall I not have seen the Father, and have entered into the Father's rest?

[John 14:10-12](#). *Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.*

In consequence of Christ's going to the Father, and the Spirit of God descending upon Christ's disciples, they are enabled to outdo their Master in some forms of holy service. For instance, some of them brought more to the faith than Christ himself had done during his lifetime, and so realized the fulfillment of this promise, “The works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.”

This exposition consisted of readings from [John 14:1-12](#) : and [Colossians 1:1-19](#).

Verses 1-20

This is a chapter which I suppose most of us know by heart, full of comfort, a very river of delight.

Remember that our Lord spoke this to his own beloved ones — to the inner circle. It was not addressed to the general public. It is not a sermon to

the world. It is a discourse to those who had lived with him, and were now sorrowing because he was about to leave them by a cruel death. Thus he begins: —

[John 14:1](#). *Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.*

“You have believed in God, whom you have never seen. Believe in me when you cannot see me. Believe that I still am — that I still am working for your good. You have believed in God, though he has not manifested himself to you in his person as I have done. Now when I am no longer seen of you, believe in me as you believe in the invisible God.” It is well for us to have the same faith in Christ that we have in the everlasting God. This is the cure for the heart trouble. You are sure to be troubled in heart unless you have much faith in God. “Let not your heart be troubled. Ye believe in God, believe also in me.”

[John 14:2](#). *In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.*

Our Lord was going away, but he was going away with a purpose, and a grand purpose too — a purpose which had to do with the everlasting future of his beloved ones. “I go to prepare a place for you.”

[John 14:3](#). *And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.*

And he will come again, beloved. That is our grandest hope. We are looking for his coming. It is very sweet to know that we shall be for ever with the Lord if we die before his coming; but still the hope of God’s people is the coming of the Lord, the resurrection of the dead — his taking to himself all his redeemed to be for ever with him.

[John 14:4](#). *And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.*

We know where Christ has gone. Every step we can follow. The way we know. It always reconciles us to a friend’s going away if we know where he has gone — know all about him. A mother tells me that she has missed her boy now for twelve months, and never heard from him. That is sorrow; but when we know that our son has gone to the other side of the world, and we know why he has gone, and where he has gone, and what is coming of it, we are greatly comforted. So Jesus says, “Whither I go, ye know, and the way ye know.”

[John 14:5](#). *Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?*

There is always somebody who has not learned the lesson. I am afraid that it is not one Thomas, but a great many Thomases that still have to say, “We know not.” Although Christ himself be the teacher, we are always poor learners.

[John 14:6](#). *Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*

There is nothing good except by Christ. They that hate Christ very soon hate God. They get rid of the Christ of the gospel, and they soon get rid of God out of creation too, and there is no coming to the Father in any way or fashion except by Christ. He has gone to the Father, but he is also the way to the Father.

[John 14:7-8](#). *If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him. Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us.*

There is a Philip as well as a Thomas. It does not seem that, even with Christ for a teacher, we should learn much without the Holy Ghost. The greatest blessing, after all, is not the bodily presence of the Saviour, though we learn something from that, but it is the indwelling and the teaching of the Holy Ghost which we most of all need.

[John 14:9-11](#). *Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake.*

The eternal union between Christ and the Father should never be forgotten by us. He seems to sink himself, but the well-beloved Son will have it that his words are not his own, but come from the Father. I cannot help remarking how different this is from some who profess to be the ministers of Christ. They must be original; they must be great thinkers. Every man nowadays makes his own gospel, but the Saviour was no original — the grandest of all intellects, and yet he says, “The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself, but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me, or else believe me for the very work's sake.”

[John 14:12](#). *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.*

While the Master was here in his humiliation he healed a few poor Jews, and raised here and there a dead one, but he purposely veiled the splendor of his godhead. But now that he has gone up on high, he does greater wonders by his servants than he himself personally did, for he said to a few poor fishermen, “Go and break up the Roman Empire,” and they did it. They preached the gospel, and the gods of the heathen that sat upon their thrones for ages were cast to the moles and the bats. And there are greater victories yet before the Church of God. You ought not to measure our passage by the past, but believe that “greater works than these shall ye do, because I go unto my Father.”

[John 14:13](#). *And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.*

We do not believe enough in the power of prayer. I sometimes feel staggered when I meet with good people, undoubtedly good people, who still look upon it as a new thing that we should believe that God hears our prayers. But this is the fundamental of Christian experience. How can we live without the mercy-seat? And if that mercy-seat be nothing but a vain show, and prayer be only a pious but useless exercise, what is there in the Christian religion at all? We have heard some very wise people say that prayer is no doubt beneficial to those who offer it; but to suppose that it has any effect upon the mind of God is absurd. Do you not see, brethren, that they think us all idiots. They must do so, for do you suppose that any but an idiot would go on praying at all if he did not believe that it had some effect upon the mind of God, and that it did prevail with God? I would as soon stand and whistle out of my bedroom window for half an hour, as I would kneel down and pray for half an hour, if there were to be no result coming from it, and so would every sensible man. But we know of a surety that God heareth prayer. We cannot imagine our Lord deceiving us, and he must have done so if it is not so, for he says, “Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.”

[John 14:14](#). *If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.*

But there is a deal of praying that never reaches to the name of Christ. Even to pray for Christ's sake does not reach to the point of praying in Christ's name. If I go and transact business in the name of such a person,

that is a different thing from merely asking to be allowed to do my own business for the sake of that person. But when you are authorized to use the name of Christ — as it were, to write his signature to your cheques — oh! what power there is in prayer at that time! “If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it.” But you cannot ask everything in that name. You are obliged to draw back from some prayers, and say, “No; Christ would never authorize me to put his name to that.” You see there is a blessed cheque upon the universality of prayer — a most necessary and useful cheque — for we would not dare to ask some things in that wondrous name.

[John 14:15-17](#). *If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.*

He dwelt with the apostles, but was not in them until after Christ rose from the dead. But now you and I knew his indwelling. He has made our bodies to be the temples of the Holy Ghost.

[John 14:18](#). *I will not leave you comfortless:*

Orphans.

[John 14:18](#). *I will come to you.*

He does this by his Spirit, but still he means more than that. It is not a spiritual coming merely; it is a personal coming. “I will come to you.”

[John 14:19-20](#). *Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.*

Wondrous unity — Christ in the Father, we in him, and Christ in us. Who understands this? He only who is taught of the Holy Spirit.

Verses 1-21

We have often read this chapter, both in our private meditations, and at our public worship; but we cannot read it too often. It is sweet as honey and the honeycomb. It contains the very quintessence of consolation. Every word in the chapter is rich, and full of meaning. Perhaps they understand it best who cannot read it quickly, but are obliged to spell over every word of it, and so are like those who feast upon marrow and fatness.

[John 14:1](#). *Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.*

That is the cure for heart trouble, and all other trouble, too, — believing in God, and believing in his Son, Jesus Christ. Faith is the double cure of trouble, for it delivers us altogether from the trouble, and, at the same time, it helps us to find sweetness in it as long as we have to endure it. Notice that our Saviour says, “Let not your heart be troubled.” If your heart can be preserved from trouble, you will not be greatly tried by it. Trouble is in your house, perhaps; but, if so, let it not get into your heart. The waves beat all round your vessel, but let not the vessel itself leak, and take in the water: “Let not your heart be troubled.”

[John 14:2](#). *In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.*

This was very largely the cause of their trouble; they were full of sorrow because their Lord and Master was going away from them; yet he was going for their good. It was with a set purpose that he was leaving them, and the same reason still keeps him away from us. We are not to mourn for him as we might for one slain in battle, who would never come back to us. He has gone for a little while to another country, to the great Father’s house, upon a most gracious and necessary errand: “I go to prepare a place for you.” The Spirit of God is down here to prepare us for the place; the Son of God is up yonder to prepare the place for us.

[John 14:3](#). *And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.*

Do not tell us about a purgatory for Christ’s people, a limbo in which they are to be awhile to be prepared to share his glory. No, he will come at the right time, and take them to be where he is, and they shall have the very place that Jesus has: “I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” Do you want a better rest than that after all your work and warfare here below? Does not this prospect cheer you while you are journeying down the hill of life?

[John 14:5](#). *And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.*

“Ye know that I am going to the Father, and ye know that I am myself the way to the Father; I am going whence I came.”

[John 14:6](#). *Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life:*

“I am all that you want on your way to heaven, the truth that will make heaven for you, and the life which you will enjoy with me for ever in

heaven. I give you all that while you are yet here below.”

[John 14:6](#). *No man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*

There is no getting to God except through Christ. Those who say that we can go to heaven without a Mediator know not what they say, or say what they know to be false. There can be no acceptable approach to the Father except by Jesus Christ the Son.

[John 14:7](#). *If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also:*

For Christ is also “the mighty God, the everlasting Father.” All the character of God is seen in the Christ of God, and he who truly comes to Christ has really come to the Father.

[John 14:7](#). *And from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.*

I hope that this may be said of many of us, that we do truly know God; and, since we have seen Christ by faith, we have seen the Father also.

[John 14:8](#). *Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us.*

What a comfort these questions and blunders of Thomas and Philip ought to be to us, for it is clear that we are not the only dolts in Christ’s school; and if he could bear with them, he can bear with us also. Like them, how little do we retain of that which he teaches us! We are taught much, but we learn little, for we are such poor scholars. Our memory holds but little, and our understanding still less of what we have been taught, and we are all too apt to want something that we can see, just as Philip said, “Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us.”

[John 14:9-11](#). *Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works’ sake.*

Note how the Master continued to urge his disciples to believe. Again and again he returned to that vital point: Believest thou? “Believe me...: believe me.” This he did because there is no relief from heart-trouble but by believing the everlasting truth of God, and especially by believing him who is “the truth.” The believer alone has true peace of heart; the unbeliever is tossed to and fro on the billows of the great ocean of doubt; how can he rest? There is nothing for him to rest upon. Happily, Christ is still saying,

“Come unto me, and I will give you rest;” and they are truly wise who accept his gracious invitation.

[John 14:12](#). *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.*

When Christ had gone back to the Father, he opened all heaven’s treasures for his people; he bestowed the Spirit of all grace, and so his servants were helped to do even greater works than he himself did while he was upon the earth. We cannot add anything to his atonement; that work must for ever stand as complete and unique; but there are other forms of service, in which he engaged in his earthly ministry, in which his servants have gone far beyond him. The Lord Jesus Christ never preached a sermon after which three thousand were converted and baptized in one day; to a large extent he kept his personal ministry within the bounds of Palestine; but, after his resurrection, when the Spirit was poured out at Pentecost, then, in the power of the Spirit, greater works than his were wrought the wide world over.

[John 14:13-14](#). *And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.*

Is that promise true to every man? Certainly not. It was made by Christ to his own disciples, and not to all of them absolutely; but only to them as they believe in him, as they are filled with his Spirit, and as they keep his commandments. There are some of God’s children who have little power with him in prayer, — some who walk so disorderly that, since they do not listen to God’s words, he will not listen to theirs. Yet he will give them necessaries, as you give even to your naughty and disobedient children; but he will not give them the luxury of prevailing prayer, and that full fellowship with him which comes through abiding in him. Such luxuries he saves for his obedient children, who are filled with his Spirit. Even under the old dispensation, David wrote, “Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart;” and in a very special sense, under the new dispensation, that spirituality of mind, which enables us to delight in God, is a necessary antecedent to our obtaining the desires of our heart in the high and spiritual sphere of prayer.

[John 14:15-17](#). *If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him:*

The world is carnal, it is unspiritual; therefore, it is unable to see or to know the Spirit of God. A man without a spiritual nature cannot recognize the Holy Spirit; he must be born again before he can do so. You who are only soul and body need to receive that third and loftier principle — the spirit which is wrought in us by the Spirit of God. Until you have it, this verse applies to you: “The Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him.”

[John 14:17](#). *But ye know him;*

Christ’s own disciples know him.

[John 14:17-19](#). *For he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also.*

Oh, what a rich promise! How, then, can Christ’s people ever perish? Until Christ himself perishes, no child of his can ever be lost.

[John 14:20](#). *At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.*

Three wondrous mysteries of union, — Christ in the Father, the Church in Christ, and Christ in his Church.

[John 14:21](#). *He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.*

May we be such lovers of Christ that he may love us, and manifest himself unto us, for his name’s sake! Amen.

Verses 1-31

[John 14:1](#). *Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.*

You will be troubled; that cannot be helped. But let not your heart be troubled. You are like a ship, and all the water in the sea cannot hurt a ship, if it is kept outside of her. Let not your heart be troubled. How are you to prevent it? Faith is the remedy. Ye believe already; believe more. “Ye believe in God; believe also in me.” “You have a trust in the infinite power of God; believe in me as the incarnation of his infinite love.”

[John 14:2](#). *In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.*

There is no room for you on earth; there will be in heaven. If troubles should so multiply that it seems impossible to live in them, you shall be carried away where you shall live above them "In my Father's house are many mansions." You may depend upon the love of Christ beloved, for if there were anything dark, mysterious, distressing, which would lead you to despair, he would not have kept it back. He treats you frankly. "If it were not so I would have told you. I go, and you are sorry that I go. It is the source of your sorrow. But I go to prepare place for you."

[John 14:3](#). *And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.*

Oh! this is ground for sweet comfort, and it ought to yield it to us tonight. He has gone, but he will come again; he has not left us for ever. Space divides us for awhile; but, skipping over the mountains like a roe and a young hart, he will come again, even to this poor world, and to us, his waiting church, he will come again. Therefore, have patience. Let not your heart be troubled. Jesus Christ will come very soon.

[John 14:4](#). *And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.*

Ye know where Christ is gone. Ye know how to get at him. The throne on which he sits is the throne of grace. He is gone to the Father, and your prayers will find the Father. You know the way. Then frequent it; and though as yet in your bodies you cannot reach to him, yet in spirit you can. "Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know."

[John 14:5](#). *Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?*

Which was a contradiction of his Master, which Thomas ought not to have uttered. He should have put it much rather in the form of a question for explanation, than of such a fiat denial. His Master said, "Whither I go ye know." He said, "We know not whither thou goest." But we must take care that we do not contradict Christ. Our unbelief would be shamed out of us, if we were to look at it and examine it. I am persuaded that your faith will be justified the more you examine it, till you will discover that faith in God is nothing, after all, but sanctified common sense. So unbelief will appear to be more shameful the more you examine it, till you discover at length that it is nothing but garish folly. An outrage upon the first principles of wisdom is distrust of God.

[John 14:6-7](#). *Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.*

This, then, is the main point of knowledge with us, to know Christ. All the studies in the world are vain, compared with the study of Christ crucified. This is the most excellent of all the sciences. He that knoweth Christ knoweth the way, the truth, the life, yea, and God himself.

[John 14:8-9](#). *Philip saith unto him, Lord shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?*

The best view of God we can ever have is Christ in the person of his Son. There is more seen of God than in all nature; aye and in all history added to nature. God hath given us a full-length portrait of himself in Jesus; while in all his works, we have no more then a mere miniature of him. Oh! that we knew Christ more; then should we know the Father.

[John 14:10-12](#). *Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.*

Oh! what strength there is in faith. These are the same people who are not to be troubled. They are to rise so much above trouble of heart, that they are to become performers of works like to Christ. Yea, and since Christ has gone, and he has endowed us with the Holy Spirit, we are to do yet greater works than he did. Oh! to know the possibilities of our nature; to know what God can do by us. What appears to us as we are, as unable to be done, we may be enabled to do through the spirit of God which is in Christ Jesus.

[John 14:13-14](#). *And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.*

It does not mean that every prayer will be answered. The power to ask a thing in Christ's name is not given to everybody. It is not merely to say at the end of your prayer, "for Christ's sake." It is another thing; it is to be able

to feel that, as Christ stood in your place, so you dare stand in Christ's place; and what you have asked, you have asked in his name, feeling that what you have asked is such that Christ would have asked it. Now, when you can feel that, and can feel that Christ puts his seal on what you have asked, then, you ask in his name. A person cannot always speak in the name of another; cannot do it at all unless he has received an authorization so to do. Then he stands as that person's deputy; stands in his place; speaks in his name. I am sure that nine out of ten of the prayers of Christians are not offered in the name of Christ, and could not be. It would be a sin against Christ for such prayers to be supposed to be the prayers of Christ. But when we talk of the Spirit of God, and we dare ask in the name and use the seal of Christ to set his signature at the bottom of our petition, then, brethren, depend upon it Christ will do it.

[John 14:15](#). *If ye love me, keep my commandments.*

Oh! some of us would have liked him to have said, "If ye love me, give all your money; go into a convent. If ye love me, perform some wonderful action. Go into the streets and preach; where you would be hooted. Go to some foreign country and get yourself made a martyr of." No, no; "If ye love me, keep my commandments. Stop at home near your father and mother. If ye love me, love my disciples. Let love rule you. And in that place in life in which I have set you, try to honour my name by exhibiting my character. If ye love me, keep my commandments."

[John 14:16-19](#). *And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him: for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also.*

"Yet a little while and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me." Now, when the world does not see him, we still see him. He is present to our faith, though passing from our sight. "Because I live, ye shall live also." Is he a dead Christ? Then he has a dead people for his church. He is a living Saviour: he has a living people; and they shall no more die than he shall die; "for he, being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him." "Because I live, ye shall live also."

[John 14:20](#). *At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in You.*

What a wonderful union this is — Christ in the Father; the saints in Christ, and Christ in the saints. These be riddles which are not meant for the children of this world; but they who are the children of God shall understand them, shall live upon them.

[John 14:21](#). *He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me:*

Not he that preaches about them, talks much about them; boasts about a higher life and all sorts of things; but “he that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.”

[John 14:21-22](#). *And he that loveth me shall be loved by my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?*

If thou dost manifest thyself to us, who are only a few poor fishermen, thou does not extend thy kingdom so; but if thou wouldest manifest thyself to the world in all thy glory, surely they would be surprised and overwhelmed, and thy kingdom would thus come. But that is not Christ’s way. His manifestations are for his own: not for glitter, but for edification. He comes to bless them; not that he may be ostentatious among men.

[John 14:23](#). *Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.*

Oh! what an honoured man that — for the Father and the Son to be his guests, to make an abode in his heart.

[John 14:24-28](#). *He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings; and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father’s which sent me. These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever have said unto you. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I.*

Christ had stooped to take a lower place for our sakes.

[John 14:29-31](#). *And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe. Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me. But that the world may know that I love the Father: and as the Father gave me commandment, even so do, Arise, let us go hence.*

Verses 15-31

[John 14:15](#). *If ye love me, keep my commandments.*

We cannot expect the Holy Spirit to dwell with us unless we are obedient to the commands of Christ. Our Saviour here tells us much about the spirit of truth, but he begins with this test of our love to him, “ If ye love me, keep my commandments.”

[John 14:16](#). *And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;*

Not a different Comforter, but the Comforter who is now with us, is of the same nature, and works after the same manner, as the Lord Jesus himself, who was our first Advocate, Helper, Paraclete, Comforter: I give you these four words instead of one, because they are all wrapped up in the original word ‘Paraclete’-“ that he may abide with you for ever and ever.” The Lord Jesus could not abide with us for ever, it was expedient for him that he should go to heaven to prepare a place for us. But the Holy Spirit will not go; he will remain in this dispensation, even to the end of it,-“that he may abide with you for ever.”

[John 14:17](#). *Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.*

The world knows nothing about the Holy Spirit; it can hear the gospel, it can hear the outward word, but the living, mystic, inward Spirit the world knows nothing of.

[John 14:18-19](#). *I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a little while and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also.*

“While I am away the Holy Spirit shall be your Comforter, you shall not be like orphans without father or friend.” Jesus will come a second time. This is our joyful hope, but meanwhile, while he is away, we are not without a Comforter. “ Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more.” What a wonderful thing! The children of God always see Jesus spiritually. “

But ye see me; because I live, ye shall live also.” There is life in a look, and our continued sight of Christ brings us continued life through Christ. Because he lives, there is a loving, living, lasting union between us and Christ.

[John 14:20](#). *At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.*

Three wonderful unions, Christ in the Father, his people in Christ, Christ in his people. If you are instructed of the Lord, you will understand this text. This is such knowledge as the universities cannot teach; it is such knowledge as the most-learned doctors cannot attain to by themselves.

Only the Spirit of God can teach us these things.

[John 14:21](#). *He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.*

He must have obedience. Christ cannot come and comfortably manifest himself to those who are living out of order and disregarding his words. Take heed, children of God, of disobedience; it is a discipline of the divine family that if we disobey we should lose the comfortable presence of our Lord. “I will manifest myself to him.”

[John 14:22-23](#). *Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.*

Christ and his Father dwell with obedient people: “We will dwell with him, and make our abode with him.” Oh, that we might carefully watch our thoughts, our words, our acts, lest we grieve our Lord. He will manifest himself to us when we yield ourselves to him. When we obey his will, it will be his will to honour us with his constant presence.

[John 14:24](#). *He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings:*

There is much talk of loyalty to Christ, but the teachings of Christ are despised. The teachings of his apostles are the teachings of Christ they are but a prolongation and exposition of what Christ taught. In rejecting them we reject Christ. He will not have it that we can be loyal to him and yet refuse his teaching.

[John 14:24](#). *And the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father’s which sent me.*

It is a wonderful denial of originality on the part of Christ. If anybody could have spoken his own word, it was surely the Christ of God. But he was a messenger, and he delivered his message. Now, if it be so with Christ, how much more so with us who are very inferior messengers. We ought to be very careful that we do not deliver our own thoughts, or suggestions, excogitations and philosophies. "The word which ye hear is not mine," (that I can most emphatically say,) "but the Father's which sent me." You see, when we deliver a message which is not ours but the Father's, we feel safe about it; we feel sure of its success, whereas, if we were the makers of it, we should often question whether we had not told you falsely: but if we can fall back upon the Word of God, and prove it from what the Father has said, then do we feel we are no longer responsible.

[John 14:25-26](#). *These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.*

That is the teaching. The Holy Spirit does not reveal anything fresh to us. He brings to our remembrance what has already been said and written in the inspired Word. Whereas the Book conveys to us the outward sense, the Holy Ghost conveys to us the inner meaning. The embodiment of truth you have in this Book, but the truth itself, dealing with the conscience, and heart, and spirit must be led home by the Author of the Book, by the Holy Ghost himself.

[John 14:27](#). *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you:*

Have you got it, brothers and sisters? Are you at peace at this moment? "I am very much troubled," says one. Well, you are to have tribulation here; but you are to have peace with it. In the world ye shall have tribulation, but in Christ you shall have peace. If you have got the bitter herbs, do not be satisfied with bitter herbs, ask for the Paschal Lamb.

[John 14:27](#). *Not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*

Come, tell your trouble to your Lord, ask the Holy Spirit to exercise the office of Comforter upon you now at this very moment.

[John 14:28](#). *Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I.*

The Lord Jesus had taken a subordinate place, he had become the servant of the Father, the messenger for the Father, but he was going back to reassume his glory. That ought to be a subject of joy to us. Let us bless Jesus that he is not here. If he were here in his former state he would be in his humiliation; but now he has gone to his glory. Let us rejoice in this.

[John 14:29](#). *And now I have told you before it came to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe.*

Jesus warned his disciples of all that was to happen in his death and in his departure. I believe that the Spirit of God often gives inward warnings to God's people of troubles that are to come, -monitions, so that they may be prepared for the trouble when it comes, and may feel as if he had told them before it came to pass.

[John 14:30](#). *Hereafter I will not talk much with you; for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.*

He would have very few words, for he was going to the bloody sweat and scourging and death: his words might well be few, for his actions would speak more loudly than words.

[John 14:31](#). *But that the world may know that I love the Father; and the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence.*

And they left the supper-table to go to the garden, the garden of his agony. Let us be willing to go wherever God calls us.

Verses 21-31

In this "sacred farewell" talk of our Lord's, he gives us many a revelation of the soul's way of intercourse with him.

[John 14:21-22](#). *He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them. he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?*

Many a time have we asked that question with great admiration of the special sovereign grace of God, that he should manifest himself to us, and not to the world. It is an unanswerable question. It is "even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight."

[John 14:23](#). *Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.*

Where the grace of God has created love between us and Christ, there is a window through which Christ can manifest himself to us. Why he gave us that love we do not know, but when he has given us that love he will not deny us communion with himself.

[John 14:24-26](#). *He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me. These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.*

The Holy Spirit does not teach us any new doctrine. Fix that in your minds, for in the present age we have numbers of persons who talk about being inspired with the Holy Ghost, and who come with all kinds of crudities and fooleries. Believe them not. The Holy Ghost says no other and no more than the Lord Jesus Christ himself said, "He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said to you." The canon of revelation is closed. None can add to it without a curse. Do not accept any testimony that would add to it. Keep you to what is here found, and pray the Holy Spirit to lead you into the clear understanding of it.

[John 14:27-28](#). *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I.*

Christ had himself less than the Father in his state of humiliation, and now he is returning to the Father to be re-clothed with honour and majesty. Should we not rejoice in that?

[John 14:29-31](#). *And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe. Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me. But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so do I. Arise, let us go hence.*

And he went; to his death bravely determined, to do the Father's will, though it meant the drinking up of that bitter cup, which made his very soul to tremble within him. God give us such love to Christ as Christ had to the Father.

JOHN CONTENTS

CHAPTER 15

Verses 1-8

On the way from the supper table to the garden of Gethsemane, or while still lingering in the upper room, our Lord spoke this wondrous parable.

John 15:1. *I am the true vine,-*

All other vines are but shadows of Christ. They represent Christ, but he is himself the substance. the essence, the one great reality. He is the truth of all things that exist: "I am the true Vine." Does anybody ask which is the true Church? All who are vitally joined to Christ are in the true Church, for he says, "I am the true Vine,"-

John 15:1. *And my Father is the husbandman.*

He cares for the Church with infinite wisdom and love. No one else can care for that true Vine as the Father-the Husbandman-does.

John 15:2. *Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away:*

If there be any, who are only nominally in Christ, and who therefore bear no fruit, their doom is to be taken away; for, in order to final perseverance and eternal safety, there must be fruit-bearing.

John 15:2. *And every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.*

Pruning, then, is for fruit-bearers. If the branch were dead, what would be the good of pruning it? Say not, dear friends that your afflictions must be caused by your sins; nay, rather they may come in consequence of your virtues. Because you do bear fruit, it is worth while for the Husbandman to use his knife upon you, that you may bring forth more fruit.

John 15:3-4. *Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you.*

Give good heed to that sweet word, beloved brethren, "Abide in me." Do not seem to get into Christ, and then depart from him. Add constancy to all your other graces.

John 15:4-5. *As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit for without me ye can do nothing.*

You know how the branch is in the vine, it is a component part of the vine; but do not forget that the vine is also in the branch,-that the sap, which is the very life of the vine, flows into every living branch. So we are in Christ, and Christ is in us, and he says to us, as the marginal reading has it, "Severed from me, ye can do nothing." What! not even a little, Lord? Can we not do something good, something acceptable apart from thee? No; "Without me, ye can do nothing."

[John 15:6](#). *If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.*

That is all that can be done with fruitless vine-branches. You cannot make anything of them. Other trees yield timber, and are useful for various purposes; but, with the vine, it is as the prophet Ezekiel says, "Son of man, What is the vine tree more than any tree, or than a branch which is among the trees of the forest? Shall wood be taken thereof to do any work? or will men take a pin of it to hang any vessel thereon? Behold, it is cast into the fire for fuel; the fire devoureth both the ends of it, and the midst of it is burned. Is it meet for any work?" It is useless if it is fruitless; and so is it with us, if we do not bear fruit unto God, we are of no service to him whatsoever.

[John 15:7](#). *If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.*

Here is the secret of prevailing prayer. It is not every man who chooses to pray, who shall have whatever he asks of God; but the successful pleader is the man who abides in Christ, and in whom Christ's words abide. God will not hear our words if we disregard his words. We cannot expect our prayers to be prevalent if we are severed from our Lord.

[John 15:8](#). *Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.*

"Much fruit" should be produced by the disciples of the much-doing Christ.

The true Vine was full of fruit, and it scarcely can be believed that we are branches of that Vine if we exhibit only a little fruit. It is "much fruit" that proves our union to this Vine.

Verses 1-11

[John 15:1](#). *I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.*

If you want to know where the true Church is, Christ here tells you: “I am the true vine.” All who are in Christ are in the true Church. If you want to know who is the Father of the Church, its Keeper and Guardian, Christ here tells you: “My Father is the husbandman.” Hence, I feel persuaded that the true vine, the Church, will never die, for it is Christ; and I am also persuaded that it will never be uprooted, for Jesus says, “My Father is the husbandman;” and that fact is a guarantee that he will take care of it.

[John 15:2](#). *Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away:*

In some sense, men and women may be in Christ by a mere outward profession; but if they have no evidence of a real union to Christ, if they produce no fruit, they will be taken away, some by death, and others by apostasy; but they will be taken away.

[John 15:2](#). *And every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit!*

From these words, it is clear that, many of the afflictions which we have to endure are not brought upon us because we are unfruitful, but because we are bearing fruit.

[John 15:3-4](#). *Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me.*

Dear friends, beware of a Christless Christianity. Beware of trying to be Christians without living daily upon Christ. The branch may just as well try to bear fruit apart from the vine as for you to hope to maintain the reality of Christian life without continual fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

[John 15:5-6](#). *I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.*

The vine must either bear fruit or be good for nothing; and you, believer, must be vitally united to Christ, and bear fruit in consequence of that union or else you will be like those fruitless vine-branches, of which our Lord said that “men gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned,”

[John 15:7](#). *If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you.*

Do not take that verse as a promise of unlimited answers to prayer, for it is nothing of the kind. Remember the “if” that qualifies it: “If ye abide in

me, and my words abide in you,” for a man who is truly in Christ, as the branch is in the vine, and who is feeding upon Christ’s words, will be so influenced by the Holy Spirit that he will not ask anything which is contrary to the mind of God. Consequently, his prayers, though in one sense unrestricted, are really restricted by the tenderness of his conscience, and the sensitiveness of his spirit to the influence of the mind of God. There are some Christians who do not get their prayers answered, and who never will as long as they do not comply with this condition, “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you.” If you do not take notice of Christ’s words, he will not take notice of your words. He is not going to open his door to every stranger who chooses to give a runaway knock at it, but he will pay attention to his own children who pay attention to him.

[John 15:8](#). *Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.*

“Ye shall be known to be my disciples.” Everybody will perceive that you must be branches of that fruitful vine, Christ Jesus, if ye bear much fruit.

[John 15:9](#). *As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.*

How wondrously Jesus loves those who are truly, his! As the Father loved him, so does he love us: that is, without beginning, without measure, without variation, without end. “Continue ye in my love;” that is, live in it, enjoy it, drink it in, be influenced by it.

[John 15:10](#). *If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love;*

“You shall live in the realization of my love if you live in obedience to me.”

[John 15:10-11](#). *Even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.*

For, when Christ is not pleased with us, we are not likely to have joy in ourselves, Oh, that we may so live as to please Christ!

Verses 1-17

Thus speaks the Lord Jesus: —

[John 15:1](#). *I am the true vine,*

Many questions have been raised about which is the true Church; the Saviour answers them, “I am the true vine.” All who are united, really united, to the ever-living Saviour are members of the true Church. Find ye

them where ye may, if they are one with Christ, they are his — they are parts of the divine vine; they are belonging to his Church.

[John 15:1](#). *And my Father is the husbandman.*

It is the Father's province, by the Holy Spirit and by the works of Providence, to see to the prosperity of the Church. "My Father is the husbandman." All preachers, all teachers, are but, so to speak, the pruning tool in the hand of the great vine-dresser. "My Father is the husbandman."

[John 15:2](#). *Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away:*

It is a necessary part of vine-dressing to remove the superfluous shoots. Too much wood-making, which does not lead to fruit-bearing, is but a waste of strength. And so in the Church there are those that bear no fruit, and for a while they appear to be fresh and green, and they who are the under-vine-dressers dare not take them away. But the Father does it — sometimes by removing them by death; at other times by permitting them openly to expose their own character, until they are then amenable to the discipline of the Church, and are removed.

[John 15:2](#). *Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away and every branch that beareth fruit —*

What of that? "He purgeth it (pruneth it) that it may bring forth more fruit." "I cannot understand," said one to me the other day, "why I am so very sorely afflicted. I have been searching myself to discover what sin can have been the cause of it." Now, beloved, if that be your question tonight, there may be a sin to be put away, and, if so, God forbid that I should prevent your searching; but remember, on the other hand, affliction is no evidence of sin, but oftentimes of the very contrary, It is the fruit-bearing branch that gets the pruning. You are so good a branch that God would fain have you better. You have such capacities for bearing fruit, that he wants to see those capacities developed. The lapidary does not chase upon the wheel the stone that is not precious, but that which is, and so real affliction is no mark, therefore, of your want of grace, but of your having it. "Every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit."

[John 15:3](#). *Now ye are clean--*

For so it should be.

[John 15:3](#). *Through the word which I have spoken unto you.*

While Christ was with his disciples he kept his vine continually pruned by the word which he spoke. That word cut off the non-fruit-bearing-branches, for we read that after that saying there were some that went back,

and walked no more with him, for they said, “This is a hard saying; who can bear it?” That was the word pruning off the useless branches. And there were others who were grieved by his Word. These, were good people, and it did them good. It was a godly sorrow that led to bringing forth fruits meet for repentance.

[John 15:4](#). *Abide in me and I in you.*

There is the great canon of the Christian life. Hold fast to Christ. Not only live with him, but live in him. “Abide in me.” And on! let Jesus not be merely your companion now and then, on holy occasions, but let him abide in you; make your heart a temple; let him find his sweetest rest his home in you.

[John 15:4](#). *As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.*

It is keeping in Christ, then, that is the vital relater. There is the root of the whole business, to be still one with Jesus by vital union, deriving the sap of our life entirely from him.

[John 15:5](#). *I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit:*

This double abiding gives a double harvest. Christ in me, and I in Christ — I must be fruitful. Oh! beloved, look well to this. I am afraid we get at a distance from Christ. There is more danger of this in old professors than there is in young beginners. The young beginner is warm of heart. The very novelty of the thing keeps him near his Master, but oh! take care of slackening; you that have been long pilgrims, take care of slackening. It is so easy to grow cold in this cold world, and it is so hard to maintain the holy spiritual fervent, without which there is no spiritual health.

[John 15:5](#). *He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.*

Not “ye will do less,” or “ye will do least,” but ye can do nothing — nothing good, nothing spiritual, nothing acceptable, if severed from Jesus.

[John 15:6](#). *If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered: and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.*

And oh! how many come to this end! They did seem to be all that the fruit-bearing branches are, but they were never saved souls, for saved souls always bring forth fruits of righteousness. Their salvation is proved by their

fruitfulness. But these appeared to be all that the others were, and after a while they were discovered, and cast into the fire and burned.

[John 15:7](#). *If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you,*

My very words. You must treasure up Christ's teaching; you must obey his precepts. If ye do this, "Ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." In this chapter we are taught once or twice that the power of prayer depends very much upon the closeness of our communion with Christ, and the completeness of our obedience to him. We are saved by faith in the Redeemer, but the joy of salvation, the very dignity and glory of it, will only come to those men who jealously watch themselves, and zealously obey their Lord and Master.

[John 15:8-9](#). *Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you:*

What a glorious word! I scarcely know a text more deep, more full than this. After the same manner as God the Father loves the Son — after that same sort does the Son love us. Hear ye the words again, "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you; continue ye in my love." He confirms us in it, and bids us live in the enjoyment of it.

[John 15:10](#). *If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love.*

Ye shall know it; ye shall live in it; it shall be the atmosphere you breathe.

[John 15:10-11](#). *Even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you.*

Christ would have his people happy; happy, however, with a holy joy, which is not, therefore, a dim and second-rate joy. It is the very joy of Christ, God's people are to enjoy.

[John 15:11-16](#). *That my joy might remain in you. and that your joy might be full. This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you. Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.*

A second time he puts this remarkable prevalence of prayer side by side with walking in the Lord's commandments. Oh! ye that miss success in your life and work, may you not trace your failure to your forgetfulness of God. Shall God do your will, if you will not do his will? Shall he wait on you, if you will not wait on him? Will he not (must you not expect that he will) walk contrary to you if you walk contrary to him? May Spirit make you pure in life, for then shall you be successful at the mercy-seat!

[John 15:17](#). *These things I command you, that ye love one another.*

Jesus! send us this spirit of love, we pray thee. Amen.

Verses 1-27

Many of you know the words of this chapter by heart; you could repeat them without a mistake. May the savor of them abide in your hearts even as the letter of them abides in your memory!

[John 15:1](#). *I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.*

We thank thee, O Saviour, for this blessed answer to the oft-repeated question, "Which is the true Church?" Are you one with Christ? Then are you a part of the true vine. If we have but real, vital personal, having connection with Christ, to whatever section of the visible Church we may belong, we are part of "the true vine." And we are told, in the next sentence, who is the great Caretaker of the Church? Some of us are much occupied in Christ's service, and there is a tendency with all of us to get, like Martha, "numbered" even in serving for him. We are apt to fancy that the burden of all the churches lies upon our shoulders, but, beloved, this is a great mistake. Jesus said, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman," or vine-dresser. He will take the utmost possible care of it, for it is very dear to him. There is not a branch in that vine which the Father does not love with infinite affection; and as for the majestic stem, even Jesus, he loves him beyond measure.

[John 15:2](#). *Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away:*

This operation is always going on. God is continually taking away from the Church, in some way or other, non-fruit-bearers. We know that these do not truly belong to Christ, for fruit must come from vital union to him but it is a trial to the Church to have non-fruit-bearing branches. These are taken away, sometimes by death, sometimes by judgment, sometimes by the open discovery of their secret sin, the culmination of their backslides in overt acts of transgression. "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh

away:” but side by side with this action another process is constantly going on: —

[John 15:2](#). *And every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.*

Is this, then, dear friend, one reason why you are being chastened, — because you are a fruit-bearing branch? If you bore no fruit, you would be left unpruned, because the knife would do its sterner work upon you by taking you altogether away. If you really do bring forth fruit to God, you must expect to have trial, trouble, affliction, and that full often.

[John 15:3](#). *Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.*

That was a “word” which had sorely grieved them, and cut them to the quick, so that the Saviour had to say to them, more than once, “Let not your heart be troubled.” (See the 1st, and the 27th, verses of the preceding chapter.) They had felt the sharp edge of the pruning-knife, so Jesus said to them, “Now ye are clean (purged or pruned) through the word which I have spoken unto you.”

[John 15:4](#). *Abide in me, and I in you.*

The main thing is not restless activity, running here and there, and doing this, and that, and the other thing; it is abiding in Christ, persevering, constant cleaving to Christ, by virtue of a vital union with him: “Abide in me, and I in you.”

[John 15:4](#). *As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.*

You may hurry, and flurry, and worry; but you will lose by it. Keep close to Christ. Never let your heart be dissociated from intimate communion with him. So shall you bring forth fruit, but not else.

[John 15:5-6](#). *I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered: and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.*

The vine is of use for nothing but fruit-bearing; and if it does not bear fruit, it is good for nothing except to be burned. In the social economy of life, a man may be of some use however bad he may be; but a man who is in the nominal Church of Christ, and yet does not bring forth fruit unto God, is of no use whatsoever. There is nothing to be done with him but to

gather him up with the sere autumn leaves, and the decaying stalks of vegetation, to be burned in the corner outside the wall. How trying is the smoke that comes from such a burning as that! We pastors sometimes get it into our eyes, and it fills them with bitter tears. I know of nothing that is more grievous to us than this putting out of the unworthy, this casting the fruitless vine branches into the fire that they may be burned.

[John 15:7](#). *Ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, —*

You see that doctrinal vitality is necessary to true union to Christ. Some, in these days, talk about a spiritual attachment to the person of Christ, while they shoot their envenomed darts against the dogmas of Christ; but that will not do. “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you,” — my words of doctrine, precept, or promise, then —

[John 15:7](#). *Ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.*

This is the secret of successful prayer. Christ listens to your words because you listen to his words. If you are conformed to his will, he will grant you your will. Disobedient children, when they pray, may expect to get the rod for an answer. In true kindness, God may refuse to listen to them until they are willing to listen to him.

[John 15:8](#). *Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit;*

What a wonderful vine that must be whose branches glorify God! Who ever heard of such a thing? The very branches do this, and they do it by bearing fruit. How this ought to excite us to desire to bear Christian graces, and to do Christian service, and to endure with resignation the Lord’s will, for those are the clusters that hang upon this vine.

[John 15:8](#). *So shall ye be my disciples.*

For Christ is not merely a fruit-bearer, but a bearer of much fruit. If we are to be Christ’s disciples indeed, we must not be content with doing something for him, but we must do everything that is possible to us; and God can strengthen us till we shall get beyond our natural possibilities into a still loftier realm.

[John 15:9](#). *As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.*

As truly as the Father loves the Son, so truly does Jesus love us; nay, more than that, in the same manner as the Father loved the Son, — that is, without beginning, without cessation, without change, without end, without measure, — so does Jesus love us. There are many vast texts in the Bible, but I have often questioned whether there is a bigger text than this, — a

vaster abyss of meaning shall not be found in these few words, “As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you.” “Continue ye in my love.” Recognize it, enjoy it, walk in consistency with it, reflect it: “Continue ye in my love.”

[John 15:10](#). *If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love.*

I said just now that the doctrinal words of Christ were to be regarded by us. So, dearly-beloved, the precepts or commands of God must ever be regarded. It is an idle tale for men to talk of a mythical visionary love to Christ which does not result in obedience to his will. We must keep his commandments, or we cannot truly say to him, “Thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.”

[John 15:11](#). *These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.*

Good children are truly happy when their parents are happy in them. When they, through the good teaching and example of their parents, bring honour and joy to their parents, then they are sure to be themselves joyful. Oh, that we might so live that Christ’s joy might abide in us, for then our joy would be full.

[John 15:12](#). *This is my commandment, That ye love one another as I have loved you.*

Are you doing this, brethren and sisters in Christ, really loving one another? Do you never pick holes in each other’s character? Do you never judge a fellow-Christian harshly? If you do these things, chide yourself, and cease from this evil habit at once, for your Lord says to you, “This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.”

[John 15:13](#). *Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.*

“Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.” I lift you above the rank of servant, and make you my table companions, privileged to sit at the table with me in communion. I put you down on my list of associates and familiars, with whom I take sweet counsel, and in company with whom I walk to the house of God. “Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.” This condition applies to the whole range of Christ’s commands. We are not to omit any one of them, nor to make a little nick in our conscience as some do, nor to neglect what seems to be a comparatively small duty; for neglected duties, even of the lesser kind,

often set upon us as little stones in a boot do upon a traveler. They lame him, they may not prevent him from traveling, but they mar his comfort on the road. Be scrupulous, brethren, lest, through the neglect of what some regard as scruples, you should bring upon yourselves great sorrows.

[John 15:14-16](#). *Ye are my friends, if ye do whatever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you. Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you,*

“That is where the love began, — not with you, but with me.”

[John 15:16](#). *And ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain:*

There are some people who are very fond of quoting the first part of this verse, they are very glad to hear a sermon upon the free, sovereign grace of God. They cannot too often repeat the words, “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you;” but they do not talk so much about the next clause: “and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain.” Let us accept all God’s words as he has given them to us, and keep up the due proportion of the whole. Note that Christ is not speaking here of spasmodic piety, the religion that can only be kept up by popular preaching, and great meetings, and much excitement, and all that sort of thing; but of the religion of principle that bears its clusters tomorrow as well as today, and even months and years hence, — the religion that bears its fruit every month, and the leaf whereof doth not wither. May we be such branches in the true vine that our fruit shall thus remain.

[John 15:16](#). *That whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.*

For, where the fruit remains, power in prayer will remain. If we are constantly living unto God, we shall find ourselves privileged to have the ear of God; and when we pray to him, he will grant us the desire of our hearts.

[John 15:17](#). *These things I command you, that ye love one another.*

Our Lord repeated the command, for he knew how prone even his disciples would be to disobey it.

[John 15:18](#). *If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.*

It is no new thing for the ungodly to hate the godly, so let us not be surprised if that is our portion.

[John 15:19-20](#). *If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.*

It ought to be quite sufficient for the servant if he is treated as his Lord was; what higher honour than that could he wish to have?

[John 15:21](#). *But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sale, because they know not him that sent me.*

They professed to know God, and some of them even thought that they were rendering acceptable service to God when they rejected his Son, whom he had sent unto them.

[John 15:22-24](#). *If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin. He that hateth me hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now they have both seen and hated both me and my Father.*

Our Lord did not mean that they would have been sinless if he had not come to them, but that his coming, and their rejection of him, had enormously increased and intensified their sinfulness.

[John 15:25](#). *But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause.*

They fulfilled what had been written long before, even as they afterwards did when they put Christ to death.

[John 15:26-27](#). *But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.*

The witness of the Spirit of truth still continues, and Christ's disciples are still privileged to be co-witnesses, even with the Holy Spirit himself; let us take care to avail ourselves of this privilege whenever we can.

Verses 9-27

[John 15:9](#). *As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you:*

Oh, drink this nectar down! It is as when Cleopatra dissolved the pearl into a single draught; for here is the choicest pearl of truth that ever was dissolved into a single verse to be a delicious draught for his people to drink: “As the Father hath loved me,” — as surely as the Father hath loved me; and, then, “as” — that is,— in the same manner “as the Father hath loved me,” — without beginning, without ending, Without measure, without change, “so have I loved you.”

[John 15:9-10](#). *Continue ye in my love. If ye keep any commandments, ye shall abide in my love;*

Note this point of the Lord’s discipline; — not that Christ ever casts away his people, but that he does take from them the sweet sense of his love, the realization of it, if they are disobedient to him, and keep not his commandments.

[John 15:10-11](#). *Even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you,*

That he might joy in us,— feel a sacred delight in thinking of us as he does when he sees us keeping his commandments, and treasuring up his words, and so living in his love, and being mighty in prayer.

[John 15:11](#). *And that your joy might be full.*

If Christ is not pleased with us, we cannot be glad; and if he has no joy in us, we cannot have joy in him. These two things rise and fall together. When the father of the family looks with joy upon his boy, then the boy is happy; but when the father has no joy in his son, then be sure of this, the son has no joy in his father, but he is sad at heart. O God, may we never grieve thee, for if we do, we shall be ourselves grieved; at least, I trust that we shall, we would not have it otherwise. But, oh! that we might have the testimony that Enoch had before his translation, that we have pleased God!

Then shall we have true pleasure in ourselves.

[John 15:12-14](#). *This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.*

Obedience, then, is rewarded with a holy friendship, for Christ becomes in the highest sense our Friend; but we are not his friends till we cease to delight in sin, and turn away from it into the paths of holiness.

[John 15:15](#). *Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.*

The servant works in a building, and it is enough for him that he is laying part of a line of brick or stone. Perhaps he has never seen the design of the structure, nor had a wish to do so. But you and I have the great Architect constantly coming to us to tell us what the building is to be, and to explain to us his plans, and so we work with greater pleasure and joy than a mere labourer might. The very heart of Christ is laid bare to his people: “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him.” Happy are his people; glad to be his servants,— gladder still to be his friends.

[John 15:16](#). *Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.*

There you see divine election leading on to fruit-bearing, and perpetuated in perseverance: “that your fruit should remain.” It brings also to every one of its objects this conspicuous favor, prevailing power in prayer: “that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.”

[John 15:17](#). *These things I command you, that ye love one another.*

O you professors, who have no love to one another, you are breaking the King’s commandment! You are living in direct violation of a plain command that is most dear to his heart. Oh, that we might constantly hear it and obey it! “These things I command you, that ye love one another.”

[John 15:18](#). *If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.*

That is what you have reason to expect, and you may feel honoured if they treat you as they have treated your Lord.

[John 15:19-22](#). *If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name’s sake, because they know not him that sent me. If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin.*

There is an awful increase of sin produced by Christ speaking to a man; and if any of you have been very near to the Kingdom, and your conscience has been aroused, and your mind has been impressed by the truth, and yet you have gone back to your sin, you have multiplied that sin a thousandfold. The times of your ignorance God may have winked at; but now you are sinning against light and knowledge; and unless you repent, terrible will be your doom.

[John 15:23-26](#). *He that hateth me hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father. But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause. But when the Comforter is come,*

And he has come; he is here, he has never been taken away; he still abides with and in the Church.

[John 15:26](#). *Whom I'll send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me:*

By this mark you may know whether that which has been taught you is of the Spirit of God. If it does not testify of Christ, if he is not the head and front of it all, there is nothing in it for you to accept. If any man comes to you with what he calls a revelation, if it is not all concerning Christ, by this shall you judge it; it is not of the Spirit of God if it does not testify of Christ.

[John 15:27](#). *And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.*

May we all bear witness according as we have been with Christ, for there is no bearing witness to Christ unless we have first been with him.

Verses 12-27

[John 15:12](#). *This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.*

O beloved, do keep this commandment! Overlook each other's infirmities. Bear with each other's faults. Love one another as Christ has loved us.

[John 15:13-15](#). *Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.*

“I have explained myself to you in such a way that I have proved that you are my friends. A master sets his servant to work without explaining what his object is in that work, but I have explained to you what my Father’s design is. Therefore, you are my friends.”

[John 15:16-21](#). *Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you. These things I command you, that ye love one another. If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name’s sake, because they know not him that sent me.*

Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name’s sake, because they know not him that sent me. We cannot expect, therefore, to receive honour, and to wear a crown of gold where Jesus wore a crown of thorns.

[John 15:22-24](#). *If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin. He that hateth me hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin:*

They would have been comparatively free from sin.

[John 15:24-26](#). *But now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father. But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause. But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me:*

Notice that blessed truth,—that even that Divine Person, the Holy Ghost, when he comes to visit us, has nothing better to speak of than our Lord Jesus Christ: “He shall testify of me.” Even the Holy Spirit, when he exercises the function of the Comforter, testifies of Christ. Is he not the consolation of Israel? Well did the poet write

“Thou dear Redeemer, dying Lamb,
We love to hear of thee;
No music’s like thy charming name,
Nor half so sweet can be.”

[John 15:27](#). *And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning*

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CHAPTER 16

Verses 1-14

[John 16:1-3](#). *These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me.*

True followers of Christ must not reckon upon having the world’s commendation. At first, the Jews persecuted the Christians; then the Romans took up the cruel work, and others have continued it, in some form or other, even to this day, for the persecution of the saints has not yet ceased. There are many who still have hard times, and have to endure trials of cruel mockings for Christ’s sake. If you resolve to follow Christ men will be sure to call you old-fashioned, ridiculous, Puritanic, and I know not what besides, yet what does it matter to you if they do? Your Master foretold that it would be so.

[John 16:4](#). *But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning because I was with you.*

Christ did not deceive his disciples concerning the treatment that would be meted out to them. He did not promise that the road to heaven would be an easy path, or flatter his followers with the notion that the cross, which they had to carry after him, had no weight in it; “These things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them.”

[John 16:5-6](#). *But now I go my way to him that sent me, and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou? But because I have said these things unto*

you, sorrow hath filled your heart.

They were thinking more of their loss by his going away from them than of his gain in going back to his Father. If they had thought of the glory into which he was so soon to enter, they would have ceased to sorrow, and would have rejoiced with exceeding joy, but they seem to have loved themselves better than they loved their Lord; hence his absence, which ought to have given them many reasons for rejoicing, became to them a cause for grief.

[John 16:7](#). *Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away:*

“It is not merely for my own glory that I am going away, but my absence from you will be better for you than my continued bodily presence with you could possibly be.”

[John 16:7](#). *For if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.*

“And he will be of more service to you than I could be even if I were to remain with you.” The presence of the Spirit of God in the Church is better for the present dispensation than even the bodily presence of Christ would be.

[John 16:8-12](#). *And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.*

“You have not yet received the Spirit of God as you shall do after my departure, and then your capacities shall be enlarged, so that you shall be able to understand deep truths which are altogether beyond your comprehension at present.”

[John 16:13](#). *Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.*

Is not that wonderful? As Jesus Christ said that he did not bear witness to himself, but spoke the words which his Father had given him, so the Spirit of God does not speak of himself, but he bears witness to the truth which Christ has revealed, and also makes known “things to come.” But he will never reveal anything contrary to that which Christ has revealed in his Word. That which is to be revealed is that truth which was from the

beginning. As we are taught it by the Divine Spirit, it becomes fresh truth to us, though it was ever in Christ's eternal mind.

[John 16:14](#). *He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.*

Oh, that this blessed Spirit may continually show the things of Christ to us!

Verses 1-16

[John 16:1](#). *These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended.*

Or, "made to stumble." Christ would not have you who are his people caused to stumble by anything that happens to you. He wants you to walk without tripping; his angels bear you up in their hands lest at any time you should dash your foot against a stone. He himself, as your Guardian, comes and speaks beforehand to let you know what is to occur to you, that you may not be caused to stumble by any fresh trial that may assail you.

[John 16:2](#). *They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.*

Christ's disciples were to expect opposition of the most cruel kind. They were to be put away from those with whom they had long worshipped; they were even to run the risk of losing their lives; but Jesus foretold what would happen to them, that they might not be stumbled at it. Such was their Lord's love to them that he would not have them attacked unawares; by his grace, they would hold on, and hold out, they would persevere to the end; but there would have to be a struggle, and to help them in the fight, Jesus tells them all about it before it begins. We say, "Forewarned, forearmed." So the disciples were; and so are you. Your Lord tells you that you will not get to heaven without trials: "In the world ye shall have tribulation." And he tells you this that it may not surprise you when it comes, that it may not act upon you like a sudden gust of wind that would upset a little ship; but that you may just keep everything in trim looking for the storm to come: "These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be caused to stumble."

[John 16:3](#). *And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me.*

The persecuting Jews professed to be worshippers of Jehovah; but they did not know the Christ, whom he sent, and, therefore, in very truth they did not know the Father either. How can you expect that those who do not know the Father will know the Son, or any of the other children of the divine

family? As they rejected the Elder Brother, will they not also reject the younger ones? Is the disciple to be above his Master, or the servant to be treated better than his Lord? Think not so; and therefore expect that you will not be known, even as the Father and the Son were not known.

“Tis no surprising thing,
That we should be unknown:
The Jewish world knew not their King,
God’s everlasting Son.”

[John 16:4](#). *But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you.*

Our Lord did tell his disciples something about “these things.” He did warn them to expect opposition, but he did not dwell upon that theme, he did not expatiate upon it. He did not at first give that prominence to it which he was about to do, and he explains to his disciples why he had not talked much upon that topic: “because I was with you.” It did not matter how they were opposed so long as he was with them; his society more than made up for anything they might have to suffer; and, dear child of God, if you now enjoy the presence of Christ, and the power of his Spirit, you need not mind what happens to you.

[John 16:5-6](#). *But now I go my way to him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou? But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart.*

They were cast down because he was going away from them. Love awoke fear. It was a hard thing for them to have to miss him; they could not tell what might happen to them when their Leader was gone from their midst. Do you wonder that they were filled with sorrow? Yet there was no real cause for grief; there was rather reason for rejoicing when they understood the true lesson of Christ’s departure. There is no real cause for your sorrow, dear friends. If you knew all things, you would rejoice exceedingly in that very thing that now most troubles you.

[John 16:7](#). *Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.*

And the Comforter is better for us than the personal presence of Christ. We do not always think so; but it is true. It is better for the Church to have

the Holy Spirit in the midst of her, than for Christ to be here in the bodily presence on the earth.

[John 16:8](#). *And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:*

The world is not as yet convinced, but it is convicted; though it does not own its guilt, there is more than sufficient evidence to prove it guilty in the sight of God.

[John 16:9](#). *Of sin, because they believe not on me;*

What must be the depth of human wickedness that sinners will not accept a Divine Saviour! This is the crowning, crushing proof of human guilt: "They believe not on me."

[John 16:10](#). *Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more;*

Christ was righteous, the righteous One, whom men rejected, for he has gone up to the Father's side, where he could not have been if he had not perfected righteousness. The very going back of Christ to the Father's throne proves that righteousness does exist, and convicts men of sinning against it.

[John 16:11](#). *Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.*

The gospel judges him, and dethrones him; and as there has been a judgment of the world's king, so there will be a judgment of the world itself.

[John 16:12](#). *I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.*

Some teachers overload their hearers with truth till I might truly say that they pile on the agony. Truth which cannot be received is often most irksome and burdensome to the hearer; when the mind is not in a fit condition to bear any more instruction, it is cruel work to impose it. Our Lord Jesus did not so overburden his disciples: "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now."

[John 16:13](#). *Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself;*

This is a very wonderful expression: "He shall not speak of himself." We have plenty of men, nowadays, who boast that they do speak of or from themselves; that is to say, they profess to borrow from no one, not even from God. They are original thinkers, inventors; they bring forth fresh

things out of the depth of their wonderful minds; but even the Holy Ghost is here said not to “speak of himself.”

[John 16:13](#). *But whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak;*

That is just our business, to hear God’s message, and then to speak it; and if the Holy Ghost does this, and if Jesus did it, we also may be glad to do the same. We are no inventors of great novelties; we are simply the message-bearers of the Most High, the declarers of the old truths which God has revealed to us.

[John 16:13-16](#). *And he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall skew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are. mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you. A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father.*

How wonderful this is! We are to see Jesus because he has gone to the Father. It looks as if that were a reason why we should not see him; but we see him better by faith, now that he has gone to the Father, than we could have seen him while he was here below covered with the veil of his humiliation. Yet it is hardly surprising that the disciples were puzzled by their Lord’s words: “A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me:” and, “Because I go to the Father.”

Verses 1-20

This chapter contains some of the most precious words that the Lord Jesus uttered before he died upon the cross.

[John 16:1](#). *These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended.*

Or, as the Revised Version translates it, “be made to stumble.” Christ would not have his children stumble. There is an offence of the cross, but he would not have us needlessly offended. How careful is our dear Saviour not to give us offence! We ought to be very careful not to offend him; but what condescension it is on his part that he should be careful of offending us, or of permitting us to be offended, or made to stumble.

[John 16:2](#). *They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.*

Can you remain faithful to your Master then, when you lose your position, or your character, or men put you out of the synagogue? When you nearly lose life itself, and when they shall think they are doing God’s service by seeking to kill you, can you stand true to Christ then? The Master

knew that days of bitter persecution would soon come upon his followers, so he strengthened them against those evil times that were approaching.

[John 16:3](#). *And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me.*

It is ignorance that makes men hate God's people and his Son: "They have not known the Father, nor me." Truly did Paul say, "I did it ignorantly in unbelief;" and for such persecutors there is full and free forgiveness. When they turn unto the Lord, even this sin shall be forgiven them; but they will not forgive themselves for having committed it; and, like Paul, they will count themselves the chief of sinners because they persecuted the Church of God.

[John 16:4](#). *But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them.*

"You will then see my foresight, my care for you, my prophetic power. To be forewarned is to be forearmed. You will not be taken by surprise." If any of you who have lately been converted should meet with great opposition, do not be surprised; Jesus has told you to expect it; and if the fire should get seven times hotter, count it no strange thing that the fiery trial has happened unto you. It has happened unto others before you, and will happen to others after you; therefore be prepared for it.

[John 16:4](#). *And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you.*

"While I was with you, you could run to me, and tell me all about your trials and difficulties. If anybody was hard with you, I could come to your help, and comfort you. You did not need to know these things before, so I did not tell you of them. You do need to know them now, and now I tell you of them."

[John 16:5](#). *But now I go my way to him that sent me;*

Christ was going to the cross, and to the grave, and afterwards to heaven.

[John 16:5](#). *And none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou?*

For want of asking that question, Christ's disciples were full of grief.

Sometimes we do not ask enough questions. We ask too many questions of doubt; it would be well if we were to ask a few more questions of believing curiosity. There are some things that we ought to wish to know; and Christ encourages his people to come to him for information.

[John 16:6](#). *But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart.*

When a poor Christian friend is dying, you are full of sorrow because he is going away from you. Why do you not ask whither he is going? If he is going home to heaven and to glory, why, then be comforted about him; you have no cause for distress on his account.

[John 16:7](#). *Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away.*

“It is better for you that I should be absent than that I should be present.” Their Lord was their joy, their Leader, their Teacher, their Comforter. He is going away, and he tells them that his absence will be a gain to them. “It is expedient for you that I go away.”

[John 16:7](#). *For if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him, unto you.*

Now, it is better for us to have the Comforter than to have Christ here in bodily presence; for if Christ were here tonight, in this Tabernacle, where could we put him so as to be equally near each one of us? I should certainly want him up here on the platform; and you, up there in the top gallery, would say, “Well, we are a long way off; why should he not come up here?” You see, if it is bodily presence that is enjoyed, some must be near, and some must be far off; but now that Christ has gone up to heaven, his Spirit is here. Where is that Spirit? On the platform, I hope, and everywhere else. Any of you who desire it may have the Holy Spirit’s presence. The Lord says, “I will put my Spirit within you.” Better than the bodily presence of Christ is the real, though spiritual, presence of the Holy Ghost.

[John 16:8](#). *And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:*

What, a Comforter reprove? Yes. The Holy Spirit never comforts till he has reprovved. There must be a reproof of sin before there can be comfort in Christ. And while the Spirit comforts saints, he reprovves the world.

[John 16:9](#). *Of sin, because they believe not on me;*

The greatest sin in all the world is, not believing on Jesus. Our Lord did not say, “Of sin, because of the evil of drunkenness.” That is a great sin, a cursed sin, and there are other great sins; but Christ said, “Of sin, because they believe not on me.” That is the root sin, the foundation sin, the sin that keeps a man in his sin.

[John 16:10](#). *Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more;*

It is God's righteousness that takes Christ up to heaven. He has been here; he has lived a perfect life; he has died a sacrificial death; and God has shown his acceptance of him, for he has gone to his reward.

[John 16:11](#). *Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.*

When Christ came here, there was a crisis, a judgment; and sin was judged and condemned; and the prince of the world, the chief sinner in the world, received his death-blow: "the prince of this world is judged."

[John 16:12](#). *I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.*

See how Christ teaches us slowly, wisely, prudently. There are some things which some of you young Christians do not know; you could not bear them if you did know them. You shall know them when you can bear them. A man with a doctrine that he cannot handle is often like a child with a tough piece of meat which he cannot bite. Give the child milk, or the crumb of the loaf. Do not put crusts into his mouth till he has teeth to bite them; do not give him meat till he can digest it. See the gentle Saviour's way of imparting instruction. He teaches us much, but not too much at a time.

[John 16:13](#). *Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.*

See, my dear brethren in the ministry, how little store the Holy Ghost sets by originality. We have men nowadays straining to be original. Strain the other way, for listen, "He shall not speak of himself," — not even the Holy Ghost, — "He shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak." He is the Repeater of the Father's message, not the inventor of his own. So let it be with us ministers. We are not to make up a gospel as we go along, as I have heard some say. We are not to shape it to the times in which we live, and suit it to the congregations to which we speak. God forbid! Let this be true of every one of us, "He shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak"

[John 16:14](#). *He shall glorify me*

The Holy Ghost does that; therefore, surely we, who are the preachers of the gospel, should aim at the same object: "He shall glorify me." It should be our one desire to magnify and glorify our Lord Jesus Christ.

[John 16:14-16](#). *For he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you. A little while, and ye shall not see me; and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father.*

That was a very simple statement, every Sunday-scholar understands it now; but the twelve apostles did not understand it when they heard it.

[John 16:17-18](#). *Then said some of his disciples among themselves, What is this that he saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me: and, Because I go to the Father? They said therefore, What is this that he saith, A little while? we cannot tell what he saith.*

They said this “among themselves.” This was not a wise course, for what can ignorance learn of ignorance? Here were disciples questioning one another; none of them knew anything, and yet they were trying to teach one another. If they had all gone to their Master, how much more quickly would they have understood his words! Take everything to Jesus. Try everything by the Word of God. Do not believe what you hear because I say it, or because somebody else says it. Go to the Word of God to learn what you need to know, and to the Spirit of God to teach you the meaning of what you read.

[John 16:19-20](#). *Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask him, and said unto them, Do ye enquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me? Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament,*

Christ would die; he would go away and be unseen. On the cross he would depart out of this life; in the tomb he would be hidden from his disciples: “Ye shall weep and lament.”

[John 16:20](#). *But the world shall rejoice:*

But not for long; the world’s joy at Christ’s death was soon over.

[John 16:20](#). *And ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.*

I think we may leave off our reading at this verse, with these words to flavor our mouth all this week: “Your sorrow shall be turned into joy.” God grant that it may be so with many here present, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

Verses 1-22

[John 16:1](#). *These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended.*

“That you should not be scandalized when you see me put to death, and when you miss my bodily presence from your midst. I want to prepare you for the shame and death that lie before me, and also to prepare you for all that lies before you, for many of you will have to drink of my cup, and to be baptized with my baptism. These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended,” or ashamed, or scandalized, or caused to stumble, when they come to pass.”

[John 16:2](#). *They shall put you out of the synagogues; yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.*

That terrible “time” did come very soon, and the Jewish and other persecutors hunted down the Christians in almost every place where they could be found. Nothing would satisfy their cruel foes but the blood of multitudes of martyrs, and many of the persecutors actually thought that they were doing God service while they were putting his children to torture and death.

[John 16:3-4](#). *And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me. But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them.*

To be forewarned is to be forearmed, especially when the Lord Jesus Christ gives the forewarning; and his disciples were thus to be forearmed and braced up for the coming conflict.

[John 16:4](#). *And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you.*

“I needed not, at the beginning of my ministry, to trouble you about these things. Even then, you and I were hated by evil men, but I was with you, so I was able to protect you from them.” The persecutors could not slay Christ’s sheep, as they desired to do, as long as their Shepherd was still with them, so his warning words were not needed while he was in their midst. Christ does not teach us everything at once; if he did, we might be so confused that we should not learn anything. Perhaps we have sometimes wished that our ears could hear more than they now do; but it is most probable that, if we could hear more, we should really understand less than we now do. Have you, at any time, had your hearing more than usually acute? If so, you must then have heard a thousand sounds which it would have been better for you not to have heard; for they so confused and confounded one another that you did not hear anything distinctly. It is just so with the mind; it is capable of receiving a certain quantity of truth; but if

too much truth be placed before it at once, it produces confusion in the mind's ear and in the mind's eye, and we really hear less, see less, and understand less than we should do if less truth were set before us. The Master knew that his disciples were like narrow-necked bottles, which must be gradually filled, so he only revealed the truth to them as they were able to receive it.

[John 16:5-6](#). *But now I go my way to him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou? But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart.*

Sorrow sometimes prevents us from learning the lessons that Christ wishes to teach us. You remember that, in the garden of Gethsemane, Christ's disciples were "sleeping for sorrow," and so they lost some of the lessons that they might otherwise have learnt. Those who are in great trouble are often in that dazed condition in which half-awakened persons are; and there is a measure of sleepiness about us all in times of sorrow. It was so with the disciples on this occasion, and therefore they did not ask their Lord what they might have asked him if sorrow had not filled their hearts: "None of you asketh me, Whither goest thou?"

[John 16:7-9](#). *Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me;*

Which is the head of all sin, the root of all sin, the sin which lieth in front of the door of mercy, and blocks the sinner's way. Oh, that the Spirit of God would convince all here, who are not believers on the Lord Jesus Christ, that they are living in the greatest of all sins "because they believe not on Christ"!

[John 16:10](#). *Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more;*

Of course, Christ would not have been received back by his Father if he had not completed the work of righteousness which his Father gave him the commission to perform. The risen and glorified Saviour is the great testimony to the righteousness both of Christ and of his gospel.

[John 16:11](#). *Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.*

Christ has already judged the prince of the powers of evil, so you may depend upon it that he will also judge all those who are under the dominion

of the traitor prince who has usurped his Master's position and authority. Christ has summoned the dread lord of evil to his bar, and judged him. Think not, O ye who are his servants, that any of you will be able to elude the vigilance of the great Judge of all! Judgment will assuredly come to the common soldiers of the prince of darkness since their captain himself has been judged and condemned.

[John 16:12](#). *I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.*

Here again observe the reticence of the Saviour for his disciples' good, still graciously keeping from them what they could not bear to hear; and are not you, beloved, thankful that you do not, at this moment, know what is to happen to you in the future? It is wise for each one of us to say, —

“My God, I would not wish to read
My fate with curious eyes; —
What gloomy lines are writ for me,
Or what bright scenes arise.”

It is best for you, at present, to know but little. Prize what you do know, and be content to leave all that is not yet revealed, for “the secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever.”

[John 16:13](#). *Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth:*

All that you need to know, and may know, he will teach you. If you cannot find your way into the heart of any truth, the Spirit of God has the clue to it, so ask him to guide you into it. There is such a thing as seeing the outside of a truth; that is good as far as it goes, but the blessedness lies in getting to the inside of the truth, the very kernel and core of it.

[John 16:13-14](#). *For he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me:*

That is the distinctive mark of the Spirit of God. If any man says that he speaks by the Spirit, you can test him in this way, — does what he says glorify Christ? If not, away with him, for he is not speaking as the Holy Spirit speaks.

[John 16:14-18](#). *For he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you. A little while, and ye shall not see me:*

and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father. Then said some of his disciples among themselves, What is this that he saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me: and, Because I go to the Father? They said therefore, What is this that he saith, A little while? we cannot tell what he saith.

These disciples of Christ were almost as ignorant as the rank outsiders were. Though they had been with Jesus for three years, they had not learnt what is clear enough to every Sunday-school child today, and what is certainly perfectly understood by all who are taught of God. They said, “What is this that he saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me: and, because I go to the Father? They said therefore, What is this that he saith, A little while? we cannot tell what he saith.”

[John 16:19-22](#). *Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask him, and said unto them, Do ye inquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me? Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.*

Verses 1-33

[John 16:1](#). *These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended.*

The temptation is, when Christ is despised and rejected, for our hearts to begin to sink, and for our faith to fail. Therefore did Christ warn his disciples that they “should not be offended.”

[John 16:2](#). *They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.*

The best of men are but men at the best, and they are very apt to fail when they find persecution hot against them, especially when even religious men, of a certain kind, count it to be a religious duty to persecute the people of God.

[John 16:3](#). *And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me.*

This verse reminds us of our Lord's prayer on the cross, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Persecution of God's people usually arises from ignorance of God the Father and God the Son.

[John 16:4](#). *But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you.*

"I was your Protector; by my personal presence, I so sustained your hearts that it did not matter what trouble you fell into; but now I am going away, and therefore I give you this warning."

[John 16:5-6](#). *But now I go my way to him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou? But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart.*

We sometimes endure a needless sorrow, for the asking of a single question might remove it. Our Lord says to his disciples, "If you knew where I was going, and understood my motive in going, your sorrow at my departure would be assuaged."

[John 16:7](#). *Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away:*

"It is for your profit to lose my personal presence, precious as that has been to you."

[John 16:7](#). *For if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.*

The word "Comforter" might just as well have been translated "Advocate." The Holy Spirit is that Divine Advocate who pleads the cause of God in us, and for us, and so comforts us. He it is who is now with Us. If Jesus Christ were still upon earth in the flesh, he could only be in one place at one time. If he were in this assembly, he could not also be in Jerusalem or in New York; but the Comforter can be in all the gatherings of the Lord's people, and with each individual believer, the wide world over.

[John 16:8-12](#). *And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.*

Teachers, learn wisdom from Christ. He did not try to teach his disciples everything at once; but, by teaching them one truth, he prepared them for another truth. Let us do the same with those whom we try to teach, let us dispense to them the simpler truths first, and afterwards those that are deeper and more mysterious.

[John 16:13-14](#). *Howbeit when he the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.*

That spirit, which does not glorify Christ, is not the spirit of God. Hereby shall ye discern between the spirit of error and the Spirit of truth.

[John 16:15-16](#). *All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you. A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father.*

This is what our whole life is: “a little while.” But in that little while there are little whiles of sadness, and little whiles of gladness, — little whiles in which we have Christ with us, and little whiles in which we see him, but find him not. Blessed be God, we are going away from the land of these changing little whiles up to the place where the sun shineth in its strength for ever and ever.

[John 16:17-18](#). *Then said some of his disciples among themselves, What is this that he saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and, again, a little while, and ye shall see me: and, Because I go to the Father? They said therefore, What is this that he saith, A little while? we cannot tell what he saith.*

Sometimes, when you are reading the Bible, you will come across a text of which you will say to yourselves, “What is this? We cannot tell what he saith.” But do not give up reading the Bible because you cannot understand it. There is a great deal that a father says which his child cannot comprehend, yet it is a part of the child’s education to be with his father, and to hear some things that he does not at first understand; but by-and-by, it all becomes clear. So, believer, what thou knowest not now thou shalt know hereafter.

[John 16:19](#). *Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask him*

They did not ask him, but they desired to do so, and a desire is a prayer. Where our blessed Master is present, the very desires of his people are

prayers, even though their lips remain closed.

[John 16:19-20](#). *And said unto them, Do you enquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me? Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.*

Oh, what a blessed promise!

[John 16:21-24](#). *A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you. And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall, receive, that your joy may be full.*

They had asked very little, and they had never asked even that little in Christ's name; and there are but few Christians who do so even now. They ask for Christ's sake, which is a good plea, but to ask in Christ's name is better still, — when you feel conscious that you have Christ's authority to use his name, and so can put the King's own signature at the bottom of your petitions. There are some prayers to which a man dares not to set Christ's seal; but when the prayer is such that Christ himself might have offered it, then we may present it in his name, and we may be certain that we shall receive what we have asked.

[John 16:25-28](#). *These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father. At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: For the Father himself teacheth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God. I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father.*

Here are four unfathomable depths: "I came forth from the Father," — there is Christ's eternal pre-existence. "And am come into the world," — there is his incarnation. "Again, I leave the world," — there is his death, resurrection, and ascension into the glory of God. "And go to the Father," — there is his exaltation to the Father's right hand.

[John 16:29](#). *His disciples said unto him, Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb.*

Did you never, when reading the Bible, come across a text, that was opened up to you so sweetly that you vied out just as these disciples did “Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb.”

[John 16:30-31](#). *Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God. Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe?*

Listen, you who imagine that you are so strong in faith, and every grace, that you think you are almost perfect: “Do ye now believe?”

[John 16:32](#). *Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone:*

Ah, me! these were the men who said they believed in him; yet, in his time of trial, they fled like cowardly unbelievers. God help us, and sustain us, or we shall do as they did!

[John 16:32-33](#). *And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me. These things I have spoken unto you that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.*

Verses 16-33

[John 16:16](#). *A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father.*

Remember that the disciples were on the verge of great trouble. Their Leader and Friend was about to be taken away from them by a cruel death. They were to be tried as they had never been tried before. The Saviour therefore prepared their minds for the trial. I have often noticed that, before a great trouble comes, the Spirit of God secretly comforts in a very remarkable manner those who are to be tried. Perhaps, tonight, without knowing it, we may be near some great affliction or sorrow. If so, may the Lord store us with comfort and strength for the coming hour of need!

[John 16:17-18](#). *There said some of his disciples among themselves, What is this that he saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shalt see me: and, Because I go to the Father? They said therefore, What is this that he saith, A little while? we cannot tell what he saith.*

It was only too plain. We often do not understand our Master because we imagine that there is some deep significance in his words when their meaning lies upon the very surface. If you would understand the gospel as you understand the common talk of life, it would be wise. If we could but bring men to believe God as a child believes its mother, practically and really, then their salvation would be a very simple and speedy matter.

[John 16:19-20](#). *Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask him, and said unto them, Do ye enquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me? Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice:*

Sometimes the world appears to have the best of it. Its mouth is full of laughter while the child of God cannot speak for sorrow. Ah! well, there is time enough for a change. We may very well let those laugh today who will have to gnash their teeth for ever. Judge not God by your present circumstances. Take the rough with the smooth. Be willing to go to heaven up the bleak side of the hill.

[John 16:20](#). *And ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.*

So, the more of it the better. If your sorrow is to be turned into joy, then the more sorrow, the more joy. Happy is he who endureth trial, since his trial is to be turned into happiness.

[John 16:21-22](#). *A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now therefore have sorrow:*

But your sorrow is the pang of life.

[John 16:22](#). *But I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.*

The joy that comes by sorrow in connection with Christ is the joy of which we shall never be bereaved. Let us thank God that there is a joy which no man can take away. Happy are they who have it.

[John 16:23](#). *And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you,*

Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. This is a grand promise. If we dare ask in the name of Christ, and it is not everything that we could ask for in his name ³/₄if our petition is such that we

honestly judge that we may put Christ's name to it; if it is a thing that Christ would have asked; if it is a thing that Christ could have asked, let us ask in Christ's name, and the Father will give it.

[John 16:24](#). *Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name:*

You have not been bold enough. You have asked a few petty things, but you have never fully made use of Christ's name. How many Christians have never learned to pray in the name of Christ! They say at the end of their petition, "For Christ's sake." That is good as far as it goes. I may ask a man to give me such and such a thing for the sake of another; that is good pleading so far as it goes. But if I dare to use the authority that my friend gives me to put his name at the bottom of my request, that is another and a higher thing. To ask in the name of Christ, to plead under his authority, this is to pray indeed.

[John 16:24](#). *Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.*

"That your joy may be full," a ripe joy, a joy that fills your being, that sparkles in your eye, dances in your feet, leaps in your heart, an unutterable, inexpressible joy: "That your joy may be full."

[John 16:25-26](#). *These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father. At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you:*

Though that be true,

[John 16:27](#). *For the Father himself loveth you,*

What a delightful little sentence! "The Father himself loveth you."

[John 16:27](#). *Because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God.*

God's first love to us is from himself alone. Then there is another love that grows in his heart because of our love to his Son. You love your child. The reason lies in your own heart. After a while, that dear, loving, affectionate child has won a farther place in your affection, and you love him because of his choice and special love to you. Remember that Psalm, "Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name." Our love of God wins from him another love, of a different sort, although it comes from the same fountain as the first: "For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God."

[John 16:28-30](#). *I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father. His disciples said unto him, Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb. Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God.*

One does not see any reason why they should have been made so strong in faith just then. But we were not there to hear Christ's words. There is many a message, which depends upon the tone and manner of the speaker for its influence over the people who hear it. When you read the story afterwards, without the earnest manner and the living tone of the speaker, you do not see why it had such a strange effect upon his hearers. So we do not quite see here, by the calm reading of this narrative, why the disciples leaped all of a sudden into such confidence.

[John 16:31](#). *Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe?*

He did not feel so sure of their faith as they did. We often think we have great heaps of the gold of faith; and it glitters very brightly, but it is not the precious metal after all. So Jesus said, "Do ye now believe?"

[John 16:32](#). *Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.*

These poor creatures, who were so bold and so oversure, would all be runaways. If persecution were to arise in our day, I wonder how many of us would be found true men. Ah! you think you are true blue; but you would run at the first touch of water, not to mention fire. Are there not many of us who are but poor believers? If our faith were sharply tried, would it stand the test?

[John 16:33](#). *These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.*

Christ wants his disciples to have peace. Are you fretting tonight? Are you afraid of Monday? Are you fearful about the trials of the week? Christ wants you to be at peace. Be quiet. Be quiet. Let all be still within your heart, and wait your Father's will. "In the world ye shall have tribulation:" on God's threshing-floor the flail will be kept going. If you are a child of God, you will have to suffer. The Captain of our salvation was made perfect through sufferings; and good soldiers of Jesus Christ must expect to pass through the same experience. As long as you are here, you will be tried: "In

the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” Think of that; the Christ who is about to sweat great drops of blood, and to die on the cross of Calvary, says, “I have overcome.” It is not Julius Caesar’s “Veni, vidi, vici;” but it is Christ’s “Veni, vidi, vici;” ³/₄“I came, I saw, I conquered:” “I have overcome.” And as he has overcome, so shall you, if you be his true follower.

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CHAPTER 17

Verses 1-12

[John 17:1](#). *These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come;*

This is in a very special sense our Lord’s prayer. What a word that is from the lips of Jesus, “Father”! This was the night of his deepest sorrow and his heaviest woe, but he begins his prayer with this tender expression, “Father, the hour is come;” the hour of darkness, the hour of his passion and death, had now arrived.

[John 17:1](#). *Glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee:*

Did Jesus look upon his suffering as his glory? He does not merely pray, “Sustain thy Son,” but, “Glorify thy Son.” In truth, our Lord’s lowest stoop was his highest glory. He was never more resplendent than when he hung upon the cross, that was his true spiritual throne, so he prayed, “Glorify thy Son,” — Enable him to bear the agony, and to pass through it to the glory.” “That thy Son also may glorify thee.” The death of Christ was a great glorifying of God. We see his love and his justice rendered more glorious in the death of Christ than they would have been by any other method.

[John 17:2](#). *As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.*

In this verse you get the doctrines of general and particular redemption blended. By his death, Christ obtained power over all flesh; his death had some relation to every man, but the special object of it was the salvation of the elect. The purpose of the shower is to water one particular field; but the rain falls everywhere, so plenteous is the bounty of God. The object of Christ’s atonement is to purchase eternal life for those who were given to him by his Father; but he has also obtained power over all flesh.

[John 17:3](#). *And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.*

To know God, is eternal life. If you know God, if you know Jesus Christ whom he has sent, you are spiritually quickened. That knowledge has brought to you, nay, it is, in itself, the new life: “This is life eternal,” — not life for a few years but life eternal. Mark the final perseverance of the saints, how they shall hold on and hold out for ever.

[John 17:4](#). *I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.*

Jesus regards his work as already done, although he had yet to die, to pay the ransom price for his people, yet by a leap of holy faith he says, “I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.”

[John 17:5](#). *And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.*

Jesus had laid aside his glory for our sakes, now he asks that, his work being regarded as done, his glory may be given to him again.

[John 17:6](#). *I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me: and they have kept thy word.*

God’s people belong to him, he gives them to his Son, Christ gives them his word, and they keep it: “They have kept thy word.” Do we keep God’s word? Do we hold to it? Do we make it the guide of our whole life? Do we seek to obey it? This is the token of God’s chosen people.

[John 17:7-12](#). *Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.*

Christ always has kept his people, he still keeps his people, and he will keep his people for ever. The sheep shall be delivered into the hand of the

Father in full number, there shall not be one of them missing in that day when they shall pass under the rod of the great Shepherd.

We cannot read all this prayer of our Lord tonight; we must now go, in the language of the next chapter, with the Master into the garden of his grief.

This exposition consisted of readings from [John 17:1-12](#); [John 18:1-14](#).

Verses 1-26

[John 17:1](#). *These words spake Jesus, and, lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come;*

The hour to which he had so long looked forward, the hour which he had anticipated with ardent desire: “The hour is come.” On the very night that Jesus prayed this prayer, Luke’s record tells us, “When the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. And he said unto them,

With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer;” So he began his great intercessory prayer, “Father, the hour is come, —

[John 17:1-2](#). *Glorify thy Son that thy Son also may glorify thee: as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.*

In these words we have both the general and the special aspects of redemption. Christ has received power over all flesh, but with this peculiar design, that he should give eternal life to as many as his Father has given him. Who are they who have been given to him by his Father? All who come to him by faith, even as he said, “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me.” To all of these Jesus gives eternal life.

[John 17:3](#). *And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.*

Do you know God? Do you know Jesus Christ? Are you on speaking terms, on loving terms, with them? Are they your friends? Then, you have eternal life; for “this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”

[John 17:4-6](#). *I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.*

What a sweet thing for the Lord Jesus to say of that poor, much-erring company of disciples, “They have kept thy word”! “They have not been all they might have been, nor all they ought to have been, but, O my Father, they have kept thy word!” I trust that we may be found faithful to the truth that the Holy Spirit has taught us, and obedient to its precepts, that our Lord may be able to say to his Father concerning us also, “They have kept thy word.”

[John 17:7-8](#). *Now they have known that all things to whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.*

See how the Lord Jesus himself takes all his teaching from the Father. You never hear from him any boast about being the originator of profound thoughts. No, he just repeated to his disciples the words he had received from the Father: “I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me.” If Jesus acted thus, how much more must the messengers of God receive the word from the Lord’s mouth, and speak it as they receive it!

[John 17:9-10](#). *I pray for them: I pray not for the world but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine: and I am glorified in them.*

Is not this a wonderful prayer? If anybody, possessing the greatest possible inventive faculty, were asked to produce a prayer which could be fitly prayed by a person who was both God and man, it would be an impossible task. This chapter has about it all the air of truthfulness, it ought to be sufficient to convince any man that Christ was God and man. There is such a wonderful mixing of the two natures, without any confusion of ideas, so manifestly does he plead as man, and yet so clearly does he also pray as none but the Son of God could pray, that he must be the God-man, the one mediator between God and man.

[John 17:11-12](#). *And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.*

It was known and foretold that Judas would be lost; therefore, the Saviour, the great Keeper of the sheep, is not to be held responsible for the

loss of “the son of perdition”, who was never committed to his charge.

[John 17:13-17](#). *And now come I to thee, and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.*

Our Divine Lord seems to think nothing about his own sufferings; all his thoughts are occupied with that which concerns his people. All his prayers are for them, that they may be made holy, and that so God may be glorified in them.

[John 17:18-19](#). *As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself,*

Or, “I set myself apart.”

[John 17:19-20](#). *That they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;*

They were only a handful of disciples, but you cannot tell what a multitude will believe on Christ through their word. There were but twelve apostles; yet John beheld a hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel, and after that he beheld a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, standing before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and with palms in their hands. The Saviour doubtless linked his little band of disciples with the ancient promise, “There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains, the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon.” What great events from little causes spring! Whenever you are doing good, remember not only those who are immediately saved, but the others who will be blessed through them, even as our Saviour said, “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.” We who have believed on Jesus, through the word preached or written by the apostles, are also included in this prayer of their Lord and ours. Notice what our Saviour asked of his Father for them and for us: —

[John 17:21](#). *That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou*

hast sent me.

And when Christians, being one in Christ, and one in the truth, shall become more manifestly one in heart, and life, and faith, what glad days we may hope to see!

[John 17:22-23](#). *And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them: that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and them in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.*

This is a wonderful expression, where will you find anything like it! It is indeed marvellous that God should have loved his people even as he loved Christ his Son, yet that is what the Lord Jesus here says: “Thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.”

[John 17:24-26](#). *Father. I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them thy name,*

“Thy character, thy work,” —

[John 17:26](#). *And will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.*

This prayer is for you, and for me, as much as for the twelve apostles. May the Lord fulfill it in all of us as well as in them, for his dear name’s sake!

Amen.

Verses 15-26

We will read this evening a portion of two prayers offered by our Divine Lord and Master on that night in which he was betrayed. The first is that memorable intercessory prayer of his recorded in the seventeenth chapter of the Gospel according to John.

[John 17:15](#). *I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou should keep them from the evil.*

Christ did not pray that his disciples should be taken out of the world. It is very seldom that we ought to present such a petition. If that had been a proper prayer for us to offer, it would have been authorized by the Master. There are times when, in great pain of body, or in deep depression of spirit, the believer, like Elijah under the juniper tree, requests for himself that he

may die. If you ever do pray such a prayer, utter it very softly, for the Master does not authorize it, and that is a matter that must be left to the Lord of life and death. Jesus says here, “I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.” Sin is the real evil of the world; the danger of our being entangled in worldly customs, or dropping into the evil ways of an ungodly generation. Christ does pray that we may be kept from the evil that is in the world; and we also may and must pray that the Lord will keep us from the evil by which we are surrounded, and especially from the evil one who seeks our destruction.

[John 17:16](#). *They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.*

“They are of another race: they are swayed by other motives, they have another life; they have another destiny; ‘They are not of the world.’” Is that true of you, dear hearer? We are reading out of God’s Book, remember. This is the description of Christ’s people; does it describe you? “They are not of the world: “they are not worldly, they are other-worldly; their thoughts and hearts are set upon the world to come”.

[John 17:17](#). *Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.*

What! Do they need to be sanctified? They are not of the world, and are kept from the evil in the world; do they need to be sanctified? Yes we shall always need sanctifying until we reach our heavenly home, where sin cannot enter. Every day we need the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit to lead us unto holiness. “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.” It is only the truth of God that can beget holiness; false doctrine is never the medium of sanctification. You can tell which are false doctrines, and which are the true, by our Lord’s own test: “By their fruits ye shall know them.” The same men who reject the old-fashioned doctrines also rebel against the old-fashioned style of living; loose living generally goes with loose doctrine. There never was an age in which the doctrines of grace were despised but, sooner or later, licentiousness prevailed. On the other hand, when we had Puritan teaching, we had also pure and holy living. This prayer is still needed for all Christ’s disciples, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”

[John 17:18](#). *As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.*

This is the original Missionary Society, and the model for all others; Christ sent, missioned, of the Father, and every saint missioned of Christ.

Are you carrying out your mission, O ye people of God? How dare you call yourselves by that name if you have no mission to anybody? If you are living here for yourself alone, how can you belong to Christ, who never lived a moment for himself, but always lived wholly for others?

[John 17:19](#). *And for their sakes I sanctify myself,*

“I set myself apart, as one who is consecrated, dedicated, devoted to a grand design.”

[John 17:19](#). *That they also might be sanctified through the truth.*

This is our Lord’s prayer for his disciples. In the ninth verse we read, “I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.”

Now our Lord Jesus prays for those who are to be his people. I wonder whether there are any of them here tonight.

[John 17:20](#). *Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe in me through their word;*

There is a great company of people who are not at present believers, but who shall yet believe on Christ through the testimony of those who are already believers on him. O God, call out many such through our word I pray.

[John 17:21](#). *That they all may be one;*

This is Christ’s prayer for all those who shall believe on him, that they may be converted, and brought into the one Church together with those who are already there:” that they all may be one.”

[John 17:21](#). *As thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.*

Christ would have all his people joined in communion with himself, and with his Father; and when that is the case, then will men know that Christ came into the world for a definite purpose: “that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.”

[John 17:22-23](#). *And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one;*

Christ is the incarnation of God, and the Church should be the incarnation of Christ. Oh, when shall this great prayer be answered?

[John 17:23-26](#). *And that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory,*

which thou hast given me: for those lovedst me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.

A very short time after our Divine Lord offered this intercessory supplication, he prayed a very different prayer, in a strangely-altered style. You will find it in the Gospel according to Matthew, chapter twenty-six. Remember that there was a very short interval between the utterance of the majestic prayer I have been reading, and the presentation of the cries and tears of which we are now to read.

This exposition consisted of readings from [John 17:15-26](#); And [Matthew 26:36-46](#).

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CHAPTER 18

Verses 1-9

John 18:1. *When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples.*

Our Lord could not cross that “brook Cedron” without being reminded of the time when David went that way in the hour of his sorrow, though he knew that he had to face a far greater trial than that of David. The very brook would remind him of his approaching sacrifice, for through it flowed the blood and refuse from the temple.

John 18:2. *And Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place: for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples.*

The place of our Lord’s frequent retirement for private prayer was well known to Judas, who had often gone there with his Lord and his fellow disciples.

John 18:3. *Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons.*

How completely the traitor must have been in the power of Satan, and how hardened and callous he must have grown, that he could lead “thither”

the men who were going to arrest the Saviour! Truly it was by wicked hands that Christ was taken, and crucified, and slain; yet, unconsciously, these evil men were carrying out “the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.” How strangely were they equipped for their deed of darkness! “With lanterns and torches and weapons.” They were coming to the Light of the world bearing “lanterns and torches”; and armed with “weapons” that they might use against “the Lamb of God.” If he had wished to deliver himself, all their “weapons” would have been in vain, and their “lanterns and torches” would not have revealed him, even with the help of the full moon, which was probably shining at the time.

John 18:4-5. *Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye? They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them.*

Notice, dear friends, that the word “he” is in italics, showing that it is not in the original. Our Lord here twice used the name of Jehovah, I AM,—as he did on certain other memorable occasions. It was most fitting that, as he was going out to die, he should declare that it was no mere man who was about to suffer on the cross, but that, while he was truly man, he was also “very God of very God.”

John 18:6. *As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground.*

The simple utterance of his name drove them from him, and smote them to the earth; what would have happened if he had put forth his almighty power?

John 18:7-9. *Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way: that the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none.*

This exposition consisted of readings from John 17.; and John 18:1-9.

Verses 1-14

John 18:1. *When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron,*

A dark, foul brook, through which flowed the blood and refuse from the temple. King David crossed that brook one night in bitter sorrow; and now the Saviour crossed it when it was near to midnight: “He went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron.”

John 18:1-2. *Where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples. And Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place: for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples.*

Our Lord went there to pray, and Judas knew that this was his custom. Are we such men of prayer that others know where we pray? Have you some familiar place where you go to meet your Lord? I am afraid that many know where we trade, and many know where we preach, but perhaps, few know where we pray. God grant that we may be often at the mercy-seat! We should be better men and women if we were more frequently at the throne of grace.

John 18:3. *Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons.*

“Lanterns” to give light to the Sun, “torches” to find out the Light of the world; “Weapons” with which to fight with the Lamb of God, the unarmed Sufferer. Strange treatment this for him who came to save and bless!

John 18:4-5. *Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye? They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he.*

Or, “I am.” It is remarkable that Jesus should, in his betrayal, twice use this expression, thus uttering the very name of Jehovah.

John 18:5. *And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them.*

What a hardened wretch he must have been to be able to stand with them! One would have thought that, having betrayed his Master, he would have hidden himself away for shame, but no, “Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them.” His heart must have been steeled.

John 18:6. *As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground.*

Christ’s almighty power cast them down at once. He needed not to lift his hand or even his finger; he only said, “I am,” and “they went backward, and fell to the ground.”

John 18:7. *Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye, And they said, Jesus of Nazareth.*

Do they return again to the fray? Having once felt Christ’s divine power, do they summon courage enough to attack him again? Yes, for there is no limit to the malice and impudence of the human heart.

John 18:8-10. *Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way: that the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none. Then Simon Peter*

— Always ready to boil over, ever full of zeal and rash impetuosity, Peter

— John 18:10. *Having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus.*

Peter struck at his head; he was not content with trying to wound, he meant to kill Malchus, and he did “cut off his right ear.”

John 18:11-14. *Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it? Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him, and led him away to Annas first; for he was father in law to Caiaphas, which was the high priest that same year. Now Caiaphas was he, which gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.*

Saying a great deal more than he thought he was saying, for he uttered a great Gospel truth when he said, “It was expedient that one man should die for the people.”

This exposition consisted of readings from John 17:1-12; John 18:1-14.

Verses 1-27

John 18:1. *When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples.*

From our Lord's example, we should learn, when trouble is near, to meet it with composure. Our Saviour did not sit still; but, as the hour approached for his betrayal and death, “he went forth with his disciples.” The passing over the black brook of Cedron, through which flowed the filth of the temple, was very significant. King David had crossed that brook long before when he had been driven from his home by Absalom's rebellion, and now the greater David went “over the brook Cedron, where was a garden.” He specially wanted solitude just then, for one of the best preparations for suffering is to get alone with God. Learn this lesson also from your Lord's example, and as he put Gethsemane before Calvary, if you can put an hour of prayerful contemplation before your expected suffering, it will be a great help to you.

John 18:2. *And Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place: for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples.*

That dark and gloomy olive garden was no pleasure garden that night. It had often been a place of retirement and of prayer for the Master. What happy memories his disciples must have had of being with him there for a season of prayer! It was a very choice privilege for them to be with him when he preached, but it must have been, if possible, a still greater privilege to be with him when he prayed. It is not recorded that his disciples ever said to him, "Lord, teach us how to preach;" but at least one of them was so struck with his prayers that he said, "Lord, teach us to pray." We may well ask him to do that for us now. Perhaps some of you would like to be taught how you can become great; it is much more important for you to be taught to become prayerful.

John 18:3. *Judas then, having received a band of men and of officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons.*

It does not matter much about the band of men and officers with lanterns and torches and weapons, but the dreadful part of the narrative is that they were led by one who had been a disciple of Christ, one who had been numbered with the apostles. Is Christ still betrayed by his professed friends? Yes, it is so, but may you and I never be guilty of that terrible crime! Yet why should we not unless the grace of God should prevent it? We are of the same flesh and blood as Judas; and although we might not be tempted by a sum of money, we may be tempted by a sinful pleasure or by a sinful shame. Lest we should be led astray, let us pray that we may not enter into temptation, and especially ask that we may be preserved from betraying our Lord, as Judas did.

John 18:4. *Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye?*

Because of his divinity, he knew all that would come upon him, but what a wondrous manhood his was that, although he knew all that would befall him, he went forth calm and composed, resigned to his Father's will and said to those who had come to seize him, "Whom seek ye?" I think he is saying to some of us, "whom seek ye?" We have not come here to slay him; we have not come here to fight against him, and lead him away to crucify him; yet I hope that we can truly say that we have come seeking Jesus. If this be really your heart's desire, it shall surely be fulfilled to you.

John 18:5. *They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he.*

Or, rather, "I Am," pronouncing the words with a divine dignity which had a startling effect upon them.

John 18:5-6. *And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them. As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground.*

It seems as if our Lord intended to let them realize something of his divine power and glory, for the utterance of that august expression, I am which is his Father's name, staggered them, and they fell to the ground. Do you not wonder that they did not rise up, and go away and leave him after they had fallen at his feet and asked his forgiveness? They did not so act, for the power of fear when it is not accompanied by love is very small. There was enough power in it to make them fall down to the ground, but there was not power enough in it to make them fall at Christ's feet confessing their sin.

John 18:7-8. *Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way:*

It is very cheering to us to think of our Lord meeting all the enemies of his people, gathering up all their weapons into his own heart that his people might go free. You and I, if we had been in such a case, would have been hurried and worried, and our fears would have made us selfish. We should have forgotten our poor friends who were with us; but Jesus thought not of himself, he thought of his poor trembling disciples, and therefore he said, "If therefore ye seek me, let these go their way."

John 18:9. *That the saying might be fulfilled which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none.*

He had only said that just a little while before, but this verse shows us that the New Testament is as sure to be fulfilled as the Old Testament. It was a new saying, not then written, yet it had all the life and power of God in it; so it must live, and must be fulfilled.

John 18:10. *Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus.*

Here is every prospect of a fight. Simon Peter has begun it, and the armed men will be eager to continue it. We always have our Simon Peters

about, — men of emotion, men of impulse, men of impetuosity. They are not a bad sort of Christians, and I do not know what we should do without them. Our cold, frozen thinkers would not do much without our warmhearted Peters to help to thaw them. Still, Peter was only one of the twelve apostles; and though they call him the head of the church, he made a very poor head of the church just then. He drew a sword, and began to use that carnal weapon by cutting off the right ear of Malchus. It was a great mercy that the Lord was there to heal the ear, and to forbid the use of the sword in his defense.

John 18:11. *Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?*

Here is another helpful lesson for any of you who have a trial before you. Do not seek to set the trial aside, use no wrong means to escape from affliction; drink your ordained cup. Though Peter's sword is handy, put it up into its sheath, and do not use it. Bear and forbear, on and on and on to the end of the chapter. Drink the cup that your Father gives you. However bitter it is, it is sweetened by the fact that he gives it to you. Shall not a true son of God drink the cup that his Father presents to him? There can be no harm in it, and it must work you some real good; so put up your sword, and lift the cup to your lips, and drink it to the dregs.

John 18:12. *Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him, —*

When you are bound with sickness, or bound with weakness, or bound in any other way, do not complain. Your Master was bound, and I think we ought to be willing to be anything that Christ was. What was good enough for him is good enough for us. "They took Jesus, and bound him," —

John 18:13-14. *And led him away to Annas first; for he was father in law to Caiaphas, which was the high priest that same year. Now Caiaphas was he, which gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.*

Christ could not die without the question of expediency turning up. I never knew any great sin in the world, nor any great heresy, nor any great combination of men to maintain it without the question of expediency coming under consideration. Expediency is the great Christ-killer. Many nowadays say to us, "Do not preach against error; it is not expedient to do so. Do not break away from evil associations; it is not expedient." How many there are of even good men who do certain thing, not because they are

right, but because they are expedient! But, believers in Jesus, in the name of your Lord I implore you to hate expediency, since it put Christ to death. It was a wicked expediency that would murder Christ in order to save a nation; but it did not really do so after all, for the guilt of slaying Christ brought upon the nation the glaring crime of deicide.

John 18:10. *And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple: that disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest.*

This other disciple was, no doubt, John, who thus veiled himself as he did on other occasions.

John 18:16. *But Peter stood at the door without.*

It would have been better for him if he had kept there, he would probably have been more out of the way of temptation than he was inside the palace of the high priest.

John 18:16. *Then went out that other disciple, which was known unto the high priest and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter.*

John doubtless acted thus out of kindness to Peter, but he was the means of bringing his friend into a place where he was not strong enough to keep his feet. You and may act like that, perhaps, in perfect innocence, and even with commendable kindness; yet we may be unintentionally doing our friends a great wrong. I notice that John seems to have been the first of the apostles to associate with Peter after that terrible fall of his; and in his record of Peter's denial of his Lord he does not mention his cursing and swearing as Matthew and Mark do. He appears to have felt great tenderness towards Peter; perhaps all the more so because he had been the innocent means of getting him into the place of temptation.

John 18:17. *Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou also one of this man's disciples? He saith, I am not.*

As, Peter! Ah, myself! If anyone is trusting in himself, he may soon utter a falsehood concerning his Lord, as Peter did. Keep us, O God, by thy grace, or else it will be so with us. It was nothing but a poor maidservant that cowed this brave Peter; the man whose sword was drawn just now in his Master's defense is not able truthfully to answer the maid's question, "Art not thou also one of this man's disciples? He saith, I am not."

John 18:18. *And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals, for it was cold: and they warmed themselves and Peter stood with them and warmed himself.*

While his Lord and Master was being maltreated and abused over yonder at the end of the hall, Peter was warming himself at the servant's fire. Ah! he was getting cold spiritually while warming himself physically; and it sometimes happens that, when men are warming their bodies, they are at the same time cooling their hearts. I have known a man warm himself at a very big fire through coming into possession of a large amount of property, but he has also grown very cold spiritually for these coals of fire do not warm the heart.

John 18:19-21. *The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples and of his doctrine. Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto thee: behold, they know what I said.*

Our Lord's teaching was never deceptive, he did not say one thing and mean another. He could truly appeal to his hearers concerning his teaching. It is a great thing for a preacher to be able to feel that his hearers know what he has said to them. We cannot always say that, for some of them forget, and some of them do not understand what we say. Some of them do not give sufficient attention to know what it is that is said, but Christ's preaching was so clear and plain that he could truly say, "Ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said."

John 18:22-23. *And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying Answerest thou the high priest so?*

Jesus answered him, Not as Paul did, "God shall smite thee, thou whited wall." The Master is superior to the disciple at all points. Jesus said: —

John 18:23. *If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?*

Let us pray that, whenever we are despitefully treated, we may keep our temper, and be as composed as our Lord was; and if we must make an answer to our accusers, let it be as discreet and as justifiable as this answer of our Lord was.

John 18:24; John 18:26. *Now Annas had sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest. And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself.*

John thus resumes the narrative concerning Peter from the 17th verse: "Simon Peter stood and warmed himself."

John 18:25. *They said therefore unto him.*

Two or three or more of them speaking at a time said to him: —

John 18:26-27. *Art not thou also one of his disciples? He denied it, and said, I am not. One of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him? Peter then denied again:*

Ah, me! they who lie once will be all too apt to lie again; those who deny Christ once will be apt to go to still greater lengths in their denial of him. May they be stopped as Peter was!

John 18:27. *And immediately the cock crew.*

May the cock crow for some who have been asleep up till now, and warn them that the night is far spent, and that it is time for them to awake out of sleep, and wash their eyes with tears, and repent of having denied their Lord!

Verses 12-24

The passages, which we are about to read from three of the Evangelists, make up a continuous narrative of our Lord's trial before the high priest. First, John gives us an account of our Saviour's appearance before Annas, of which I need not say much, as I recently preached upon it.

John 18:12-14. *Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him, and led him away to Annas first; for he was father in law to Caiaphas, which was the high priest that came year. Now Caiaphas was he, which gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.*

John 18:19-21. *The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine. Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou me? Ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said.*

What an admirable answer that was! Whatever he might have said about his doctrine, they would have twisted into a ground of accusation against him, so he simply said, "Mine has been public teaching, open to all. I was not found in holes and corners, secretly fomenting sedition. I spoke in the streets; I spoke in the synagogue; I spoke in the temple; ask those who heard me to tell you what I said." What more convincing answer could he have given?

John 18:22-24. *And when he had thus spoken, one of the officer, which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of His hand, saying, Answerest thou the*

high priest so? Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me. Now Annas had sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest.

So there we see him standing, bound, before Caiaphas, the acting high priest for that year.

Now follow the narrative as given by Mark. (See Mark 14:53-65)

This exposition consisted of readings from John 18:12-14; John 18:19-26; Mark 14:53-65; and Luke 22:63-71; Luke 3:1.

Verses 12-27

John 18:12-13. *Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus and bound him, and led him away to Annas first; for he was father in law to Caiaphas, which was the high priest that same year.*

Annas had been high priest before, and he seems to have been regarded still as high priest and to have been a leading spirit amongst the adversaries of Christ. The old sinner would not go to bed that night until he had seen the man whom he hated brought bound before him. Sometimes hatred becomes a more powerful passion than even love; and here, while the disciples of Jesus all fled in terror, Annas, the Saviour's bitter foe, was wide awake, and awaiting his arrival with those who had taken him captive.

John 18:14. *Now Caiaphas was he, which gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.*

Therein uttering a prophecy which he did not himself fully understand, speaking like another Balaam, through whom God spoke the truth, as once he did through the ass that Balaam rode. Sometimes, God makes the basest men the unconscious utterers of truth which they do not themselves comprehend.

John 18:15. *And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple:*

Here is John's usual modesty, he will not mention his own name, but simply speaks of "another disciple."

John 18:15-16. *That disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest. But Peter stood at the door without.*

John boldly followed Jesus, and so was safe, Peter stood at a distance from his Lord, and so was in danger.

John 18:16-18. *Then went out that other disciple which was known unto the high priest and spake unto her that kept the door and brought in Peter.*

Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter. Art not thou also one of this man's disciples? He saith, I am not. And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals, for it was cold: and they warmed themselves; and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself.

Peter was in bad company; while he was warming his body, his soul was growing cold to his Master. Men cannot go into bad company without getting some hurt. It is said by a quaint old writer that, if men go to Ethiopia, they may not become Ethiopians, but by the scorching of the sun they will grow blacker than they were before. It is always better to keep out of harm's way if we can. He that would not fall into a ditch should take care not to walk near the edge of it; so, if Peter wanted to stand fast, he should not have gone where he would be sure to be tempted.

John 18:19. *The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine.*

This was a sort of preliminary examination before the Sanhedrin should try him officially.

John 18:20-22. *Jesus answered him I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold they know what I said. And when he had thus spoken one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand saying, Answerest thou the high priest so?*

Here we get an exposition of one of Christ's own sayings. You know that he said, "Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." Of course, Christ would carry out his own precept, so we see that he did not mean that his disciples were literally to turn the other cheek to those who struck them, but that they were to bear such treatment patiently, and not to give a railing answer. See how Jesus himself turned the other cheek.

John 18:23. *Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?*

Nothing could have been more calm or more dignified, and, at the same time, more full of the spirit of forgiveness.

John 18:24-27. *Now Annas had sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest. And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. They said therefore unto him, Art not thou also one of his disciples? He denied it, and said, I am not. One of the servants of the high priest being his kinsman whose ear*

Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him? Peter then denied again: and immediately the cock crew.

We know that the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. He did not speak a word, perhaps lest Peter should fall into the hands of those who were round about him; but his look was sufficient to kindle in Peter the fires of repentance, and he went out to weep bitterly over his shameful denial of his Lord.

Verses 15-27

John 18:15. And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple:

That is John, of course; he never mentions his own name if he can help it.

John 18:15-16. That disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest. But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple, which was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter.

I always fancy that John had a greater tenderness for Peter because he was the means of getting him into the palace of the high priest. Peter could not have got in if he had been alone, but John was known to the high priest, and so secured his admission. He must always have felt sorry that he took Peter into a place where he was so strongly tried. Hence John sought him out after his great fall; when perhaps the other apostles were inclined to leave him by himself, John cheered him up, and brought him back to the faith.

John 18:17-18. Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou also one of this man's disciples? He saith, I am not. And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals; for it was cold: and they warmed themselves: and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself.

That was a very dangerous place for Peter to be in; he would have been safer out in the cold.

John 18:25. And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself.

Twice over, we are told that, while his Master was being buffeted, Peter stood in the midst of the ribald throng, and warmed himself.

John 18:25-27. They said therefore unto him, Art not thou also one of his disciples? He denied it, and said, I am not. One of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee

in the garden with him? Peter then denied again: and immediately the cock crew.

Thus was Christ's prediction literally fulfilled, and thus, by what seems the humble instrumentality of a cock crowing, was Peter brought to repentance. There is many an eloquent divine who has missed the mark when he has been preaching, but God has spoken by a very humble voice. You, dear friend, though you have no gifts of speech, may go and tell the story of Jesus Christ to someone, and God may bring him to repentance through you, as he brought Peter back to himself through the agency of this bird. May God make us all useful, and keep us from falling into transgression as Peter did! Amen.

This exposition consisted of readings from Mark 14:27-31; Mark 14:53-54; Mark 14:66-72; and John 18:15-18; John 18:25-27.

Verses 28-38

John 18:28-38. Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the passover. Pilate then went out unto them, and said, What accusation bring ye against this man? They answered and said unto him, If he were not a malefactor we would not have delivered him up unto thee. Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him, and judge him according to your law. The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death: that the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die. Then. Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews? Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me? Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done? Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice. Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all.

Thus did all who came into contact with Jesus bear witness that the Lamb of God was indeed “holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.”

This exposition consisted of readings from Matthew 27:15-54; and John 18:28-38.

Verses 28-40

28; *Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment:*

That is to say, Pilate’s hall. Pilate, at that time, was probably residing in one of the old and sumptuous palaces of Herod, there holding His court during the time of the Passover.

John 18:28. *And it was early;*

They were very eager to prove their enmity to Christ; they had spent the night, and the earliest moments of the dawn, in examining their illustrious prisoner, condemning him, and abusing him, and now they were off to Pilate.

John 18:28. *And they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover.*

What could defile such wretches at these? Yet they were afraid of ceremonial defilement, though neither afraid nor ashamed to imbrue their hands in the blood of Jesus.

John 18:29. *Pilate then went out unto them,*

He loathed and detested them, yet, for his own evil purposes, he would yield to their wishes and whims.

John 18:29-30. *And said, What accusation bring ye against this man? They answered and said unto him, If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee.*

As much as to say, “You may take that for granted. We would not have brought him if he had not done wrong. You need not examine into the matter, we have already heard the evidence, and convicted him, and so saved you all the trouble of trying him; we only bring him here for you to condemn him.”

John 18:31. *Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him, and judge him according to your law.*

“That is your way of doing such things, but it is not a method into which we shall fall. Our law does not condemn a man before it hears the evidence against him. I am not going to be your tool, to put this man to death without

hearing what is laid to his charge, and the proofs of his guilt. If you want that done, you must do it yourselves.”

John 18:31. *The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death:*

“You Romans have taken from us the power of life and death, and we want him put to death.” There was a clear confession that nothing short of Christ’s death would satisfy them.

John 18:32. *That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die.*

Crucifixion was a Roman, not a Jewish method of capital punishment, so God overruled the wanton wickedness of the worst of men for the accomplishment of his own eternal purposes, without, however, diminishing their responsibility and guilt in the least degree. It was “by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God” that Christ was put to death, yet it was “with wicked hands” that they took him, and crucified him.

John 18:33. *Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews?*

He did not look much like it. There was little enough about his appearance or his apparel to suggest the idea of royalty.

John 18:34-35. *Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me? Pilate answered, Am I a Jew?*

I can imagine him throwing all the scorn and contempt possible into the question. It was characteristic of the Romans, as we learn from the works of their great writers, that they utterly despised and detested the Jews.

John 18:35-37. *Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee, unto me: what hast thou done? Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I unto the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.*

We might have expected that he would have said, “I came into the world that I might be a king.” But he explains that, as a Witness to the truth, he was a King.

John 18:38. *Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no*

fault at all.

He did not want an answer. He merely thought it such an unnecessary piece of trifling to talk about truth, he himself had so slight an idea of what the word might mean, that when he had said, “What is truth?” “he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all.” That was the truth about the Truth, from the lips of a man who cared nothing about truth, yet who was compelled to bear this testimony, “I find in him no fault at all.”

John 18:39. *But we have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the passover: will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews?*

Now, Pilate may have thought, if Christ was their King, they would certainly prefer him to a thief and a robber; so he was putting before himself an opportunity of escaping from judging Christ, and before them a test as to whether there really was in them any liking for the Christ, or any possibility of his becoming their King.

John 18:40. *Then cried they all again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber.*

This exposition consisted of readings from John 18:28-40; and Psalms 2.

[JOHN CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 19

Verses 1-16

[John 19:1-3](#). *Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him. And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe. And said, Hail, King of the Jews!*

Just as they were gathered to say, “Ave Imperator” — “Hail emperor” — so imitating that word which they applied to Caesar. and applying it to Jesus in mockery. “King of the Jews,” the utmost scorn was thrown into the last word, “of the Jews.” There had been a general tradition that there should arise among the Jews a king who would subdue the nations, and the Romans jested at the very thought that they should be conquered by the leader of such a despised race as the Jews, and so they said, “King of the Jews.”

[John 19:3-4](#). *And they smote him with their hands. Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye*

may know that I find no fault in him.

That is the second time he said it. He had declared it before; in the 38th verse of the previous chapter we read, “I find in him no fault at all.” And now again, “That ye may know that I find no fault in him.” “Then came Jesus forth” — you can see him going down the steps out of Pilate’s hall into that same courtyard — “wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them” — “Ecce Homo” — “behold the man.” He does not call him king; he only gives him the title of man. As if to say, “How foolish are you to think there is any danger from him; look at him in all his suffering and shame.”

[John 19:5-6](#). *Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the man! When the chief priests therefore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Take ye him, and crucify him: for I find no fault in him.*

That is the third time. It was well that he who had the principal hand in the slaughter of the Lamb of God should make his report that he was “a Lamb without blemish and without spot”; and, therefore, fit to be presented in sacrifice before God. For the third time he doth acquit him. The Jews answered him, “We have a law” — it may not be your law — “and by our law he ought to die because he made himself the son of God.” This is a reviving of the charge of blasphemy which they had brought against him in the palace of the high priest.

[John 19:7-8](#). *The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God. When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was the more afraid:*

It shows he was afraid all along — the coward — the vacillating coward — and now a fresh superstition seizes upon him. He believed, as a Roman in gods many. “What?” said he to himself. “What if, after all, I should have been torturing a divine Being, a God who has come among men in their likeness?”

[John 19:9-10](#). *And went again, into the judgment hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou? But Jesus gave him no answer. The, saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, And have power to release thee?*

And he trembled with fear, “and went again into the judgment, hall,” taking his prisoner with him — you can see the two sitting there alone —

“and saith unto Jesus, ‘Whence art thou? Tell me now, what is thy character, thine origin, thy rank? ‘But Jesus gave him no answer.’ Pilate’s day of grace was over; he had had his opportunity, but that was now ended; there was no answer. It is a very solemn thing when God gives no answer to a man; when a man turns to Scripture, but there is no answer; when he goes to hear the voice, but there is no voice from the oracle for him; when he even bows the knee in prayer, but gets no answer. The silence of the Christ of God is very terrible. “Then saith Pilate unto him,” with all the pride of a Roman in his face, “Speakest thou not unto me Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and power to release thee?”

[John 19:11](#). *Jesus answered, Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.*

“Thou hast the power to execute the sentence, lent to thee from heaven: but he that brought me here, and laid the charge against me, even Caiaphas, as the representative of the Jews, hath the greater sin.” And then the Blessed One closed his lips, never to open them again until on the cross. From this time, “like a sheep before her shearers,” he is dumb. Notice that even though that word is the word of the Judge who judges Pilate, who judges the Jews, yet there is a strain of the gentleness of his character about it, for though he does virtually declare Pilate guilty of great sin, yet he says there is a greater, and while there is no apology for Pilate, yet he puts it softly.

[John 19:12](#). *And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him: but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar’s friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar.*

One of the Herods had put upon his coins the name, “Caesar’s friend.” and so they quoted the title which one of their kings had taken, and they tell Pilate that he will not be the friend of Tiberius. Here was a sore point with Pilate; he knew that just then Tiberius was gloomy and morose, too ready to catch anything against his servants; and the man by whose influence Pilate had come into power had just then lost all influence at court. So he was afraid it would be his disgrace and discharge as governor if the Jews brought a charge against him to Tiberius. Therefore he trembled.

[John 19:13](#). *When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha.*

The usual form of the Roman judgment-place, in the open air, with a stone pavement, and a raised throne.

[John 19:14-15](#). *And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King! But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar.*

“To crucify your king.” In bitter sarcasm: “You call him king, and ask to have him crucified.” “The Chief Priests answered, ‘We have no king but Caesar.’” Verily they thus proved the truth of that word, “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the lawgiver from between his feet until Shiloh come.” And here he was sent, of God. He has come at last, for the scepter has evidently departed from Judah; and these men are crying, We have no king but the alien monarch, the all-conquering Caesar.”

[John 19:16](#). Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus and led him away.

This exposition consisted of readings from [John 1:19-33](#); [John 19:1-16](#).

Verses 1-37

[John 19:1](#). *Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him.*

This was one of the most terrible punishments to which a man could be sentenced. The Roman scourge was no trifle. It tore off the quivering flesh of the agonized sufferer for it was constructed on purpose to do so. It was generally made of the sinews of oxen, intertwined with the knuckle bones of sheep, and small slivers of bone. This torture our blessed Saviour endured. These are the stripes with which we are healed.

[John 19:2](#). *And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe,*

Mockery was blended with cruelty. They might have made him a crown, yet surely it need not have been one of thorns unless they intended to put him to the utmost torment that they could conceive. By this crown of thorns our blessed Lord was crowned King of the curse, for the earth was cursed through Adam’s sin, and part of the sentence pronounced by God in the garden of Eden was, “Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee.” So Christ wore the mark of the curse which man’s sin had brought upon the world.

[John 19:3](#). *And said, Hail, King of the Jews! and they smote him with their hands.*

This was the homage which the Son of God received from men; harmless and gentle, he came here with no purpose but that of doing good, and this is how mankind treated him.

[John 19:4-5](#). *Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him. Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the man!*

Was there ever such a sight of majesty in misery before or since? Yet he needed not to endure all that ignominy, he was no vanquished monarch unable to maintain his own rights. He was still “over all, God blessed for ever,” and he could have smitten everyone there to death if he had pleased to do so. But he was the Lamb of God’s passover, so he meekly suffered.

[John 19:6-7](#). *When the chief priests therefore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Take ye him, and crucify him: for I find no fault in him. The Jews answered him. We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.*

They no doubt understood that he claimed to be divine, and so he did. I have heard some say that he was a good man, but not God. If he was not God, he was certainly not a good man, for no good man, who was only a man, would claim to be God, or lead others to believe that he was divine. If he was not actually divine, he was a rank impostor; but he was divine, and therefore we worship and adore him equally with the Father and the Spirit.

[John 19:8-10](#). *When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was the more afraid; and went again into the judgment hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou? But Jesus gave him no answer. Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?*

Pilate talks like some great one, yet how contemptibly little he was, vacillating, cowardly, unable to do what he knew was right. His poor Victim who stood before him was infinitely greater in character than he was.

[John 19:11](#). *Jesus answered, Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.*

Christ referred to Judas, and through him to the Jews who had conspired to put him to death; but what tenderness it was, on the part of Jesus, to make an excuse as it were even for Pilate! He was notable for making

excuses for the guilty. That was a remarkable excuse that he pleaded for his murderers, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” There was never another such a tender heart as his; he was so gentle and so kind that all their cruelty only moved him to pity them, and pray for them.

[John 19:12-14](#). *And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him: but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar’s friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar. When Pilate therefore heard that crying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha. And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King!*

What mockery there was in Pilate’s use of this title, and yet how true it was! They asked to have Christ put to death, yet he was their King. Their accusation was transparently false, and Pilate made them see that it was so.

[John 19:15-17](#). *But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your king? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar. Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led him away. And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha:*

The inspired writers seem to delight to give us the Hebrew names of these notable places that are linked with Christ’s last agonies, and they are still very precious to Christians, Gethsemane, Gabbatha, Golgotha^¾, three names never to be forgotten by those who were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ.

[John 19:18](#). *Where they crucified him, and two other with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst.*

As if to show that they thought him the worst of the three, and therefore gave him ^¾shall I call it the place of chief dishonour?

[John 19:19-20](#). *And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS. This title then read many of the Jews: for the place where Jesus was crucified was near to the city and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin.*

So that all who gathered around the cross might read it.

[John 19:21-22](#). *Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews; but that he said, I am king of the Jews. Pilate answered, What I have written I have written.*

He could be stubborn about some things which shows that he had strength of mind if he had chosen to use it; yet he was beaten to and fro like a shuttlecock by these wicked men, and seemed to have no power to resist them.

[John 19:23](#). *Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments,^{3/4}*

For they had stripped him. He must be naked, because sin makes us naked, and his garments must be a covering for us. They “took his garments,” —

[John 19:23-24](#). *And made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also his coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled,^{3/4}*

They knew nothing about that ancient prophecy, yet God ordained that they should act thus “that the Scripture might be fulfilled,” —

[John 19:24](#). *Which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did.*

Doubtless, on the dice there fell the blood of Christ, yet they still gambled there. There is, perhaps, no sin which so effectually hardens the heart as that of gambling; it is a sin with which Christians should not have even the reluctant connection.

[John 19:25-30](#). *Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home. After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished;*

Consummatum est. “The work is done, redemption is accomplished; the salvation of my people is for ever secured.”

[John 19:30-37](#). *And he sowed his head, and gave up the ghost. The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be*

taken away. Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side and forthwith came there out blood and water. And he that saw it bare record and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe. For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken. And again another scripture saith, They shall look upon him whom they pierced.

Verses 14-37

[John 19:14](#). *And it was the preparation of the Passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King!*

They had accused him of being a King, or of pretending to be one. Pilate had scourged him, the soldiers had mocked him, and there he stood piteous spectacle of woe. What cruel sarcasm there was in the tones of the Governor when he said to the Jews, “Behold your King.”

[John 19:15](#). *But they cried out, away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King?*

“How could you call him King, and bring against him a charge of setting up a rival kingdom when you, who would be his subjects, are all crying out, ‘Crucify him’? ‘Shall I crucify your King?’” How false they were their own actions proved.

[John 19:15](#). *The chief priests answered, we have no king but Caesar.*

They said this with all the coolness in the world. The mob had been stirred up and excited, but the chief priests, the principal ecclesiastics of the day, coolly said, “We have no king but Caesar.” Did they not recollect that the scepter was not to pass away from Judah until Shiloh came, so that, as it had evidently passed away, Shiloh must have come? After all their Bible-reading, did they not know that? Oh, how easy it is to read much of Scripture and yet to know little about its teaching! Dear friends, let us not join the Jews in refusing to have Christ as King. They cried, “Away with him, away with him,” when he was set before them as King. Let us not do that, but let us rather accept the Crucified as our Master and Lord, and cheerfully bow at his feet.

[John 19:16](#). *Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led him away.*

So was he led as a sheep to the slaughter, as Isaiah had long before foretold that he would be.

[John 19:17](#). *And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha:*

Probably a knoll of rock which today stands outside the city gate looking wonderfully like a skull, with two depressions in the rock which at distance appear like eyes. This was the common place of execution, the Tyburn, the Old Bailey of Jerusalem.

[John 19:18-19](#). *Where they crucified him, and two others with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst. And Pilate wrote a title and put it on the cross. And the writing was, Jesus Of Nazareth The King Of The Jews.*

What could have moved Pilate to write that title? Perhaps he did it just to let the Jews know that they had forced him to put the Christ to death; he would put over him their accusation without any endorsement of his own: “ JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS “ and so he is, and King of the Gentiles, too.

[John 19:20](#). *This title then read many of the Jews: for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city: and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin.*

So that everybody could read it, for some one or other of these languages would be known to everybody in the crowd; they were not dead languages then as they are now.

[John 19:21-22](#). *Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews; but that he said, I am King of the Jews. Pilate answered, What I have written I have written.*

He could sometimes be firm; perhaps when there was least excuse for it but when there was need of firmness, this vacillating Governor was swayed by the will of cruel men.

[John 19:23](#). *Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments.*

It was the custom with executioners to take the garments of the criminal.

[John 19:23](#). *And made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also his coat: now the coat woven without seam, woven from the top throughout.*

The common robe of the country, for Christ assumed no garment or vesture that would make him seem great. He was too great to need the adornment of any special style of clothes.

[John 19:24](#). *They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did.*

Those rough Roman soldiers knew nothing about the ancient prophecy, yet a divine destiny guided them. God's Word must be fulfilled; and they, in the freedom of their will, did exactly what God had ordained, and the Spirit had long before prophesied. There are two things that are true; ³/₄that men act freely and are therefore responsible when they sin, but that there is a divine predestination that rules all things according to the purpose and will of God. It would have puzzled us to explain how such a prophecy could be fulfilled at all, ³/₄parting Christ's raiment among them, and then casting lots for his vesture; yet so it was, they divided what could be divided, and they cast lots upon what would have been spoilt if they had rent it. I think that no Christian man will ever like the rattle of dice when he remembers that they were used at the cross; all games of chance should be put away from us, for we can, as it were, see our Master's blood bespattered upon them.

[John 19:25-26](#). *Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!*

"See in John one who will act as a son to thee."

[John 19:27](#). *Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother!*

"John, take her home, and treat her as a mother should be treated."

[John 19:27](#). *And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.*

He was the disciple whom Jesus specially loved, so as a token of Christ's great love to him, he left his mother to his charge. Have you any poor folk dependent upon you? Do you know any of God's very poor people? Take care of them, and do not think the charge a burden; but do it for the sake of him who loves you so much that he entrusts his poor ones to you. Oh, that everybody would look at this matter of caring for God's poor in that light!

[John 19:28](#). *After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst!*

It seems a strange thing that Jesus should have said, "I thirst," because, out of all the pains that he endured upon the cross, and they were very many

and very sharp, he never mentions one except thirst. A person in such terrible agony as he was enduring might have mentioned fifty things, but he singles out this one because there was a prophecy concerning it.

[John 19:29](#). *Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth.*

Why is hyssop mentioned here? You remember that the hyssop was used in the cleansing of the leper, and that David prayed, “ Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.” The hyssop was also used in the sprinkling of blood under the law, so it is introduced here with a set purpose. The sponge is introduced here too; it always seems to me very remarkable that, in the death of Christ the circle of life was completed. The sponge is the very lowest form of animal life, and Christ is the very highest type of life of any kind. The sponge was lifted to the lip of the King of glory, and carried refreshment to him; and you and I, like the sponge, the very least of God’s living ones, may yet bring refreshment to our Saviour’s lips.

[John 19:30](#). *When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished; and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.*

It is not that he died, and that then his head fell forward; but while he yet lived, having before maintained an erect, noble bearing even in the pangs of death, he now, to show his perfect resignation to his Father’s will bows his head, and yields up that saved spirit of his which dwelt within his body.

[John 19:31](#). *The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath day, for that Sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.*

The breaking of the legs was intended to hasten death, ^{3/4}a very cruel method, but a very effectual one. Passing by Christ hanging in the center it was a strange thing for them to do, yet it had to be done, although they were quite unconscious of the reason why they so acted.

[John 19:32-34](#). *Then came the soldier, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side,-*

To make sure that he should not survive,^{3/4}

[John 19:34-37](#). *And forthwith came there out blood and water. And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true, and he knoweth that he saith*

true, that ye might believe. For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken. And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced.”

So his side must be pierced, but his bones must not be broken. See how the hand of God carries out the Word of God, and value every line of Scripture. Our Lord Jesus Christ seemed to go out of his way so as to ensure that every single word in the Old Testament in reference to himself should be fulfilled, so mind that you do not think little of the Old Testament which he so highly prized.

Verses 23-37

[John 19:23](#). *There the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments,*

They had already stripped him, no element of shame was wanting in his substitution for us. He stooped as low as our sins could have thrust us, that he might bring us up from the very depths of degradation and shame.

[John 19:23-24](#). *And made four parts, to every soldier a part, and also his coat: now the coat was without seam woven from the top throughout. They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did.*

Quite unaware of the ancient prophecy, yet in complete accord with divine predestination these soldiers did exactly according to the eternal purposes of God. It is very wonderful how, in practice, the free agency of man tallies exactly with the predestination of God. We need not enquire how it is, but we may admire that so it is. “These things therefore the soldiers did,” yet the motive which swayed them was not the fulfillment of the divine will, but simply the commonsense thought that it would be a pity to spoil such a garment by rending it apart $\frac{3}{4}$ also by that innate love of gambling which is found everywhere, in every age, so that often men would sooner run the hazard of winning all than take the safe one fourth which might fall to their lot. Let us reverently adore the whole scheme of providence by which God’s determinate purpose is carried out in every jot and little, while the free agency of man is left unfettered.

[John 19:25](#). *Now there stood by the cross of Jesus, his mother, and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.*

These gracious women stood by the cross: we call them the feebler sex; but we must grant that they are the stronger of the two in anything which has to do with pure disinterested love. Yield the first place to them.

[John 19:26](#). *When Jesus therefore saw his mother,*

Here was another pang for him: he could not be spared anywhere. He must recollect in his death everything that would cause him grief: “When Jesus therefore saw his mother,” —

[John 19:26-27](#). *And the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother. Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.*

There was no specific direction given to John to entertain Mary. It was quite enough for the Lord to call his attention to her by saying “Behold thy mother.” How I wish we were always in such a state of heart that we did not need specific precepts, a hint would suffice. Dear friends, do not need pressing or driving to holy duty; be not as bullocks that must be goaded, but rather have within you such a spring of love that it shall be a delight to do anything that may give joy to the heart of the Well-beloved. When you see him on the cross, is there anything you can deny him? Will you not think spontaneously of what you can do to please him?

[John 19:28](#). *After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst.*

There was yet a little more to be done; all the great things were accomplished, but he would keep even the least particles of prophecy, so he cried, “I thirst.”

[John 19:29-30](#). *Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, —*

He did receive that; he had refused the drugged draught which they had first offered to him to lull his pain, but he accepted this, which was simply weak wine, no doubt a little sour, possibly bitter. When he “had received the vinegar,” —

[John 19:30](#). *He said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.*

Incarnate love has fulfilled its self-imposed task. Jesus, as the substitute for sinners, was condemned to die, and he died that he might finish the work of our redemption.

“It is Finished.”

Hear the dying Saviour cry.”

[John 19:31](#). *The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the Sabbath day, (for that Sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.*

To prevent a ceremonial error, they are willing to commit brutal cruelty; indeed, they had already committed the more brutal cruelty of putting Christ to death. How particular some men are about some merely human rubric, yet the divine precepts of the law they violate with impunity. God save us from a conscience which will stick at home minute point which is of no consequence, but will allow us to commit great sin! We have heard of a Spanish bandit who confessed to his priest, after having murdered a great many persons, not his robberies and his murders, but the fact that a drop of blood had spurted on to his lips on a Friday, and thus he had defiled the feast day by taking animal food! Ah me! Conscience is a strange thing, yet some call it “the vicegerent of God.” I believe it is no such thing, but that it very soon becomes as depraved as any other power of the human mind: we have need of far more than conscience to keep us right.

[John 19:32](#). *Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him.*

With a huge iron bar smashing the great bones of their legs.

[John 19:33-34](#). *But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they broke not his legs: but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced him twice, and forthwith there came out blood and water. See how, even after death, his heart it tribute poured out for us. We have not only the love of Christ’s heart blessing us while he lives, but after he died there was the stream of blood and water to cleanse us from sins guilt and power.*

[John 19:35-37](#). *And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe. For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, a bone of him shall not be broken. And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced.*

Verses 25-30

[John 19:25](#). *Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother’s sister, Mary, the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.*

Last at the cross, first at the sepulcher. No woman's lip betrayed her Lord; no woman's hand ever smote him; their eyes wept for him; they gazed upon him with pitying awe and love. God bless the Marys! When we see so many of them about the cross, we feel that we honour the very name of Mary.

[John 19:26](#). *When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith into his mother, Woman, behold thy son!*

Sad, sad spectacle! Now was fulfilled the word of Simeon, "Yes, a sword shall pierce through thine own soul also, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." Did the Saviour mean, as he gave a glance to John, "Woman, thou art losing one Son; but yonder stands another, who will be a son to thee in my absence"? "Woman, behold thy son!"

[John 19:27](#). *Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother!*

"Take her as thy mother, stand thou in my place, care for her as I have cared for her." Those who love Christ best shall have the honour of taking care of his church and of his poor. Never say of any poor relative or friend, the widow or the fatherless, "They are a great burden to me." Oh, no! Say, "They are a great honour to me; my Lord has entrusted them to my care." John thought so; let us think so. Jesus selected the disciple he loved best to take his mother under his care. He selects those whom he loves best today, and puts his poor people under their wing. Take them gladly, and treat them well.

[John 19:27](#). *And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home*
You expected him to do it, did you not? He loved his Lord so well.

[John 19:28](#). *After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst.*

There was a prophecy to that effect in the Psalms, and he must needs fulfill that. Think of a dying man prayerfully going through the whole of the Scriptures and carefully fulfilling all that is there written concerning him: "That the scripture might be fulfilled, Jesus saith, I thirst."

[John 19:29](#). *Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar,*

For he did receive it. It was a weak kind of wine, commonly drunk by the soldiery. This is not that mixed potion which he refused, wine mingled with myrrh, which was intended to stupefy the dying in their pains: "When

he had tasted thereof, he would not drink;” for he would not be stupefied. He came to suffer to the bitter end the penalty of sin; and he would not have his sorrow mitigated; but when this slight refreshment was offered to him, he received it. Having just expressed his human weakness by saying, “I thirst,” he now manifests his all-sufficient strength by crying, with a loud voice as Matthew, Mark, and Luke all testify.

[John 19:30](#). *He said, It is finished:*

What “it” was it that was finished? I will not attempt to expound it. It is the biggest “it” that ever was. Turn it over and you will see that it will grow, and grow, and grow, and grow, till it fills the whole earth: “It is finished.”

[John 19:30](#). *And he lowered his head, and gave up the ghost.*

He did not give up the ghost, and then bow his head, because he was dead; but he bowed his head as though in the act of worship, or as leaning it down upon his Father’s bosom, and then gave up the ghost. Thus have we had two gospel pictures of our dying Lord. May we remember them, and learn the lessons they are intended to teach.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Luke 23:33-46](#); [John 19:25-30](#)

Verses 38-42

[John 19:38-40](#). *And after this Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus. And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight. Then took they the body of Jesus.*

Oh, how tenderly, and with how many tears, did they take their Lord’s body from the cross!

[John 19:40-42](#). *And wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulcher, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews’ preparation day; for the sepulcher was nigh at hand.*

John’s Gospel contains some particulars not mentioned by Mark; and the same may be said of Matthew’s account, and Luke’s. Read them all when you are at home, and ponder the wonderful story. The apostle Paul, speaking of our Lord’s resurrection, mentions his burial. We will now read

in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, just a few verses from the fifteenth chapter.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Mark 15:34-47](#); [John 19:38-42](#); John , [1 CORINTHIAN 5:1-9](#).

[JOHN CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 20

Verses 1-18

[John 20:1](#). *The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulcher, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulcher.*

Her love for her Lord made her rise early, and helped her to overcome the fear which would have prevented many from going out “when it was yet dark, unto the sepulcher.” There are fears which some cannot shake off in the dark, and those fears would be apt to become intensified in going to a sepulcher in the dark; but love wakes early to try to find Christ, and love can see in the dark when looking for Jesus. Mary little expected to find the tomb of Jesus rifled, and the stone rolled away; she was so surprised at what she saw that she hurried away to tell the story to other friends of her Lord.

[John 20:2](#). *Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulcher, and we know not where they have laid him.*

This was the language of ignorance and unbelief. She had forgotten that the Lord had said that he would rise again, the third day; or else she had never understood the meaning of his words; so, instead of saying “He is risen,” she said, “They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulcher, and we know not where they have laid him.” Unbelief often reads things wrongly; it reads sorrow into facts that should create joy. Nothing could have made Mary happier than to believe that her Lord had risen from the dead, and nothing ever made her more sorrowful than feeling that she must say, “They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulcher, and we know not where they have laid him.”

[John 20:3-4](#). *Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulcher. So they ran both together: and the other disciple did*

outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulcher.

They wanted to know what had really happened, so they resolved that they would go and see. The woman's message surprised them, and troubled them: "So they ran both together." A good many people seemed to be running that morning. Had the disciples known the whole truth, they might have taken to dancing for joy, but their fears quickened their footsteps.

[John 20:5](#). *And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; —*

So that he knew that they had not taken away the body of Jesus; for, if they had, they certainly would not have taken off the linen clothes. It would have been very difficult, and would have taken considerable time to unwrap the cold grave-clothes when they were bound to the body by the unguents that had been used: "He saw the linen clothes lying; " —

[John 20:5](#). *Yet went he not in.*

Perhaps, out of reverence; or, possibly, out of deference to the older man, he would give him the preference, and let him enter first.

[John 20:6](#). *Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulcher, and seeth the linen clothes lie,*

They were evidently both struck with that sight. It indicated that there had been no haste, no hurry by thieves, but deliberate action of quite another kind.

[John 20:7](#). *And the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself.*

As one has well said, there were the grave-clothes left as the furniture for the believer's last bed, and there was the napkin, "in a place by itself," to wipe away the tears of mourners. The chief lesson is that this act had been done at leisure by someone who was in no hurry whatever. He had put together the linen clothes, and wrapped up the napkin, and laid it "in a place by itself."

[John 20:8](#). *Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulcher, and he saw, and believed.*

That is a great deal for John to be able to say concerning himself, for Mary had not yet believed. Possibly, Peter had scarcely believed, but John had. He felt certain that the Lord had risen. He remembered his words, and he correctly interpreted the fact now before him: "he saw, and believed."

[John 20:9](#). *For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead.*

They did not understand it; even John himself did not until then. The rest of the disciples had never put that interpretation upon our Lord's words which was the clear and simple meaning of them, namely, that he would rise from the dead. I should not wonder if there are other words of Scripture, with regard to the future, which we should comprehend if we took them exactly as they stand in the Word; but we have put other meanings upon them, and consequently see no further into them.

[John 20:10](#). *Then the disciples went away again unto their own home.*

Having ascertained that the body of Jesus was not there, and John having come to the conclusion that the Lord had indeed risen from the dead, he and Peter went away home prayerfully to wait and see what next would happen.

[John 20:11](#). *But Mary stood, —*

She was not going away home. Love cannot leave the place where it lost its object; it will continue to search there: "But Mary stood" —

[John 20:11](#). *Without at the sepulcher weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked —*

Some can weep, but never look. Do not act so, beloved, but look for comfort even when your heart is breaking: "As she wept, she stooped down, and looked " —

[John 20:11-12](#). *into the sepulcher, and seeth two angels in white —*

The resurrection color, the color of joy and gladness: "two angels in white" —

[John 20:12](#). *Sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.*

I have no doubt that the angel who sat at the feet was quite as content to sit there as the other was to sit at the head. If any two of you are sent upon the Lord's business, do not pick and choose as to where you shall be, or what you shall do. "One at the head, and the other at the feet." I am afraid that, if they had been men instead of angels, both would have wanted to sit at the head, and the feet would have been neglected. This sight seems to remind one of the mercy-seat, where the cherubim stood facing each other, and covering the mercy-seat with their outspread wings.

[John 20:13](#). *And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.*

Grief has not many words. It is apt to repeat itself, as the Lord himself did in Gethsemane when he prayed three times, using the same words.

[John 20:14-15](#). *And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou?*

Christ often repeats the words of his messengers, as if to endorse them. The angels said, “Woman, why weepest thou?” The angels’ Master says the same. I pray him, tonight, not only to give me the right word to say, but also to say it himself to your hearts. But Jesus added another question to the angels’ “Woman, why weepest thou?”

[John 20:15](#). *Whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou hast borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.*

Did it occur to her that, possibly, the gardener objected to having a corpse in the garden, and that, therefore, he had come early in the morning, and taken it away? We can hardly imagine what she did think; but when people are in great grief, they often think a great many things which they would not think if they were quite in their right minds. What strange delusions, what singular chimeras of monstrous shape will pass through the heart of grief! God help us to be clear-minded, and not to think what we should not like to say! Still, Mary was a brave woman, for she said to the gardener, “Tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.”

[John 20:16](#). *Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master.*

She said, “My Master, my Rabbi, my Teacher, my Leader, my dear Master;” and I expect she said it with great exultation. She delighted to have her Master again, to have her Teacher again; for, to be without her Teacher, and without her Lord, was a terrible bereavement to that gentle, teachable heart. I suppose she was about to lay hold upon Christ, to grasp him by the feet, lest he should again go away from her.

[John 20:17](#). *Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; —*

Or, as the words may be read, “Hold me not; detain me not; “ —

[John 20:17](#). *For I am not yet ascended to my Father:*

“I have to go away from you, so do not imagine that you can hold me back. Nay, the time for such communications with me is past, for I am now in another condition. I will communicate with you spiritually; but, for that, you must wait a little: ‘ I am not yet ascended to my Father.’”

[John 20:17](#). *But go to my brethren, —*

He had never called them that before. “Brethren” he had called them, but not with the emphatic “my.” “Go to my brethren,” —

[John 20:17](#). *And say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.*

Thus Christ explained to them that the Father, who is God, was God to Christ, and God to them; the Father of Christ, and their Father also.

[John 20:18](#). *Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord,*

That was a very different message from her first one. Then she came and said, “He is gone; the tomb is empty; the stone is rolled away;” now she comes with the joyful tidings, “I have seen our risen Lord.”

[John 20:18](#). *And that he had spoken these things unto her.*

Sometimes, we have to deliver the message of stern justice, which is one of doom to the guilty; but, oh, how sweet it is to be able to come with the message of the gospel!

‘He lives; the great Redeemer lives.’

He lives to plead for sinners; so, sinners: come and trust him, for he will manifest himself to you as surely as he did to these disciples, though not in exactly the same form.

Verses 11-29

[John 20:11-12](#). *But Mary stood without at the sepulcher weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulcher, and seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.*

You see, dear friends, love is very patient and persevering. The other disciples had gone away home, but not so Mary, she stands outside the sepulcher, and still waits, for she cannot go till she has seen her Lord. Love, however, has many sorrows for, as Mary stood without the sepulcher, she was weeping. Oftentimes your love to Christ will make you sorrowful when you for a while lose his presence; it will be a great sorrow to you if your Lord should seem to have hidden himself from you. But see how quick-sighted love is; Mary saw the angels, whom the other disciples might have seen if they had not gone home. One of the beatitudes is, “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God;” and love is one of the most eminent signs of purity. I do not wonder, therefore, that love saw angels, since love sees God himself.

[John 20:13](#). *And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou?*

They could not understand Mary's tears, their question seemed to say "Christ the Lord is risen from the dead, and all the streets of heaven are ringing with hallelujahs because the great Conqueror has returned bearing the spoils of his victory. Why weepest thou? Art not thou one of those for whom this redeeming work was done? 'Woman, why weepest thou?'"

[John 20:13](#). *She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.*

That was enough to make any of Christ's loved ones weep, and if ever you hear a sermon which has not Christ in it, you may well go down the aisle weeping, and if any ask why you weep, you may reply, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him."

[John 20:14](#). *And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus.*

A strange and sad unbelief had taken possession of her, and there is nothing that blinds the eye so quickly as unbelief. Christ is near thee, poor soul, near thee in thy trouble, but thou dost not know that it is Jesus. Open thine eyes, may God the Holy Spirit touch them with his heavenly eye-salve, that thou mayest see that it is Christ himself who is close beside thee!

[John 20:15](#). *Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.*

Her supposition was wrong in one way, but right in another, for Jesus is the Gardener, and his Church is his garden. There was one gardener in whom we fell; here is another and a better Gardener in whom we rise. It is he, and he alone, who can properly tend all the plants of his Father's right-hand planting. He is the Gardener, though not the one that Mary supposed, but what a strange request this was for her to make: "If thou hast borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away." Could she have carried away the body of Jesus if it had been there? If so, what a ghastly load for her tender frame to bear! Ay, but she would have done it somehow or other; for, if faith laughs at impossibilities, and cries, "It shall be done," it is love that actually does the deed of holy daring. The task that seems well-nigh impossible is readily performed when the spirit is invigorated by love.

[John 20:16](#). *Jesus saith unto her, Mary.*

In the simple utterance of her name, there were tones which she could not mistake, it was the sweetest music she had heard since her Lord's last message from the cross: "Mary." "Why, surely," she must have thought, "it was the Master's voice calling me by name!"

[John 20:16](#). *She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master.*

Or, "My Master!" The word "Rabboni" means something more than "Master." Mary seems to say, "Greatest and best of all teachers, I know thy voice; now that thou hast called me by my name, I recognize thee, and I wait to listen to the instruction thou art ready to impart to me."

[John 20:17](#). *Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father:*

"There will be time enough for the fellowship your heart craves:" —

[John 20:17](#). *But go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.*

Practical service is better than personal rapture. Mary would fain have held her Lord, but he says to her, "Go to my brethren." You will always find that it is best and safest to do what Jesus tells you, when he tells you, and as he tells you. What a delightful message is this from the risen Christ! "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God."

[John 20:18-19](#). *Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her. Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.*

If they had possessed more faith, they would have left a door open for Jesus to come in, however anxious they might have been to shut out the Jews. I am afraid, dear brethren and sisters, that we also are sometimes more anxious about shutting out the Jews than we are about letting in Christ. I mean, we are very particular in trying to keep out our own troubles and cares, but if we get Jesus within, we shall not think of the Jews, nor of our troubles and cares; they will all disappear as soon as he appears.

[John 20:20](#). *And when he had so said, he showed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.*

That was enough to make them glad. The gladdest sight out of heaven, and the gladdest sight in heaven itself, is to see the Lord.

[John 20:21](#). *Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.*

“I am the Messiah, the sent One; you, too, shall be my missionaries, my sent ones;” it is but another form of the same word.

[John 20:22-23](#). *And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.*

That is to say, “As you proclaim my gospel, I will back up your message; when you preach of pardoning blood, I will make it efficacious. When you declare to penitent sinners that their sins are remitted, it shall be so; and when you tell those who believe not that they are condemned already, and that except they repent they shall abide in condemnation, their sins shall still be retained.” The true minister of God speaketh not apart from the Word of God, and when he speaks the Word of God, the God of the Word is himself there to make it effectual. It shall be no brutum fulmen, no wasted thunderbolt; it shall fall in reality, and what the servant of Christ declares, according to the Scriptures, shall really be proved to be true.

[John 20:24](#). *But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.*

Possibly he did not go out of an evening; it may be that he was a half-dead sort of Christian, like a great many people are in London. They think they have done finely if they go out on the Sabbath morning, but the evening, — well, it is too cold for them, or they must find some other excuse for keeping indoors: “Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.” That was a great pity, because Thomas would not only be a loser by his absence, but he would be sure to influence others, for he was an apostle. Surely, whenever it is possible, we who are leaders in the church, ministers, deacons, and elders, should take care that we are not absent from the house of the Lord.

[John 20:25](#). *The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord.*

But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe. There is something good about that declaration of Thomas, for a man is not bound to believe merely on the testimony of others. He should, if he can, endeavor to get evidence for himself, and as

Christ is still alive, the very best thing is to go to him. But there was also much that Thomas said which was very wrong, he had no right to demand that he should see the nail prints in Christ's hands, and, worse still, that he should be permitted to put his finger into them, and to thrust his hand into his Lord's side. There was more than a little impertinence about that utterance, and something more even than an ordinary unbelief; and when we ask for signs and wonders from God, and say that we will not believe except we have them, we are guilty of very presumptuous conduct. We are bound to look for evidence concerning Christ; but when the evidence is sufficient, we ought not out of curiosity to crave for more.

[John 20:26](#). *And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them.*

That was an improvement upon the meeting of the previous Lord's-day evening; Thomas had learnt by this time what he had lost the week before, so he was present on this occasion.

[John 20:26-27](#). *Then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas,*

Picking out the one who most needed to be addressed, like the Good Shepherd seeking out the sick sheep first: "Then saith he to Thomas," —

[John 20:27-28](#). *Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.*

It has been well observed that Thomas was the first person who ever proved to himself the Deity of Christ from the exhibition of his wounds. There is a good argument in it, which we cannot stay to explain at this time; but the very humanity of Christ has in it the doctrine of his Deity; you can easily argue from the one to the other. How divine must he be who, in his condescension, took upon himself our nature!

[John 20:29](#). *Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*

That blessedness can be reached by all of us who believe in Christ. Those who lived in this world before Christ came, saw his day by faith, and they were blessed; those who lived in his day, and saw him in the flesh, and trusted him, were blessed; but we who cannot see him, yet believe in him, are the most blessed of them all.

Verses 18-31

[John 20:18](#). *Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her.*

She was a true woman — one whom they had known well enough to be quite able to trust her, and her witness ought to have been believed, but there were some that doubted.

[John 20:19](#). *Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and said unto them, Peace be unto you.*

How he came there we do not know, but doors cannot shut him out. Is there any door between my soul and Christ tonight then? Have I shut myself up in the chamber of doubt, despondency, unbelief? He can come to me. While the doors are yet shut, he can appear within my spirit, and say, “Peace be to you. “Oh! that he would do so! Do we not cry to him to come and breathe peace upon us?”

[John 20:20](#). *And when he had so said, he showed unto them his hands and his side.*

That they might be sure it was he — the same who had died by crucifixion — that they might see how intimate he was with them — familiar — that his scarcely healed wounds should be seen by them.

[John 20:20](#). *Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.*

Oh! for such a sight! There is a depth of gladness in a risen Christ. Those wounds preach peace and joy.

[John 20:21-23](#). *Then said Jesus to them again. Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.*

Thus did Jesus Christ support and make for ever true the probing of his word. Do we declare that the sins of penitents are remitted? They are remitted. Are we, in his name, bidden to declare that “he that believeth not shall be condemned”? So shall it be. He will make the word which is uttered to be true. We shall not speak without our Master making the utterance of his word to be readier of fact.

[John 20:24](#). *But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.*

Perhaps he lived a long way off, or else, being rather slow, he had stayed away, doubting, and fearing, and questioning, and he had not got there in time; anyhow, he was not there. "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is," for it will be a loss to you, as it was to him.

[John 20:25](#). *The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.*

Dogged, obstinate unbelief. Some have said he was a large-hearted man, who investigated truth. I do not see it. He had not gone to the tomb, like Peter and John, to look at the grave-clothes, and to discover that Christ was not there. He does not appear to have investigated the testimony of Mary Magdalene and of the others. He was just as narrow-minded as he very well could be, as I believe modern doubters are with all their boast of their wonderful thoughtfulness and liberality. We have only their own opinion, I am sure, upon that matter; and when a man sounds his own trumpet, there is not much in it.

[John 20:26-27](#). *And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then said he to Thomas.*

For our Lord has a way of making personal application of his word. He looks after the sheep that is sick, and severs it from the flock, that he may deal with it in his wisdom. "Then saith he to Thomas."

[John 20:27-28](#). *Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.*

And whether Thomas did put his finger into the print of his nails or not, we cannot tell. Everyone may think as he likes about that. He may have done so, or he may not, but this one thing happened, that he "answered and said unto him, 'My Lord and my God.'" He made a splendid leap from the depths of doubt to the firm rock of confidence. With two blessed "mys" he seems to grasp Christ with both hands, and in two grand words he pictures him, "My Lord and my God."

[John 20:29](#). *Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*

That is the faith — the true faith — that wants no buttressing and props, but believes the testimony of God.

[John 20:30-31](#). *And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God: and that believing ye might have life through his name.*

God grant that the object of writing the New Testament may be answered in each one of us.

Verses 19-31

[John 20:19](#). *Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.*

He has not risen from the tomb many hours before we find him thus coming to his disciples. His love to them was too great to permit him to be long absent from them. He had said to them, “A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me;” so he kept his word. He stood in their midst, and said unto them, “Peace be unto you.” He is the Lord and Giver of peace just as much now as he was then. Oh, that he would speak peace to the hearts of all his people now! May each believing soul among you have a deep peace! May all your troublous thoughts come to an end, and every anxious mind be calmed! Peace! Blessed peace. Oh, that the Spirit of peace would breathe it upon us all! “Peace be unto you.”

[John 20:20](#). *And when he had so said, he showed unto them his hands and his side.*

These were the marks to help their recognition of him. These were the memorials to excite their gratitude. These, too, were the tokens of his condescension; for a man does not show his wounds to any but to those whom he loves; “He showed unto them his hands and his side.” You cannot see that sight, brethren, but you can meditate upon it. Think how he gave those blessed hands to the nails, and that precious side to the soldier’s spear; and, as you think of them, let your love flow forth unto him who suffered thus for you.

[John 20:20](#). *Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.*

I should think they were glad. They had been afraid of the Jews; but they forgot that fear when they saw the Lord. I suppose that, at first, when he suddenly appeared in their midst, they were afraid of him; but now there

was first a sacred calm, and then there was a ripple of holy gladness on the surface of the still waters of their souls. We cannot see him, brethren, with these eyes of ours; but by faith we can behold him, so we may have gladness even as the disciples had. We ought to be the gladdest people in all the world, because Christ is ours, and is spiritually with us as he promised that he would be.

[John 20:21](#). *Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.*

“You are to go forth and to bless the world, even as I have done. My Father hath sent me; and ‘even so send I you.’ You are to be my delegates, to carry on my service; my commissioned officers, to go forth to conflict and to conquest in my name.”

[John 20:22-23](#). *And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.*

This is as much as for Christ to say, “I will back up your ministry. When you preach that men are condemned for sin of which they have not repented, I will make it to be so as a matter of fact. When you declare pardon to all who trust in my precious blood, I will make it so. That truth, which you preach, shall have my seal of approval set upon it. My power shall go forth with your proclamation of the truth, so that it shall be seen that you are not proclaiming a fiction. When you preach my gospel, I will remit the sins of all who believe it; and when you pronounce sentence of condemnation on such as remain in unbelief, I will confirm your declaration!”

[John 20:24](#). *But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.”*

Very likely, loving Jesus, as he evidently did, very much, Thomas was broken-hearted when he found that his Master was dead; so, when his fellow-disciples told him that Jesus was alive again, he could not believe it, he felt that the news was too good to be true. He had fallen into a fit of despondency, and got away, as broken-hearted, depressed people often do, trying to get quite alone, when Christian company would be one of the best ways of finding comfort and solace. So, “Thomas was not with them when Jesus came.”

[John 20:25](#). *The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord.*

“We have seen the Lord; there is no mistake about the matter, for we have all seen him.” And thus, with loving, anxious desire, they tried to cheer him, and to make him participate in the gladness which they themselves had enjoyed. Dear friends, always look after your weak brethren. If there is a Thomas, who is depressed and sad, and who therefore shuns you, do not you shun him; but find him out, and try to tell him what you have learned by way of comfort for your own heart. Mayhap, God will use it to comfort him also.

[John 20:25](#). *But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.*

Thomas should not have said that, because, after all, it was not true. I do not suppose that he did put his finger into the print of the nails, and thrust his hand into Christ’s side, yet he did believe. We sometimes say a great deal that would have been far better left unsaid; and, especially, when our spirit is depressed, it is a token of wisdom to feel, “We are hardly in a condition of mind in which we can speak as we ought, so we had better remain silent.”

[John 20:26](#). *And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them:*

That is better. His love brought him out, you see, away from himself; and it often happens that, by getting a man away from himself, we get him away from his worst enemy.

[John 20:26](#). *Then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you.*

His first salutation, after his resurrection, was such a choice one that there could not be a better, so he repeated it when he appeared the second time. Peace is so rich a blessing that even the Divine Master can say nothing sweeter to his faithful followers; so again he says to them, “Peace be unto you.”

[John 20:27](#). *Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.*

Our dear and condescending Master would give to his feeble, and somewhat petulant disciple, all the proofs he had himself asked to have. He

shall have evidence clear as noonday if he must have it; Thomas, however, as I suppose, was wise enough not to accept the gracious offer of his Lord. Sometimes, it is wise not to take what God himself may put in our way. You remember how Balaam was allowed to go with the men sent to him by Balak, and he did so; yet it would have been much wiser of him if he had not gone. I do not think that Thomas did put his finger into the print of the nails, or thrust his hand into his Master's side. On the contrary, we read: —

[John 20:28](#). *And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.*

Leaping out of the slough of doubt, on to the rock of confidence, by a single spring, and getting further, perhaps, than others had done who had before outstripped him. He inferred the Deity of Christ from his wounds and his resurrection, — a grand chain of argument of which we have not the intervening links. His thoughtful mind made him feel that, if Christ was indeed risen, — the same Christ who had died, — it was proved, by those death-wounds, that he was both Lord and God; while his personal, appropriating faith, realizing the identity of the Saviour's person, made him say, "My Lord and my God."

[John 20:29](#). *Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed:*

That is well.

[John 20:29](#). *Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*

That is better.

[John 20:30-31](#). *And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.*

Now, dear friends, has the purpose, for which this Book was written, been answered in your case? Have you been led to "believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God," and so to believe that you "have life through his name"? If not, why not? May you have grace to answer that question, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

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CHAPTER 21

Verses 1-25

John 21:1-3. *After these things Jesus shewed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and on this wise shewed he himself. There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee. and two other of his disciples. Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee.*

They could not do better. Idleness is the most injurious condition in which a man can be found. A preacher is much better occupied fishing than doing nothing.

John 21:3. *They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing.*

Even apostles may fish and catch nothing. Do not be discouraged, you who, when you are endeavoring to fish for souls, for many a day catch nothing.

John 21:4. *But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus.*

Yet he was their old familiar friend. Was it their unbelief? Let us hope not. Was it that a remarkable change had passed over the Master — that, after his resurrection from the dead, there was a glory about him quite unusual, such as they had never seen before, except when they were with him on the holy mount? Perhaps so.

John 21:5. *Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat?*

Just the kind of language you would expect from him — to call them children, and to inquire even about their temporal wants. For evermore the Lord had an eye to the temporal condition of the twelve, as well as to their spiritual. “Have ye any meat?”

John 21:5-6. *They answered him, No. And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.*

Christ knows where fishes are. He knows where you are then, my friend, though you do not, perhaps, know where you are yourself. You have get out of your own latitude, mentally and spiritually. You could not describe yourself, but Christ knows every minnow in the brook, and every fish in the lake, and knows where you are. Christ can bring fish where he wants them to be. He brought them into the net. Christ can bring souls into his net

tonight. At his will, their will shall sweetly yield itself up, and they shall come into the net.

John 21:7. *Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, (for he was naked,)*

He was in his undress.

John 21:7-8. *And did cast himself into the sea. And the other disciples came in a little ship; (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits,) dragging the net with fishes.*

It is all very well of Peter to be in such a hurry, but somebody must keep hold of the net. It is not always the most venturesome that is the most practical. We are glad to have some splendidly rash brethren, but we are equally glad that the rest are not quite so rash and are a little more prudent.

John 21:9. *As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon and bread.*

Christ had provided this. We are to catch fish as if we should have nothing to eat if we did not, but yet we are to depend upon him as if we never caught a fish ourselves. Do everything as if you had to do everything; trust in God as if you had to do nothing. The blending of these two will make a wise believer. "They saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread."

John 21:10. *Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught.*

"I do not need it in order to entertain you, for I have fish here already; still, bring it." Nothing is given in vain; use it.

John 21:11-12. *Simon Peter went up and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken. And Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord.*

Inwardly conscious that it was Christ's habit to speak as he had spoken. Nobody could have caught his manner, and besides, what secret instinct enabled them to discern their meek and lowly Lord, even through the glory which surrounded him?

John 21:13-14. *Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them. and fish likewise. This is now the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead.*

Count the visits of Christ. “This is now the third time.” We ought to remember Christ’s visits to us so well and so thoroughly that we could tell how many times he has been with us. “This is now the third time.”

John 21:15-17. *So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.*

Nobody can feed Christ’s sheep unless they love him, and when we love Christ the most practical way of showing it is by taking care of his lambs — his little ones — and of all those that are his — his sheep. Love will teach us how to do it. Love will sign our commission, and ordain us to the work. The Master went on to say: —

John 21:18. *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest; but when thou shall be old, thou shall stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.*

Peter, thou wilt have to be girded with an iron chain, and taken off to prison, and taken off to the cross to die.

John 21:19. *This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.*

That is your life business. Follow me, even though you end, as I did, on a cross. Follow me. I am a shepherd; you must be a shepherd too; and as the sheep follow you, so do you follow me.

John 21:20-21. *Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee? Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do?*

What about this man?

John 21:22. *Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me.*

We ought not to be curious about the future of anybody. We must not be inquiring into what is not revealed; and what the Saviour said on this

occasion was misunderstood; and if the words of Jesus, even when he spoke them, were misunderstood so as to become the foundation of a false tradition, you may judge how little value can ever be put upon tradition in the Church.

John 21:23. Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but if I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?

The Word of God is to be trusted, and not tradition, for in the handing of a message from mouth to mouth it generally varies. It sometimes loses its very essential spirit, and sometimes may be made to say the very reverse of what was said. Stick to the word, and leave the traditions alone.

John 21:24-25. This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true. And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.

Such a full life — so pregnant with meaning — so active, and all its activity so intensely real and spiritual, that to write a life of Christ is an impossibility: and though there have been many very admirable “lives of Christ” in our time, I recommend you to keep to one which is the best of them all, and that one is written by four. The Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are the best life of Christ out of sight. All others must be but mere helps to the understanding of these four.

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CHAPTER 1

Verses 1-12

[Acts 1:1-3](#). *The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen: to whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God:*

The resurrection of Christ, as we have often said, is the best attested of all historical facts. There is not half as much reason to be sure that Napoleon Bonaparte was ever taken to St. Helena as to believe that Jesus Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father. If the resurrection of Christ is not credible, there remains nothing credible in history. I go further than that, and say that the news of yesterday, which you read in this morning's paper, you had no right to believe if you do not believe in Christ's resurrection, for the evidence in its favor is not half as strong as the evidence concerning the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Remember that this feat was attested by men who could not be deceived concerning it, and who sealed with their blood, as well as with their unflinching testimony, their solemn belief that they had touched him, that they had spoken to him, that they had listened to him, that they had eaten with him, and had seen him eat of a broiled fish and of a honeycomb after

he rose from the grave. We know that Christ has risen from the dead. That is one of the great corner stones of the Christian faith. Fall back on that in every time of doubt, and your fears will speedily disappear.

[Acts 1:4-6](#). *And being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the holy Ghost not many days hence. When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, LORD, will thou at this time restore again the Kingdom to Israel.*

They had not got rid of their old ideas concerning a kingdom visible among men, they still clung to the idea of a temporal kingdom for Israel. There were a kingdom already established by Christ; but in the sense in which they understood the word, they were sadly in error.

[Acts 1:7-8](#). *And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath nut in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and we shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*

As indeed they were, for they went everywhere testifying to what they had seen and heard, and very many were the conversions that followed. We want the same power to rest upon us now that rested upon them when the Holy Spirit came upon them.

[Acts 1:9-10](#). *And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel;*

Luke wrote before concerning the two men, in shining garments, who said to the women at the sepulcher, "Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here but is risen." These two men in white apparel now ask an equally appropriate question: "Why stand ye gazing up into heaven?"

[Acts 1:11-12](#). *Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven, this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven. Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olives which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey.*

This exposition consisted of readings from [Luke 24:49-53](#); and [Acts 1:1-12](#).

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CHAPTER 2

Verses 1-21

[Acts 2:1-8](#). *And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. “And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?*

These men, so far from being able to speak many languages, could not by themselves speak even one correctly. The Galilaeen dialect was a base degradation of the true Jewish tongue, so that the Galilaeans were always the subject of sneers and scoffings on account of their mispronunciation. There are several stories in the old Rabbinical writings, all intended to ridicule the Galilaeans; yet these men had now been taught to speak their own language perfectly; and, what was more marvellous still, languages that they had never heard now came pouring forth from their lips with the greatest fluency. How wide the range of those foreign tongues was, we learn from the following verses: —

[Acts 2:9-11](#). *Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts in Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.*

Babel’s curse was now removed, — not by a reversing of God’s curse, for God’s curses and blessings are both like the laws of the Medes and Persians which never can be altered; men still spoke the tongues of confusion, but the apostles were able to speak to them all after receiving

that miraculous gift of tongues. Thus was fulfilled that promise of Jesus, “He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do because I go unto my Father;” for Christ never spoke with many tongues, nor did he enable his disciples to do so during his life on earth, but when he had gone back to heaven to his Father, and had received gifts for men, they were enabled to do greater works than he had accomplished by his personal ministry here below.

[Acts 2:12-13](#). *And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine.*

That is to say, if a Libyan, for instance, had been listening to one who was preaching in the language of Cappadocia, he might think that the man was merely babbling strange sounds without any meaning in them. To others, the inspired speech of the apostles was only like the incoherent utterance of drunken men.

[Acts 2:14-20](#). *But Peter, standing up with the eleven lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: for these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; and it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: and on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: and I will shew wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke: the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come:*

Doubtless this refers first to the siege of Jerusalem, when those strange portents were seen in the heavens, and afterwards to that far greater and more notable day of the Lord, the day of judgment, when the moon shall become as blood, and the sun shall become black as sackcloth of hair.

[Acts 2:21](#). *And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.*

What a glorious gospel verse this is! This is one of the great lifeboat texts of the Bible. He who can get into this boat shall certainly sail to glory in safety. “Whosoever” — there is no exception of character; whatsoever

his past life may have been, “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord” — here are no hard conditions; — prayer, trust, confession of that trust, — all these make up calling upon the name of the Lord; and whosoever shall do this not only may be, but “shall be saved.” There is no perhaps, no peradventure about it: “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

Verses 1-42

We cannot too often read the story of that wondrous outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost; and let us never read it without asking the Lord to manifest in our midst the fullness of the Spirit’s power. We may not have a repetition of the miraculous gifts which were then bestowed upon the apostles and those who were with them; but we may have that gracious influence which shall convince and convert those who gather to hear the Word. Our success in preaching the Word is entirely dependent upon the presence and working of the Holy Spirit; therefore, let our prayer be,^¾

“Lord God, the Holy Ghost,
In this accepted hour,
As on the day of Pentecost,
Descend in all thy power.

“The young, the old inspire With wisdom from above;
And give us hearts and tongues of fire,
To pray, and praise, and love.”

[Acts 2:1-13](#). *And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in*

the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine.

The people who came together were greatly astonished to find the disciples of Christ speaking to them in their own tongues. Though all the speakers were Jews, and naturally knew no tongue but their own, yet they were able to talk in divers languages. Therefore some of their hearers, mocking, said, "These men are full of new wine."

[Acts 2:14-21](#). *But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: for these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: and on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: and I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke: the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: and it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.*

I did not detain you to speak about the moon turned into blood, or the sun darkened into midnight; those matters are of small consequence to you and to me compared with this sentence: "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." What a blessed door of hope is this! What a window, letting the light of heaven shine into the darkest despondency! Whosoever shall address himself to God by repentance, by faith, by prayer, shall be saved.

[Acts 2:22-23](#). *Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:*

This was bold talking, for Peter was doubtless addressing many of the very people who had put the Lord to death, and he charges them with it. Observe how he declares that Christ's death was in accordance with "the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God," yet he expressly says that "by wicked hands" they had crucified and slain him. It never occurred to Peter that the counsel of God deprived men of the responsibility and guilt of their actions. No neither need it ever occur to you. If anyone shall say to you," When anything is according to the foreknowledge and counsel of God, how can God blame the doer of it?" you may tell him that he has first to explain to you what he means; and if he says there is a difficulty in it, ask him to tell you what the difficulty is. Those who knew better than the objector, could see none. The inspired apostle Peter could see none; but when he was most vehement in charging these men with guilt, yet, at the same time, he said that it was by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. Surely, he was a bad pleader to introduce into his argument anything that could be readily construed into an excuse for those he was accusing. But there is no real excuse in it; the free agency of man is as true as the predestination of God; the two truths stand fast for ever. It is the folly of man to imagine that they disagree. If you do wrong, you are accountable for the wrong; and if there is a providence which ordains everything, — as certainly there is, — yet that providence takes not away from any man the full responsibility for aught that he doeth. So, truly did Peter say to these Jews concerning Christ, "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain."

[Acts 2:24-32](#). *Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: because thou wilt not leave my soul in Hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance. Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulcher is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on*

his throne; he seeing this before spoke of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in the abode of the dead, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.

Here Peter appealed to the eleven, and to all the disciples then present who had seen Jesus after he had risen from the dead. It must have been a very impressive sight as they all stood up bearing witness that they had seen the Christ, who was crucified, alive after his death. It was a wonderful public attestation to that grandest of all facts, the raising again from the dead of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God.

[Acts 2:33](#). *Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.*

Was not that enough to convince them? They saw and they heard the proofs of the working of the Spirit among them, and Peter told them that “this” was the gift of Christ, who had ascended up on high. It must have been a very striking thing, to have been there, and to have heard and seen these tokens of God setting his seal to the work of Jesus.

[Acts 2:34-36](#). *For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.*

What a climax to Peter’s sermon! How simple and yet how triumphant is the argument! We do not wonder that men were convinced by it.

[Acts 2:37](#). *Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart,*

—

There is a great distinction between being cut to the heart and being pricked in the heart. Those who were cut to the heart stoned the preacher; but they who are pricked in the heart yield a sweet obedience to the will of God: “They were pricked in their heart,” —

[Acts 2:37-40](#). *And said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.*

Not, “save yourselves”; but “save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Come out from among them. They are guilty of the death of Christ; you will be found guilty of it, too, unless you now disown the people who committed that awful crime. Come right out from among them, and be altogether separated from them.

[Acts 2:41-42](#). *Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.*

Verses 1-47

[Acts 2:1](#). *And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.*

The first lesson that we ought to learn from this inspired record of what happened on the day of Pentecost is, that we cannot expect a revival until there, is unity among Christians. The Spirit of God will not visit and bless a church where there is strife. These disciples in Jerusalem “were all with one accord in one place” “in prayer and supplication,” as the fourteenth verse of the previous chapter tells us.

[Acts 2:2-6](#). *And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together,—*

It was a great cause for surprise that men should be able to speak in foreign tongues without any previous instruction. The sound was heard outside the upper room where they were gathered, many pressed to the door to listen, and then went away to tell the strange news, and thus “the multitude came together,”—

[Acts 2:6-7](#). *And were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans?*

“These men are Jews, and they come from a country district where the people are more than ordinarily illiterate. It is strange that they should be able to speak in foreign languages.”

[Acts 2:8-11](#). *And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.*

“I think you, good sir, come from Parthia?” “I do, and I am astonished to hear these Jews speak the Parthian tongue.” “And you, sir?” “I am from Media, and I am amazed to hear them speak the language of the Medes; ‘tis strange, ‘tis passing strange. We hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?”

[Acts 2:12-13](#). *And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? Others mocking, said, These men are full of new wine.*

They heard languages which they did not understand as well as those they did understand; so, putting the worst possible construction upon the wondrous scene, they said that the speakers were drunk. It is the mark of a wicked mind when we are ready to attribute evil reasons in the lack of any other. Let us never do this, but always be ready to believe all the good about men that we can.

[Acts 2:14-15](#). *But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: for these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day.*

“It is but nine o’clock in the morning; you cannot really imagine that these men are drunk.” We might have thought it hardly worth while to take notice of such an observation; but Peter knew how to conciliate the crowd, and to meet them upon their own ground. He began where they left off, but he went on to say what they little expected to hear:—

[Acts 2:16-21](#). *But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions and your old men shall dream dreams: and on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy, and I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke: the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great*

and notable day of the Lord come: and it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Peter was speaking to a Jewish audience, so he began by quoting from the Old Testament. He was wise to win their attention by a long passage out, of one of their own prophets. Now he comes nearer to his main point:

—
[Acts 2:22-23](#). *Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:*

How boldly he puts the truth before his hearers! He charges home the murder of Christ upon them, yet he skillfully softens it by that introduction about “the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.” This is a very wonderful verse, because it shows us that everything is predetermined and foreknown by God; and yet when men do wickedly, they are responsible for it. “Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.” There is no man in this world who knows where these two great truths of man’s free agency and divine predestination meet. There have been all sorts of schemes and inventions to make the two doctrines agree; and one set of men has denied one of the truths, and another set has denied the other; but do you nothing of the kind. Believe them both, yet do not pretend that you can reconcile them. It may be that, in another state, with larger capacity of mind than we at present possess, we shall be able to reconcile these two truths. I am not sure that we shall do so; and I do not know that even angels can understand this great mystery; but it is a grand thing to exercise faith where we cannot comprehend what is revealed to us. He who only believes what he can understand will have a very short creed, and soon he will have none at all; but he who believes what he cannot understand, simply because it is taught him by revelation from God, is the man who walks humbly with his God, and he shall be accepted. I thank God for the mystery that conceals so much from us; where would there be room for faith if all things were as plain as A B C?

[Acts 2:24-28](#). *When God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he*

is on my right hand that I should not be moved: therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance.

Note how Peter keeps to the Old Testament. Those quotations added force to his argument, for his hearers believed the ancient Scriptures to be the very voice of God, and therefore he gave them much of it. Having quoted from the Psalms, Peter goes on to make this comment upon David's words:—

[Acts 2:29-32](#). *Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulcher is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.*

Standing up with the eleven apostles, and with the greater company of disciples behind them, it was a noble utterance of Peter: "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses."

[Acts 2:33](#). *Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.*

"This, which is a mystery to you, is the result of Christ's exaltation at the right hand of his Father."

[Acts 2:34-36](#). *For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.*

There does not seem very much that is original or striking in that sermon; certainly, it is not a very sensational one; there is no fine metaphor in it; no garnishing of poetry; but, in plain, simple language, Peter proves that it is Jesus Christ of whom David spoke in the Psalms. This was exactly what the people wanted to have proved; many of them were ready to receive such proof as that, and they did receive it.

[Acts 2:37-40](#). *Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.*

That is to say, “Come out from among the ungodly; leave the world behind, and escape for your lives.”

[Acts 2:41-47](#). *Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.*

Oh, that we might have the same blessed experience! God grant it, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

Verses 14-43

[Acts 2:14](#). *But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you and hearken to my words:*

A great crowd had gathered in the street, and the apostles, under divine inspiration, addressed them in different tongues, Peter as the leader coming prominently to the front: “Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice.” They were twelve witnesses of the resurrection of Christ from the dead, for they had seen him after he had risen, and had eaten with him; they constituted a jury of twelve honest and true men, and Peter as their foreman, “standing up with the eleven,” gave their verdict!

[Acts 2:15](#). *For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day.*

At nine o'clock in the morning, it was not to be supposed that they had become drunken.

[Acts 2:16-18](#). *But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: and on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:*

Every member of the Christian community should be anointed by the Holy Spirit. The blessing would not simply be given to one here and another there, but there would be a wonderful outpouring that should fall upon the whole multitude of believers.

[Acts 2:19-21](#). *And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke: the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: and it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.*

This is a wonderful connection in which to find such a promise as this, ³/₄a darkened sun, a blood-red moon,³/₄ yet “whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” When the worst comes to the worst, prayer will still be heard, and faith will lead to salvation! O matchless grace of God! Is there not someone here who will call upon God’s name now before that evil day comes in all its fullness? “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Oh, that every one of you would lay hold of that promise! It is said that drowning men will catch at a straw. This is no straw, but a gloriously strong lifebuoy; only get into it, and it will float you to glory.

[Acts 2:22](#). *Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know:*

Note that Peter does not begin with the Deity of Christ. He will get to that soon; but, like a wise speaker, he commences with points upon which they were all agreed, or which they could not deny. He therefore calls Christ “a man approved of God,” and he reminds them of the “miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him” in their midst. They knew that God had thus attested his mission, so he appealed to them for confirmation: “As ye yourselves also know.”

[Acts 2:23](#). *Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:*

There is a wonderful blending, in this verse, of the predestination of God and yet the responsibility of man. I suppose our finite faculties cannot yet discern where these two things meet; but faith, in the absence of every other power, believes them both. The predestination of God does not alter the moral quality of the acts of wicked men. Man acts freely, as freely as if there were no divine predestination; yet the free agency of man does not affect the foreknowledge and predestination of God.

[Acts 2:24](#). *Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.*

It was possible for him to die, but it was not possible for him to be held in the bonds of death.

[Acts 2:25](#). *For David*^{3/4}

Speaking of Christ in the Psalm which, at first sight, might seem to refer to David himself, but which was even by the Rabbis believed also to refer to the Messiah, and which we know did indeed refer to the Messiah.

[Acts 2:20-27](#). *Speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: therefore did any heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, —*

Hades, the world of separate spirits, —

[Acts 2:27](#). *Neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.*

David was speaking of someone who, though he should die, would never in his body feel the natural effect of death, namely decay.

[Acts 2:28-29](#). *Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance. Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulcher is with us unto this day.*

Peter craves liberty to speak with freedom, and then he very shrewdly gives to David the high title of patriarch, which is not generally given to him, so as to win their attention and approval: “Let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulcher is with us unto this day,” and therefore he did not speak about himself in the words Peter was quoting.

[Acts 2:30-32](#). *Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.*

Peter points to the eleven around him, there they stood, steadfast in the midst of the surging crowd, assenting to the bold declaration of their leader.

[Acts 2:33-35](#). *Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand until I make thy foes thy footstool.*

See how he builds up his argument with clear and cogent reasoning.

[Acts 2:36](#). *Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.*

How those men must have started when he came to that which was the finale of his address, the point at which he had aimed all along!

[Acts 2:37](#). *Now when they heard this, they were picked in their heart, —*

The pointed truth had gone home to their heart, and they were wounded by it.

[Acts 2:37](#). *And said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?*

These may have been the same people who mockingly said, “These men are full of new wine.” They began badly, but they ended well. I hope none of you have come here to mock; but if you had done so, and then went out pricked in your heart by the truth you had heard, it would be better than coming in an attentive frame of mind, and then going out unimpressed as so many do. God prevent it!

[Acts 2:38](#). *Then Peter said unto them, Repent,^{3/4}*

Change your mind entirely, be sorry for what you have done, repudiate what you have done by a holy repentance of it: ‘Repent,’ —

[Acts 2:38](#). *And be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins,*

Peter urged them to repent, and bade them confess their faith by being baptized in God’s appointed way.

[Acts 2:38](#). *And ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*

“You shall be sharers in this wonderful manifestation which has so astounded you.”

[Acts 2:39](#). *For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.*

What promise did Peter mean? Why that promise in the 21st verse, “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” That promise is also given to you, my hearers, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even in the most distant heathen land, for the “whosoever” in the promise applies to every one who “shall call on the name of the Lord.” Do not therefore shut yourselves out, or try to shut others out, but believe the promise, call upon God, and you shall be saved.

[Acts 2:40](#). *And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.*

Peter first bore witness to the truth, and then pleaded with his hearers to receive his testimony. All true ministers will both “testify and exhort.” Some are always exhorting; they cry, “Believe, believe,” but they do not tell their hearers what is to be believed. Others are always testifying; they preach good doctrine, but they do not like to exhort sinners to repent, and believe the gospel. Each of these is a one-legged ministry, but we must have two legs to our ministry, and, like Peter, “testify and exhort saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” “Come out from those who crucified Christ, quit the generation that is guilty of the blood of the Son of God, put your repentance between you and them, put your public baptism between you and them, avow that you belong not to them, but to him whom they crucified, and whom God hath exalted.”

[Acts 2:41](#). *Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.*

They not only believed what he said, but they were glad to believe it; acknowledging that they had greatly sinned, they rejoiced that there was a promise which covered even their sin: “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Then, having repented and believed, they were baptized upon profession of their faith, according to the true Scriptural order.

[Acts 2:42](#). *And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.*

They believed the doctrine that was taught by the apostles, and they had fellowship with them and with all other Christians with whom they were

associated. They did not try to go to heaven by some underground railway without confessing Christ; but, having confessed their faith in Christ they further manifested their devotion to him “in breaking of bread, and in prayers.” I do not know how many prayer-meetings they had, they must have kept on praying, and praising, and preaching pretty well all day long.

[Acts 2:43](#). *And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.*

Verses 36-47

You know that Peter had been preaching a plain, simple, straightforward sermon upon the death, crucifixion, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. He, who was once such a coward that he trembled before a little maid, now that he is filled with the Spirit, boldly charges this crowd with being murderers and deicides because their kind put to death the Lord of life and glory. If you turn to the 36th verse, you will see the effect of Peter’s plain preaching through the power of the Holy Spirit: —

[Acts 2:36-37](#). *Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart,*

A little later in this same Book, we read of those who listened to Stephen’s sharp, sword-like sentences, “When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart,” and soon they stoned Stephen to death. To be “cut to the heart” is not enough, but to be pricked in the heart is to receive a mortal wound. Happy is the man who has had his sin killed through having received a deadly wound from the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. These people who heard Peter preach “were pricked in their heart,” “and, first, they were in doubt as to what they should do but, secondly, they were resolved that, whatever they should be told to do they would do at once.

[Acts 2:37-38](#). *And said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sin, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*

Nobody but a Baptist minister could have preached that sermon, at least, we shall have to wait a long while before we hear any other saying to a whole congregation, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you.” This is indeed the full proclamation of the gospel, and we have no more right to

leave out the baptism than we have to leave out the repentance. “Repent, and be baptized every one of you.” Peter was not like those hyper-Calvinists who are afraid to give an exhortation to a sinner because he is spiritually dead, but he spoke out boldly to those who had asked “What shall we do?” and said to them, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.”

[Acts 2:39](#). *For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.*

This is a most blessed verse. The promise is to us, and to our descendants; not merely to our children, but also to our grandchildren, ay, and to our race as far as it yet may run; and the next clause, “and to all that are afar off” proves that the promise is made to the far-off ones as well as to our children, with only this limitation, “even as many as the Lord our God shall call.”

[Acts 2:40](#). *And with many other works did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.*

Not, “save yourselves from hell;” that Christ alone can do for you, but “save yourselves from this generation” by coming boldly out from among the ungodly, taking upon you the distinctive mark of the Christian, and so separating yourselves from those upon whom the sentence of death shall fall.

[Acts 2:41-45](#). *Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostle’s doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods and parted them to all men, as every man had need.*

What a notable instance this was of the power of divine grace! We should not usually suppose that the Jewish race would be given to any excess of making common property; but where grace came in the first flush of its dawn, see to what prodigies of liberality it excited the early believers.

Would that we had more of this generous spirit nowadays!

[Acts 2:46](#). *And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,*

I believe that wherever two or three disciples of Christ meet together it is competent for them to celebrate the Lord's supper. That ordinance is not, as some think it to be a church ordinance, to be confined to the official assembling of all believers; but wherever two or three are met in Christ's name, there he is; and where he is, there may the emblems of his broken body and shed blood be partaken of in memory of him.

[Acts 2:47](#). *Praising God, and having favor with all his people. And the lord added to the church daily such as should be saved*

May he do the like unto all our churches, and he shall have the glory world without end! Amen.

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CHAPTER 3

Verses 1-21

[Acts 3:1](#). *Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour.*

Peter and John seem to have been linked in closest friendship. Peter had been brought back by John when he was almost despairing after having denied his Master. John lovingly found him out, and made him his associate; and now they "went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer." Observe, here, how very sweetly the Old Testament dispensation melts into the new. The Temple was no longer what it had been before; the type was of no further use now that the great Antitype of the Temple had come; yet these apostles still went up to it at the hour of prayer. There are some men who are great at destroying. It will be time to destroy the old when the new is quite ready; and even then, it may be very possible to let the darkness gradually melt away into a twilight, and so the day shall come with no great gap, no marked surprise. So Peter and John went up to the Temple at the same hour as others went. It is folly to be singular, except when to be singular is to be something more right than others.

[Acts 3:2-3](#). *And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms eye them that entered into the temple; who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple asked an alms.*

This seems to have been the custom about the Temple gates, as it is about the doors of many churches on the Continent. For instance, you could not approach the door of a certain church in Rome without being solicited, perhaps, by a score of beggars. I do not suppose that it was so in Judaea in its prosperous days; but when religion does not prosper, beggars are sure to be multiplied; and now that the very spirit of godliness had gone, almsgiving was done in public, and hence the beggars appeared in public.

[Acts 3:4-7](#). *And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us. And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them. Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give to thee: in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength.*

The man had never stood upon his feet in all his life, and was so unable to move that he had to be carried to the Temple gates to beg; and yet, at the mention of the great and glorious name of Jesus, his feet and ankle-bones immediately received strength.

[Acts 3:8-11](#). *And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God: and they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple: and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him. And as the lame man which was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering.*

You are not at all surprised that he held Peter and John; it was but natural that he should follow them wherever they went, for he owed so much to them, and they were the best friends that he had ever had. He was filled with reverence for them because of what they had wrought upon him; and now, lest they should go away, he held them; and “all the people ran together unto them, greatly wondering.” He who was healed by Christ’s wonderful name was wondering, and the people who saw him healed were all wondering. I suppose that wonder mingles with all true worship. All wonder is not worship; but where there is adoration of God, and a sense of his great goodness and of our unworthiness, there seems always to be a large amount of wonder. We shall even-

“Sing with wonder and surprise,
His lovingkindness in the skies.”

[Acts 3:12](#). *And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?*

Peter could well see that the people attributed to himself and John more than was right, so he thus had an opportunity of preaching the gospel to them, and you may be certain that he did not miss it.

[Acts 3:13](#). *The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus;*^{3/4}

Or, rather, as you have it in the Revised Version with more correctness, “hath glorified his Servant Jesus,” for his Son may be said to be glorified already. But Jesus had taken upon himself the form of a servant, and God had “glorified his Servant Jesus;” —

[Acts 3:13-15](#). *Whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go. But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses.*

I want you to note here how Peter will have it that the God of the gospel is the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. I do not hesitate to say that the god of a large number of professors now is not the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob; and the reason I say so is this, — that they often treat the Old Testament as if it were an altogether secondary volume, and speak about the imperfect ideas of God which the Hebrews had, and the imperfect revelation of God in the Old Testament. I believe that Jehovah — that very Jehovah who clave the Red Sea, and drowned the Egyptians, — the terrible God of the Old Testament — is the same God who is the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; and we are to take the Godhead as it is revealed, not alone in the New Testament, but in the Old Testament also. There are some who would pick and choose that part of Scripture which they like best, and construct a god for themselves out of those chosen texts. These be they who have other gods before Jehovah; and these be they who make unto themselves an image which, if it be not graven upon stone, is yet made out of their own imaginations, which they set up, and worship in the place of the one living and true God. “The God of our fathers hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied.” See how plain-spoken Peter is, — how boldly he presses home upon the crowd around him the murder of Christ, — the rejection of the Messiah! It took no small amount

of courage and faith to speak like that, and to speak so to persons who were full of admiration of him before, and who would be pretty sure to be filled with indignation against him directly. A man can speak boldly against those who are his enemies; but, when people begin to flatter you, and admire you, a softness steals over the bravest heart, and he is inclined to be very gentle. I admire Peter that he puts it thus plainly: “Ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses.”

[Acts 3:16](#). *And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: —*

“You see him now, and you know what he used to be; there is no question about the identity of the man.”

[Acts 3:16-17](#). *Yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all. And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, —*

How like his Master does Peter now speak! Instead of drawing his sword, as he did when he cut off the ear of Malchus, he puts the truth thus mildly: “I wot that through ignorance ye did it,” —

[Acts 3:17-21](#). *As did also your rulers. But those things, which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled. Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.*

Verses 11-26

You remember, dear friends, how Peter denied his Lord in the time of his trial. Now notice what a change was wrought in him after the Holy Spirit had fallen upon him on the day of Pentecost. We have often read the story of the man healed at the beautiful gate of the temple; now let us see what followed:

[Acts 3:11](#). *And as the lame man, which was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering.*

It is always easy to draw a crowd, but there was really something wonderful to be seen that day. The apostle was careful to turn to the very best account the curiosity of the crowd. See how quickly he carried their thoughts away from the man before him to the greater Man, the Divine Man, the Son of God whom they had rejected.

[Acts 3:12-23](#). *And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go. But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses. And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all. And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers. But those things, which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled. Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.*

Hear this, then, you who have heard Christ, through his Word and through his servants, and have heard him preach,— ay, scores and hundreds of times. Let me read this text to you again; and as I read it, may it sink into your hearts. “It shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.”

[Acts 3:24-26](#). *Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days. Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the*

kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.

They were to have the first proclamation of the gospel; from among them would be gathered many of the first converts. The preacher did not know immediately what result this sermon produced; it was not like the sermon preached at Pentecost, for he did know what happens after its delivery. This is quite as good a sermon every way, and we have every reason to believe that as many were converted by it. The Spirit of God was with Peter; yet even the Spirit of God, does not always work in the same way upon men. You see, the apostles had no opportunity to have a talk with the people afterwards, and to find out what had been done, as they had on the day of Pentecost.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Acts 3:11-26](#); [Acts 4:1-4](#); and 2 Peter 3

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CHAPTER 4

Verses 1-4

Acts 4:1-4. And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them, being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they laid hands on them, and put them in hold unto the next day: for it was now eventide. Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand.

So that, though they could not tell there and then how many were converted, and though they could not baptize them at once, for they were taken away, yet, though there was no after-meeting, there were probably just as many saved as at Pentecost. Just as grand a result came of it. You cannot judge of the result of a sermon on the particular day that it is preached; it may seem as if that sermon had produced no effect, and it may be so; but, still, this time it was not so. Whenever you go home sad that you have not had an after-meeting, or you are interrupted, and cannot tell what good was done, though you do not know what has been accomplished, the record is in heaven, and God will reveal it by-and-by; and, peradventure,

even here you will discover that you made a mistake, and that the service which seemed lost was one of the most blessed that you ever conducted. God grant that it may be so, for Christ's sake! Now let us read Peter's second Epistle, the third chapter.

This exposition consisted of readings from Acts 3:11-26; Acts 4:1-4; and 2 Peter 3

Verses 8-33

Peter and John were summoned before the priests to give an account for having healed the lame man, and for having preached in the name of Jesus of Nazareth. In the eighth verse we read: —

Acts 4:8-12. Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people and elders of Israel, if we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole: Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

Nothing can exceed the directness, the comprehensiveness, and the boldness of this statement. He not only declares the name of Christ to be the wonder-working name, but he charges them with his murder, re-asserts the resurrection; nay, further, he cuts at the root of all their ceremonial righteousness, and declares that they must be saved by this hated and despised name, or else perish forever. Under all circumstances, let the servant of God behave himself boldly. Let him remember that this is hour he ought always to speak, and that when the honour of his Master and the welfare of souls are concerned, it is not for him to withhold, but to speak out the truth.

Acts 4:13. Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.

Where else could such holy courage have been learned? They spake in their measure just as the great Master did, of whom it is written: "He spoke as one having authority, and not as the Scribes." They did not speak with the timid, hesitating manner of a preacher who seems to hold the balance of probabilities between the right and the wrong, the false and the true, but

with the demonstration of a hearty conviction of the truth of the principles which they uttered. So Christ spoke, and, having learned of him, so spake his disciples.

Acts 4:14. *And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.*

Converts shut the mouths of adversaries. The good done by the gospel will always be a dumbfounding argument to the ungodly.

Acts 4:16-20. *But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, saying, What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem: and we cannot deny it. But that it spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name. And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.*

Like the vessel full of new wine, which must have vent or burst, so is the man who is filled with the knowledge of Jesus. He must speak. He must:

—

“Tell to others round

What a dear Saviour he has found.”

It is no matter of choice with him, for, as Paul says, “Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel.” As the old prophet hath it, “The word of the Lord was as fire in my bones,” and if it be the true word of God, it will soon burn its way out.

Acts 4:21-22. *So when they had farther threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people: for all men glorified God for that which was done. For the man was above forty years old, on whom this miracle of healing was shewed.*

Therefore, it was the more remarkable, forty years lame and yet healed! But how great is the grace displayed in the salvation of an aged sinner — forty years dead in trespasses and in sins — fifty, sixty seventy, or even eighty years, a faithful servant of the black tyrant and yet made to follow the new and better Master! What a triumph of grace is that which snatches the sere brand out of the burning when it is so fitted for the fire!

Acts 4:23. *And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them.*

You can always tell a man by his company, Had these people been ungodly, they would have done as the ungodly do when they come out of prison: they would have gone off to their old pot-companions. But they are believers, and they go to their own company.

Acts 4:24-28. *And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together. For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determine before to be done.*

How strangely this doctrine of predestination comes in just there! They are singing of the wickedness of men, and the triumph which God gets over it, and so this in the very sum and substance of the song, that when wicked men think that God's decrees will be for ever put away by the destruction of his Son, they themselves are then actually doing what God had "determined before to be done." The wildest discord makes harmony in the ear of God. Man may be in rebellion against the Most High, but he is still abjectly the slave of God's predestination, and let man sin with his free will, even to the very extremest length of folly, yet even then God hath a bit in his mouth and a bridle upon his jaws, and knows how to rule and govern him according to his own good pleasure. The ferocity of kings and priests doth but fulfill the counsel of God.

Acts 4:29-33. *And now, Lord, behold their threatenings and grant unto thy servants that with all boldness they may speak thy word. By stretching forth thine hand to heal: and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of the holy child Jesus. And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together: and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness. And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. And with great power gave the apostles*

witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.

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SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

Acts Chapter 6

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER 7

Verses 14-43

Acts 7:14-17. Then sent Joseph, and called his father Jacob to him, and all his kindred, threescore and fifteen souls. So Jacob went down into Egypt, and died, he, and our fathers, and were carried over into Sychem, and laid in the sepulcher that Abraham bought for a sum of money of the sons of Emmor the father of Sychem. But when the time of the promise drew nigh, which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt,

Note those words, “the time of the promise,” and remember that every promise has its due time of fulfillment, and that there is a time of promise, to all the Lord’s chosen people, when he will surely bring them out of bondage into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

Acts 7:18-20. Till another king arose, which knew not Joseph. The same dealt subtly with our kindred, and evil entreated our father, so that they cast out their young children, to the end they might not live. In which time Moses was born, and was exceeding fair, and nourished up in his father’s house three months:

In the darkest night of Israel’s bondage in Egypt, her star of hope arose: “Moses was born, and was exceeding fair;” or, as the margin has it, “was fair to God,” ³/₄ with a beauty something more than human.

Acts 7:21-22, *And when he was cast out, Pharaoh's daughter took him up, and nourished him for her own son. And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds.*

He was well qualified for the work to which God had called him, but how much more fully qualified is that great Prophet, like unto Hoses, whom God has raised up, in these latter days, for the salvation of men, even Jesus Christ his Son! He knows more than all the learning and wisdom of the Egyptians, he knows more than the cleverness of the devil, so he can deliver us from all his crafty wiles.

Acts 7:23-25. *And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel. And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian: for he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not.*

Alas! it is just the same with Israel now. The Lord Jesus came to his own, and, according to one of his parables, the Father said of him, "They will reverence my Son;" but they did nothing of the kind; they said, "This is the Heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours." And, alas! how many, nowadays, are imitating their evil example! They say, "We will not have this man to reign over us;" they refuse to yield themselves to the sovereignty of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Acts 7:26-30. *And the next day he shewed himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another? But he that did his neighbor wrong thrust ham away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us? Wilt thou kill me, as thou diddest the Egyptian yesterday! Then fled Moses at this saying, and was a stranger in the land of Madian, where he begat two sons. And when forty years were expired, there appeared to him in the wilderness of mount Sina an angel of the Lord in a game of fire in a bush.*

So that he was eighty years of age when he really began his great lifework. Perhaps, as a rule, the larger part of our time is occupied in getting ready to work. Yet, if we are able to perform a word as good as that which Moses did, it will well repay us for a long season of preparation.

Acts 7:31-34. *When Moses saw it, he wondered at the sight: and as he drew near to behold it, the voice of the Lord came unto him, saying, I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Then Moses trembled, and durst not behold. Then said the*

Lord to him, Put off thy shoes from thy feet: for the place where thou standest is holy ground. I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people which is in Egypt, and I have heard their groaning, and am come down, to deliver them.

All this must have been very pleasant to the ear of Moses; it was solemn, yet it was exceedingly sweet; but notice what comes next:

Acts 7:34. And now come, I will send thee into Egypt.

Oh, dear! what a falling-off there seems to be in these words! God first says, "I have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver them;" and then he adds, "I will send thee into Egypt." Yes, truly, from the grandeur of the divine working down to the insignificance of our instrumentality, is a tremendous stoop; yet the God who says, "I will save sinners by my grace; none but myself can save them;" also says to me, "Go thou, and preach the gospel to them." The same Lord who says, "I will change the heart of stone into a heart of flesh, and work a miracle of mercy in renewing those who are dead in trespasses and sins," also says to you, "Speak to the persons sitting with you in the pew, and seek to point them to the Saviour." It is a wonderful stoop, but it is the condescension of almighty grace, and it brings great honour to the poor, trembling, unworthy person to whom the message is addressed. Moses thought himself very unfit for the task of delivering Israel, and he would, if he had dared to do so, have refrained from that task; but God said to him, "Now come, I will send thee into Egypt." Ah, brethren! how different a man did Moses then become! When he went out by himself, without any commission, he was impatient to get to his work, and he slew an Egyptian, and so had to flee away out of the country; but when he was sent in God's name, when the Lord said to him, "Now come, I will send thee," then the work was accomplished. O my brethren, in your service for the Saviour, always seek for power from on high! Ask to be sent of God, and pray your Master to go with you; then will you succeed in the task which he entrusts to you.

Acts 7:35. This Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge? the same did God send to he a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush.

Is not that a shadow of that grander truth, "The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner,"

Acts 7:36-37. He brought them out, after that he had showed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red sea, and in the wilderness

forty years. This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord pour God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear.

Now you see that Moses was thus a type of Christ. God grant that we may not reject Christ, as the Israelites rejected Moses; but may we be willing that he should be to us our Judge and our Deliverer!

Acts 7:38-39. This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sinai, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us: to whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust him from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt,

Though Moses had brought them out of Egypt, they were not obedient to him, and they wanted to go back to the land of bondage. And, ah! brethren, this is the great crime of the present day, the crime of mankind in general, that, after all Jesus has done, there is still within so many the evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.

Acts 7:40-41. Saying unto Aaron, Make us gods to go before us: for as for this Moses, which brought us out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of Him. And they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands.

This again is another of the ways by which men attempt to make an idol god out of something which they can see, and to rejoice in what they themselves do instead of trusting in what the Lord Jesus has done.

Acts 7:42-43. Then God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven; is it is written in the book of the prophets, O ye house of Israel, have ye offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices by the space of forty years in the wilderness? Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, figures which ye made to worship them: and I will carry you away beyond Babylon.

There was still idolatry in their hearts, and Moses was rejected by them. God grant that we may not be idolaters, and so reject the Prophet, like unto Moses, whom the Lord has sent unto us! Amen!

[ACTS CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 8

Verses 1-40

Stephen had been stoned to death; but with his latest breath he prayed for his murderers. Then this chapter begins: —

[Acts 8:1](#). *And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem, and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.*

Saul, having tasted blood in the murder of Stephen, became more and more furious in his persecution of the Church of Christ at Jerusalem, and the brethren had to escape for their lives. They all did so, except the apostles, who were specially cared for by divine providence.

[Acts 8:2](#). *And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentations over him.*

As well they might, for his death was a serious loss to the Church. He was one of the best workers for Christ of that day; and when he was thus put to death by the judicial murder of stoning, the devout men who were spared to mourn his loss “made great lamentation over him.”

[Acts 8:3](#). *As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.*

At first, we can hardly believe that this was the very man who afterwards became the greatest preacher of the gospel, and the builder up of the Church of Christ, but it was even so. He was always earnest in whatever he did. When he persecuted, he did it with all his might; and when he became converted, then he preached with all his might. He was a thoroughgoing man. I like these thoroughgoing men; they are worth saving. When they are converted, they bring great glory to God. The next verse tells us one effect of the havoc wrought by Saul: —

[Acts 8:4](#). *Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.*

They might have stopped at Jerusalem, and made a comfortable and strong church there, if they had not been persecuted; but, being scattered abroad, they were like seed in every furrow of the field: “they went every where preaching the word.” Now, out of this church, there is a continual drain of brethren and sisters, who leave their native land to go to distant colonies; such are the exigencies of the times, that many have to go abroad. I charge you, wherever you go, carry the holy seed with you. Be yourselves a seed for Christ in every land.

[Acts 8:5-11](#). Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. And there was great joy in that city. But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, this man is the great power of God. And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries.

And there are those in all ages who set up to be prophets, and who seek to draw men after them, of whom it is well to beware.

[Acts 8:12-13](#). But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Then Simon himself believed also:

Simon believed after a certain style and fashion. He saw that there was a real power about Philip, which he did not himself possess, and he was obliged to bow down before the manifest presence of God.

[Acts 8:13-17](#). And when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered beholding the miracles and signs which were done. Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (for as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.

That is to say, they received a share of those miraculous gifts which attended the introduction of the gospel of Christ. It has therefore been supposed that certain superior persons should visit the churches, and lay their hands upon people. So they should, if they have the power to bestow such a gift as Peter and John gave; but to lay empty hands on the heads of men and women, is a vain ceremony. When the apostles laid their hands on these converts in Samaria, they received the Holy Ghost.

[Acts 8:18-26](#). And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, saying, give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the

Holy Ghost. But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me. And they when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans. And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.

Philip, who had been so useful to the multitude, must now be of service to a solitary individual. My dear brethren, if you can gather a crowd of people together, preach the gospel to them; but if you cannot do that, preach the gospel to one person, if you can only reach one. It was a desert, but the angel of the Lord bade Philip go there.

[Acts 8:27](#). *And he arose and went:*

Not demurring, but at once obeying. If the Lord should send you to the wilderness, depend upon it that he will send somebody else there for you to bless; go, therefore, without fear.

[Acts 8:27-28](#). *And, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet.*

He was a devout man, a studious man, a Bible-reading man. We do not often find such persons in great authority under queens; but here was one.

[Acts 8:29-31](#). *Then the Spirit said unto Philip, go near, and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, how can I accept some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him.*

See how God honours the Christian ministry by making even his Word to be in some respects insufficient for some men; at any rate, they need that some living voice should come and guide them into the meaning of it. Oh, that he would bless our voice tonight, that some who have gathered with us

in this Tabernacle might be brought to understand the Scriptures through our guidance!

[Acts 8:32-35](#). *The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: in his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.*

It seems that, wherever Philip went, he had but one subject. When he went down to the city of Samaria, he preached Christ to them; and now that he talks to this Ethiopian eunuch, he preaches unto him Jesus.

[Acts 8:36-37](#). *And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.*

That is the great confession of faith that is to be made by all who have believed in Jesus.

[Acts 8:38-39](#). *And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.*

The Holy Spirit will not permit us to depend too much upon men as our teachers. The Spirit of the Lord did not take away the Bible: that was left to the eunuch. He only caught away Philip after the evangelist had furnished the enquirer with the key with which he could open the Scriptures, then he could unlock the Word himself. That he did so, if history is to be believed, is very clear. He went home to Ethiopia, perhaps to Abyssinia, and the people there heard the gospel from him, and to this day there are some traces of our holy faith in that land.

[Acts 8:40](#). *But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea.*

We know quite well what “he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea,” although it is not mentioned here. Wherever he went, he had but

one theme: “the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ.” So may it be with us wherever we go.

Verses 4-40

[Acts 8:4-6](#). *Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word. Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spoke, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.*

We cannot tell how far the soil had been prepared for the sowing of the gospel seed by our Lord’s visit to Sychar, a city of Samaria. The influence of the converts in that place may have inclined the people of the city of Samaria to give the more heed to the preaching of Philip. The work of a great and good man may seem sometimes to die out, but its effects remain, and extend beyond the place where he laboured.

[Acts 8:7-11](#). *For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. And there was great joy in that city. But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God. And to him they had regard, because that of long time he bewitched them with sorceries.*

He had managed to secure great influence over the people, and he held them under his wicked rule.

[Acts 8:12-17](#). *But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done. Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (for as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.*

So that miraculous gifts were bestowed upon them. Of course, there was already manifest among them that divine operation of the Spirit of God, by which men are converted, and brought to faith in Christ; but they had not

known the special, attesting, wonder-working power of the Spirit until the apostles came amongst them. A good work was thus done, yet everything was not altogether as the apostles could have wished it to be.

[Acts 8:18-26](#). *And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me. And they, when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans. And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.*

He must have wondered at receiving such an order as that. To be directed to go to a city, he could understand; but to be sent to a road which went through the desert, must have seemed strange to him; yet he obeyed his Lord's orders.

[Acts 8:27](#). *And he arose and went:*

Always do as you are told by your Lord. The first qualification for a good servant of Jesus Christ is immediate obedience.

[Acts 8:27-28](#). *And, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet.*

He was a devout man, who was seeking rest of heart, but he could not find it. He had joined in all the solemn services of the Jewish law, but as yet he had not discovered the great secret of eternal life. He was still searching for it; and as he rode along the rough road, he was reading the Book of the prophet Esaias.

[Acts 8:29-30](#). *Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest?*

That is the main thing; a religion that is not based upon understanding will soon come to an end. An emotional religion—one that is nothing but emotion—will be temporary and transient religion; so Philip enquired of the eunuch, “Understandest thou what thou readest?”

[Acts 8:31-34](#). *And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: in his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?*

That was a very important question; it went to the very root of the matter. It was useless for him to read about some unknown person; he must know who it was of whom the prophet had written

[Acts 8:35](#). *Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.*

You may begin anywhere in the Bible, and preach Jesus. You may begin at the first chapter of Genesis, or at the last chapter of Malachi, at the first of Matthew or the last of Revelation, and still preach Jesus, for he is the sum and substance of the whole Scripture.

[Acts 8:36-40](#). *And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?*

And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing. But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached—

(See how he kept to his one business wherever he might be, in Samaria, on the desert pathway, or in the town of Azotus:) “He preached”—

[Acts 8:40](#). *In all the cities, till he came to Caesarea.*

Oh, for the like earnest spirit to be in all of us who profess to be Christ’s followers, that we may preach him wherever we may be!

ACTS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 9

Verses 1-22

1, 2. *And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings, and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.*

His very breath was threatening. Slaughter seemed to be a necessity of his existence, He was breathing out threatenings and slaughter — could not breathe without them — could not speak without them. So full was he of fury against the people of God, that Jerusalem was not enough for him; he wanted wider hunting grounds; he must go to Damascus.

Acts 9:3. *And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus.*

There was his prey before him, and the wolf was ready to leap upon it.

Acts 9:3-5. *And suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven. And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who are thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.*

So it is when God means to save a man. He will make every kick that he gives against the gospel to be like that of an ox that kicks against the goad and wounds itself.

Acts 9:6. *And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? What a sudden change! Before, he knew what he was going to do. He was going to do his own will and wreak his own vengeance, but now it is, “Lord. what wilt thou have me to do? My will is in a moment subdued.*

What is it thou dost ask of me?”

Acts 9:6-9. *And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man. And Saul arose from the earth: and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the head, and brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.*

And what a battle went on in his soul then, perhaps even he could scarcely describe afterwards. Brethren, some of you can surely guess, for you, perhaps, have felt the same. Some souls are born to God with terrible pangs; and this man was one. And oh! what strong believers those often are who have great difficulty in coming at peace. “And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.”

[Acts 9:10](#). *And there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias;*

One of those to whom Paul had intended to pay his cruel respects.

[Acts 9:10](#). *And to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold I am here, Lord.*

A grand way to be able to answer the Lord at all times. May we never be, dear friends, where we shall be ashamed to say, “Behold, I am here, Lord.” Some Christians go into very strange company, and they would not like their Master to know. They would be ashamed to say, “Behold, I am here, Lord.”

[Acts 9:11](#). *And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus:*

The Lord knows the whereabouts of his people. He knows your whereabouts tonight, young man. I only trust that though you are an opponent of the gospel, he has brought you here on purpose that you may become one of his best advocates, through his renewing grace.

[Acts 9:11](#). *For, behold, he prayeth.*

There was the secret sign and mark of a changed character, “Behold, he prayeth.” What a wonder! He prayeth — he that breathed out slaughter. He prayeth — he that came to destroy. “Behold, he prayeth.”

[Acts 9:12-16](#). *And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight. Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name. But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.*

And it seemed a gracious retribution of him, did it not? I say not a penal infliction. I know not how to put it better than “a gracious retribution” —

that he who made saints to suffer should now have the high privilege to take the front rank in suffering himself. Often, I doubt not, when he was bearing and enduring with such matchless fortitude, he thought of those saints whom he had harried and worried in the days of his carnal estate; and how he must have prized them, and with what wonder must he have said, “Unto me, who am less than the least of all the saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.”

[Acts 9:17](#). *And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul,*

Oh! what new words, “brother Saul”! A few days before no man durst have used such language of familiarity to this mighty disciple of Gamaliel, armed with authority from the chief priests. Now how sweetly it must have sounded on his ear, “brother Saul”! Oh! there is nothing that makes us such brothers as the gospel. “This is the dear uniting bond That will not let us part.”

[Acts 9:17-18](#). *The Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.*

What else should a believer be but be baptized? It is the very next step which he should take after he has found the Saviour.

[Acts 9:19](#). *And when he had received meat, he was strengthened.*

It seemed unimportant to put that in here, did it not? Yet it is not so. While grace heals the infirmities of the mind, bodily food is still wanted for the body; and sometimes it is well with your young convert, when he has been a long time in distress of mind, that you refresh him in body, as well as cheer him in heart.

[Acts 9:19-20](#). *Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus. And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.*

And had they ever heard such a preacher before? How they gnashed their teeth on him — the unbelievers; and how the timid saints crept in and heard this man advocate — this man who had had a wonderful twist in his mind from which he never recovered — who had seen something — as yet he himself could hardly tell all that he had seen. Oh! it must have been fine hearing to listen to his preaching that Christ is the Son of God.

[Acts 9:21-22](#). *But all that heard him were amazed, and said: Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests? But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.*

And this is the great thing to prove to the Jew. Oh! when shall it come to pass that poor forsaken Israel shall know that this is the very Christ? God grant her restoration right speedily!

Verses 1-31

[Acts 9:1](#). *And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest,-*

Notice that little word “yet.” “Saul yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord;” but there was to be a point beyond which he could not go. I pray God that there may be such a “yet” as that put into the histories of any here who are opposing God and his Christ. “Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter,” — as if they were his very breath, as if he only lived to blaspheme the name of Christ, and to persecute his followers, — “went unto the high priest,” —

[Acts 9:2](#). *And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.*

He wanted his hunting-ground enlarged; he had not enough to gratify his malice among the thousands of believers in Jerusalem, so he must go to Damascus to hunt out the Christians there. Paul was always very thorough in all that he did; so, when he was a persecutor, he was a very bitter one. It mattered not to him whether the saints were men or women. In ordinary warfare it is the custom to spare the women. A brave man is satisfied to fight with men like himself; but a bigot’s zeal knows no bounds, and so Saul asked for letters, so that “if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.”

[Acts 9:3](#). *And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus:*

The lion is about to leap upon his prey. The sheepfold lies in the valley and the wolf surveys it from the hill-side. “Alas for the Church of God at Damascus!” you and I would have said if we had been there.

[Acts 9:3](#). *And suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven:*

A supernatural blaze, as though heaven's gate had been thrown open, and the glory had come streaming down upon this rebellious man.

[Acts 9:4](#). *And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?*

Most people are converted in a somewhat similar fashion to this. There is "a light from heaven" shining through the gospel upon them, they fall to the ground in penitent self-abasement, and then they hear the voice of the Son of God speaking to their hearts. I do not mean that the external phenomena are the same as in the case of Saul of Tarsus, but the work is the same in its effects, and in some of its processes. Saul "heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" It was a voice divine, majestic, piercing, affectionate, convincing. Saul's mind was of a deeply logical kind, so Christ's question was an appeal to his reasoning faculties: "Give the reason for thy present action. 'Why persecutest thou me?'"

[Acts 9:5](#). *And he said Who art thou. Lord? And the lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks*

I do not doubt that he had been already pricked in his conscience, and he had kicked out as an ox kicks against the ox-goad when he is pricked by it to make him go forward. Saul was a man of strong will and determined purpose. He had already felt in his own heart some of the sorrows that follow from a wrong course of life, yet he resolved to persevere in it, so the Lord said to him, "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks;" and if any of you resist the thrusts of conscience and the strivings of God's Spirit, you will be like a man, with naked feet, kicking against iron spikes, and hurting himself, but not injuring that against which he kicks.

[Acts 9:6](#). *And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?*

This was a very natural question from one who had always tried to live by doing. He had been a work-monger up to that very moment, so he naturally cried, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

[Acts 9:6](#). *And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.*

"Thou must become a disciple, and sit at the feet of another man, of a humbler sort, and thou must learn from him." Christ will never teach us by visions what we can learn by the ordinary means of instruction, nor will he work miracles where common methods may suffice.

[Acts 9:7](#). *And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless,-*

They were struck with astonishment, —

[Acts 9:7](#). *Hearing a voice, but seeing no man.*

A loud voice stunned their ears, but they could not understand its message.

[Acts 9:8-9](#). *And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.*

What a whirl of anguish must his mind have been in all that time! The panorama of Stephen's martyrdom and of the holy men and women against whom he had breathed out threatenings and slaughter would pass before his inward eyes, even though his outward eyes were closed.

[Acts 9:10-11](#). *And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord. And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth,*

God knows where every sinner is, the street he lies in, the number of the house, and the name of the owner of the house, so that he can find him when he pleases, or send one of his servants to him. You remember what John Bunyan said to the Quaker who came to see him in prison. The Quaker said to him, "Friend John, I am glad I have found thee at last, for the Lord sent me to thee, and I have been through half the prisons in England trying to find thee." "No, no," said Bunyan, "do not tell me that. The Lord did not send thee to me, for he knows I have been here all these years. If he had sent thee, thou wouldst have come straight to the prison door." When the Lord calls a man to go on an errand for him, he puts his finger on the right spot, and says, "Go there."

[Acts 9:12](#). *And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight.*

You see how true revelations fit into each other. Something is revealed to Ananias, and it is also revealed to Saul, and therefore it is proved to be true. Some years ago, a brother told me that he had had it revealed to him that I was to let him preach for me in the Tabernacle. I said that of course I would agree to that when it was revealed to me that I was to let him, but I do not believe in lopsided revelations. You will find a great many of those

crazy revelations about, and you may generally judge them in some such common-sense way as that.

[Acts 9:13-16](#). *Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: and here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name. But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.*

He had made God's people suffer because of their loyalty to Christ, so it seemed only right that he himself should suffer for the same reason.

[Acts 9:17-18](#). *And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.*

As he believed in Jesus, it was right that he should confess his faith in the way that Christ appointed.

[Acts 9:19](#). *And when he had received meat, he was strengthened.*

Do admire the tenderness of the Holy Spirit in recording that Saul received meat, and was strengthened. He had been without food or drink for three days and nights, so that it was as right for him to partake of food as to confess his faith by being baptized.

[Acts 9:19](#). *Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus.*

Thus did the lion lie down with the lamb, and the wolf with the kid.

[Acts 9:20](#). *And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.*

How he must have startled his Jewish brethren that day! They knew why he had come to Damascus, but, behold, he was preaching the very faith that he had gone there to destroy!

[Acts 9:21-25](#). *But all that heard him were amazed, and said: Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests? But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ. And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him: But their laying await*

was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him. Then the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket.

I never heard of a more precious basketful of material than that. Sometimes, the greatest of men may owe their safety to the very poorest of instruments; and I think it is the duty of a Christian to avoid trouble if he can, just as our Lord bade his disciples, when they were persecuted in one city, to flee to another. Paul was carrying out that command of his Master. It was not cowardice, it was the very soul of courage, that he might go elsewhere to proclaim the gospel that he had received in Damascus.

[Acts 9:26](#). *And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple.*

They did not admit anybody and everybody into the Church. They guarded it as Christ's Church should be guarded, that unworthy people might not enter it. If any of you should be kept back a little while, you can say to yourself, "Well, they kept back Paul." We are poor fallible creatures, but we try to judge rightly concerning those who wish to unite with us.

[Acts 9:27-31](#). *But Barnabus took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem, And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians: but they went about to slay him. Which when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus. Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.*

Blessed be God for such a conversion as that of Saul of Tarsus!

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Acts Chapter 10

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

Acts Chapter 11

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

Acts Chapter 12

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER 13

Verses 13-49

[Acts 13:13](#). *Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John departing from them returned to Jerusalem.*

“John” — that is, John Mark, as we see by chapter 15. verse 37.

[Acts 13:14-15](#). *But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down. And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue went unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on.*

The rulers of the synagogue had noticed them as strangers coming in, and perceived that they were Jews, probably by their wearing the same kind of garments as other Jews did.

[Acts 13:16](#). *Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience.*

Or, rather, “and ye Gentile proselytes, give audience.”

[Acts 13:17](#). *The God of this people of Israel choose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an high arm brought he there out of it.*

It is always well to begin with our hearers upon some common ground. So, wishing to persuade these people to receive the Lord Jesus as the promised Messiah, Paul begins with that which was always attractive to their ears, —the history of their nation, with a special mention of the peculiar favor which God had shown to his chosen people Israel in bringing them up out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage.

[Acts 13:18-21](#). *And about the time of forty years suffered he their manners in the wilderness. And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Chanaan, he divided their land to them by lot. And after that he gave unto them judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet. And afterward they desired a king: and God gave unto them Saul the son of Cis, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years.*

Do you not sometimes hear people speak disparagingly about certain parts of scripture, and say, “Oh, that is the historical part”? Dear friends, never fall into the error of thinking less of one part of Scripture than of another, but remember that “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the men of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” This sermon, by Paul, is a rehearsal of Old Testament history; and he would not have spoken unprofitably; you may depend upon that. I would urge you to bear a protest against the method, which seems to be springing up nowadays, of saying, “That part of the Bible is for the Jews;” or “That particular Epistle” — for they speak thus even of the New Testament — “is not for us.” It is all for us, and we are to seek to profit by every word of it, praying the Holy Spirit to apply it to our hearts.

[Acts 13:22-25](#). *And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfill all my will. Of this man’s seed hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus: when John had first preached before his coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. And as John fulfilled his course, he said, Whom think ye that I am? I am not he. But, behold, there cometh one after me, whose shoes of his feet I am not worthy to loose.*

Paul went on with his narrative as far as the history of Saul and David, and so he came to greet David’s greater son, the Lord Jesus Christ. He had come by way of Old Testament history to Christ, and by way of John the Baptist to Christ; and that is how the preacher of the gospel should travel. On whatever road he journeys, his terminus must be Christ. The motto of all true servants of God must be, “We preach Christ; and him crucified.” A sermon without Christ in it is like a loaf of bread without any flour in it. No

Christ in your sermon, sir? Then go home, and never preach again until you have something worth preaching.

[Acts 13:26](#). *Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God,*

Or, “is a proselyte to God.”

[Acts 13:26-27](#). *To you is the word of this salvation sent. For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophet which are read every sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him.*

See how easy it is for people to hear the Bible read, and yet to know very little about what it contains. They may have the lessons read every Sabbath day in their hearing, and yet they may not understand anything that is in them. They may even become themselves great readers of the Scriptures, yet not come to Christ, as it was with those to whom the Lord Jesus said “Ye search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. But ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.” If you are content with merely reading or hearing the Scriptures, and do not come to Christ himself, you stop short of salvation; yea, you stay in a position where you may be capable of the grossest sin, as were these people at Antioch in Pisidia.

[Acts 13:28-37](#). *And though they found no cause of death in him, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain. And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulcher. But God raised him from the dead: and he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people. And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee. And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David. Wherefore he saith also in another psalm, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his father, and saw corruption: but he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption.*

Note how Paul keeps to scripture. An inspired apostle himself, yet he appealed to the Old Testament to support his case. That was the best

argument he could possibly use with Jews; and, often, it will be the best that we can use with Gentiles.

[Acts 13:38-42](#). *Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets; Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you. And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath.*

They did not mind hearing sermons twice in those days. We are not often asked to preach the same sermon over again. But these people wanted to know the truth; and, therefore, they asked to have it repeated. If our people will not receive the gospel the first time we preach it, we must tell it to them over and over again. With the hammer of the Word, we must smite the same nail on the head again and, again. Even if we do not utter the same words there must ever be the same subject Sabbath by Sabbath, and week by week.

[Acts 13:43-46](#). *Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God. And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God. But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against these things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold,*

Though Jews themselves, they could not bear to see the bigotry of their nation.

[Acts 13:46](#). *And said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.*

And a blessed turning it has been for you, dear friends and for me.

[Acts 13:47-49](#). *For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and-as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region.*

Verses 14-42

[Acts 13:14-15](#). *But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down. And after reading of the law and the prophets,*

From which there were always two appointed lessons, one from the writings of Moses, and another from one of the prophets; and on this day it was probably the first chapter of the book of Deuteronomy, or the first chapter of the book of the prophet Isaiah — “the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them.”

[Acts 13:15](#). *The rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on.*

They were seen to be Jews who were traveling, and they were invited by the minister who conducted the service to stand up and say anything they had to say. “Then Paul stood up, and, beckoning, with his hand, said “: —

[Acts 13:16](#). *Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience.*

You, who, Enough Gentiles, have come to worship Jehovah, God of Israel — “men of Israel.”

[Acts 13:17-18](#). *The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an high arm brought he them out of it. And about the time of forty years suffered he their manners in the wilderness.*

You that are familiar with your Bibles will be struck with the great likeness of this sermon by Paul to that of Stephen. It seems to run on the same lines. Stephen gave the history of Israel to the Israelites. Paul does the same. Ah! we can never tell how great was the influence of that dying Stephen upon this living Paul. Paul is the continuation of Stephen. His blood was not lost in that day when they stoned him to death. From his ashes sprang this mighty preacher of the Word.

[Acts 13:19-22](#). *And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Chanaan, he divided their land to them by lot. And after that he gave unto them judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet, And afterward they desired a king: and God gave unto them Saul the Son of Cis, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years. And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be*

their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David, the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfill all my will.

All this would be very pleasing to the Jews. They were never weary of hearing the ancient history of themselves as a chosen people. Paul ingratiates himself with them. The gospel that he had to preach was bitter to them, but he gilds the pill, and we must do what we can lawfully and properly to win the attention of men and their kindly feeling to us, although we must faithfully preach the gospel. Now he got as far as David into history. Now we will step to Christ.

[Acts 13:23-25](#). *Of this man's seed hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus: When John had first preached before his coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. And as John fulfilled his course, he said, Whom think ye that I am? I am not he. But, behold, there cometh one after me, whose shoes of his feet I am not worthy to loose.*

He brings in the testimony of John, who was universally respected among them. They regarded him as the last of the prophets, and so Paul tries to win their kind feelings.

[Acts 13:26-27](#). *Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent. For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every Sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him.*

Not knowing it, they have fulfilled the prophecies of old in condemning Jesus, the Son of David

[Acts 13:28-29](#). *And though they found no cause of death in him, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain. And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulcher.*

You see he has given the story of Christ, his life, his death, his burial, his resurrection.

[Acts 13:30-31](#). *But God raised him from the dead: And he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people.*

He does not expect them to believe without proofs, but he adduces the proof of the resurrection in the many witnesses who saw him after he had

[Acts 13:32-37](#). *And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers. God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again: as it is also written in the second Psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David. Wherefore he saith also in another psalm, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy one to see corruption. For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption; But he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption.*

So that David was not speaking of himself, but he was speaking of another and higher David, his greater Son, the Son of God, begotten of the Father.

[Acts 13:38](#). *Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins:*

Now they have it. Now he brings it out very clearly indeed. Glad tidings are now ringing in their ears.

[Acts 13:39](#). *And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.*

The sins which the law of Moses did not propose to touch, yea, all sins which the law of Moses could only typically remove, all these sins are now really taken away by this glorious Son.

[Acts 13:40-41](#). *Beware, therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets: Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.*

You cannot imagine anything more appropriate to the occasion, more properly set forth, more bold, more clear; but these men were not prepared to receive it.

[Acts 13:42](#). *And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath.*

They are earnest hearers who want to hear the same sermon again. But perhaps they did not expect to hear the same words, but to fret the same sense and have it explained more fully that they might the better grasp it. Oh! what a mercy it is, when the congregation is going away, if there are some that stop behind, anxious to learn somewhat more!

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Acts Chapter 14

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

Acts Chapter 15

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER 16

Verses 9-34

Acts 16:9. *And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us.*

Our dreams often follow the leading thoughts of the day; or, if not of the day, yet the chief thoughts that are upon the mind. Paul dreams about mission work, for his heart is in it. I should not wonder if some before me, who are deeply engaged in earnest Christian work, have often dreamt about their Sunday-school, or their mission-station. Where the mind goes when we are awake, it often goes when we are asleep. This vision that appeared to Paul was supernatural; and was an indication of what God wanted him to do.

Acts 16:10. *And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.*

In the vision, the man prayed, "Come over into Macedonia, and help us." The best help that Paul could render to the Macedonians was "to preach the gospel unto them." The best help you can give men socially is to help them religiously; and the best religious help is to preach the gospel to them.

Acts 16:11-12. *Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis; and from thence to*

Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days.

Waiting to know what they were to do. In God's work, we are not to go on in blundering haste. Sometimes, a little waiting may be good for us; and by waiting, we may find out the true path of success.

[Acts 16:13](#). *And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made;*

Some quiet corner, where good people were wont to gather by the brook to pray.

[Acts 16:13](#). *And we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither.*

This was probably the first religious meeting of Christians that was ever held in Europe. It is remarkable that it was a prayer-meeting, a prayer-meeting attended by women, a prayer-meeting to which two ministers came, and preached the gospel to the women who resorted thither. To be able to be present at a prayer-meeting ought always to be reckoned a great privilege to all of us who are Christians. In this way the gospel first came to us; in this way the gospel will be best preserved to us; and in this way we may best obtain guidance from God as to how we may carry the gospel to others.

[Acts 16:14-15](#). *And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized,*

She seems to have become a believer in Christ, and to have been baptized at once.

[Acts 16:15](#). *And her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.*

Lydia was evidently a woman of some property. The purple which she sold was an expensive article. She seems to have been engaged in business on her own account; and when Paul met with her, she was far off from her workshop and her home. She had a house, therefore, in the place to which she had come to sell her purple; and she "constrained" the men of God to make use of her house, and to tarry there. Thus was Christianity brought into Europe, for which we praise the name of the Lord.

[Acts 16:16](#). *And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying.*

She professed to tell fortunes, and to speak under inspiration. She was really “possessed” by an evil spirit.

[Acts 16:17-18](#). *The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation. And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour.*

Here was an evil spirit bearing witness to the truth of God, and it grieved Paul. When you hear a bad man ridiculing religion, do not be surprised; what else could you expect from him? But if you heard the devil recommending Christ, then you ought to be grieved, for the Lord Jesus does not want patronage or praise from Satan. Men would begin to suspect that Christ was in league with Satan, if Satan began to speak well of Christ. Dread to be spoken well of by ungodly men; for there is great danger in such praise. There may be a motive at the bottom of the flattery, which may be full of mischief. Paul, being grieved, silenced the demon, and cast him out of the damsel. Like his Lord, he would not allow the devil to testify concerning himself and his mission.

[Acts 16:19-20](#). *And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the market-place unto the rulers, and brought them to the magistrates,*

They dragged them into the Forum, the place where the courts usually sat, and brought them before the magistrates, “saying “-what? “These men have cured a demoniac, they have performed a miracle, and cast a devil out of a young woman”? Oh! no; there would have been no wrong in that, so they must invent a charge. What do they say?

[Acts 16:20-21](#). *Saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, and teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans.*

They did not know that Paul himself was a Roman citizen, or they surely would not have brought such a charge as that against him.

[Acts 16:22](#). *And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them.*

They beat them first, and tried them afterwards. That is often the rule with those who persecute God's people: let them be hanged out of the way, and then we will enquire what they teach.

[Acts 16:23-25](#). *And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely: who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God:*

Another prayer-meeting, and a praise-meeting, too. There were only two persons at it; but they "prayed, and sang praises unto God."

[Acts 16:26](#). *And the prisoners heard them.*

Paul and Silas were in the lower prison. The sound of their prayer and praise rose up through the different tiers of cells where other prisoners were confined.

[Acts 16:26](#). *And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed.*

This was no common earthquake. An ordinary earthquake might have brought the prison down about their ears; but it would not have loosed the bands of the prisoners.

[Acts 16:27](#). *And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled.*

For the law was that, if a jailer lost a prisoner, he was to suffer whatever penalty the prisoner would have suffered. He therefore knew that, in all probability, his own life would be taken; and, strange to say, to save his life he would kill himself. Suicide is ever absurd and unreasonable. The worst that could happen to him would be to die by the sword of justice; and to escape from that, he tries to die by the sword of a suicide.

[Acts 16:28](#). *But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.*

Every prisoner was loosed from his bands, but not one had escaped; nor had any even attempted to escape, which was another miracle; for men who see their bands broken, and the prison doors open, are pretty sure to run away. These men did not, for a heavenly charm was upon them. They kept in their cells, so that Paul could cry out to the jailor, '-Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.'

[Acts 16:29](#). *Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling*

Conscious of the supernatural, compelled to feel the hand which he had never perceived before, he hastened into the inner prison, where he had thrust the servants of Christ;

[Acts 16:29](#). *And fell down before Paul and Silas, Whom he had handled so roughly just now;*

[Acts 16:30](#). *And brought them out, and said, Sirs, What a word to address to those who were still in his charge as prisoners!*

[Acts 16:30-34](#). *What must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.*

May God give to many of us to know the happy experience of that believing, baptized, and blessed household!

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Acts Chapter 17

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER 18

Verses 1-28

Paul had been preaching the gospel at Athens to the most famous men of that city gathered at Areopagus.

[Acts 18:1](#). *After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth:*

Another most important city of Greece, where he struck at the very center of the country by preaching the gospel, since these were the centers of commerce, and also of literature.

[Acts 18:2](#). *And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them.*

Lodged with them.

[Acts 18:3-4](#). *And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tent makers. And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks.*

He stepped into the synagogue, and when the time came for strangers to address the audience he began to argue that Jesus was the true Messiah. Nor did he argue in vain, for there were some who were persuaded. He endeavored to persuade them all, both the Jews and the Gentiles, who came together to listen to him.

[Acts 18:5](#). *And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ.*

He may not have brought out the whole truth at first, but argued little by little to bring them, as it were, up the steps till they should be prepared to receive the grand doctrine that Jesus is the anointed one. HIS spirit was pressed at last to come to that point more fully

[Acts 18:6](#). *And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles.*

Oh! what a blessed “from henceforth” that was for you and for me! He no longer confines his ministry to Jews, but goes out seeking the Gentiles — takes up his true commission — becomes the apostle of the Gentiles. But let all of us take heed of opposing the gospel, because it is not to be trifled with impunity. A time comes at last when God’s gospel seems to have done with us. Its ministers say, “We are clean.” They shake off the dust of their feet, and they go elsewhere to proclaim the gospel to others who may be less opposed to it. What a thing to be able to say, “I am clean.” I wonder how many in this house of prayer could say that of everybody round about them, “I am clean. The blood be on your own heads. I am clean. I have spoken to you about Christ. I have warned you. I have invited you.” “Night and day with tears,” as he says elsewhere. “I have pleaded with you, and now I am clean. I am clean.” You know there is many a man that is clean in the blood of Christ in that sense who has not yet discharged his obligations

to his fellow men, and cannot say, “I am clean.” I thought it a grand thing of George Fox, the Quaker, when he was dying, when he said, “I am clean; I am clean of the blood of all men.” To the best of his knowledge he had fearlessly proclaimed all the truth that he knew, where-over he had opportunity. O ministers of Christ, teachers of the young, and all you that know Christ, the Holy Spirit be upon you, so that you may speak the gospel till you can say, “I am clean.”

[Acts 18:7](#). *And he departed thence, and entered into a certain man's house, named Justus, one that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue.*

“The nearer the church, the farther from God.” they say; but it was not so in this case. He was one that worshipped God and his house joined hard to the synagogue.

[Acts 18:8](#). *And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized.*

That is the old-fashioned way, you know — “hearing, believed, and were baptized.” The new fashioned way is baptized, perhaps hear, and very likely do not believe at all. That is not according to the line of Scripture.

[Acts 18:9-11](#). *Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city. And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the Word of God among them.*

Farmers like to plough good soil, where they expect large harvests. So Paul, who was accustomed to make riving visits to places, on this occasion settled down for a long time — even for a year and a half. It would pay to do it, for God had much people in that city.

[Acts 18:12-13](#). *And when Gallio was the deputy of Achaia, the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgment seat. Saying, This fellow*

“This fellow,” says our Bible, but they did not say that. They had not any word bad enough, so really said “this” —

[Acts 18:13-15](#). *Persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law. And when Paul was now about to open his mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O ye Jews, reason would that I*

should bear with you: But if it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look ye to it; for I will be no judge of such matters.

I dare say you have heard Gallio condemned. They used to say in prayer, “Such and such a person went on, Gallio like, caring for none of these things”; but in truth Gallio does not deserve to be so condemned. It is no business of the civil magistrate to inquire into the religions of the people brought before him. It is out of his province. He was quite right when he said, “If it be a question of words, and names, and of your law, look ye to it. I will be no judge of such matters.” If the kings and queens of this world had been half as sensible as Gallio, there had been no stakes in Smithfield; there had been no prisons to lock up the Puritans. Religion would be let alone, which is the one thing it wants — free church and free state. We want neither the governor’s help, nor the governor’s hindrance. If he will kindly let us alone, it is all we ask from him; and so far Gallio is to be commended. But I do not think he acted thus out of any intelligent scruples on that point. He is to be condemned because of the motive. No doubt he was indifferent, and here may none of us imitate him. That he was indifferent and careless is certain, for he did not do his duty. It was his duty to let this good man alone, but it was not his duty to allow the Gentiles, on the other hand, to begin beating the Jews. If there is six of one, there should be half a dozen of the other, and so we do not admire him when we read,

[Acts 18:16-17](#). *And he drave them from the judgment seat. Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat. And Gallio cared for none of those things.*

Perhaps liked it. “You came here,” he said, “to accuse Paul, to get him beaten: now the mob is beating you, and serve you right. I shall not interfere. Why did you come here at all to plague me with your questions? Why did you interfere with Paul?” But I should think that this ruler of the synagogue must have opened his eyes when he found himself being beaten, instead of the persons whom he desired to have beaten. It is singular that this name Sosthenes should be used, when further up we find another ruler of the synagogue, Crispus, who wins a believer in Christ. “This was no doubt, one they had set up, instead of Crispus, having rejected Crispus for accepting Christ. And yet this man, Sosthenes, bears the same name as one that is spoken of as a brother in Christ afterwards. I wonder whether that beating did him good — whether, in the providence of God, he was led to ace the hand of providence in this beating falling upon him, instead of Paul;

and whether this ruler of the synagogue, who ousted a better man, did himself become a Christian. Let us hope it was so.

[Acts 18:18](#). *And Paul after this tarried there yet a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence into Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila; having shorn his head in Cenchrea: for he had a vow.*

Most probably not Paul, but Aquila had shorn his head, because usually Luke puts the man first. “Aquila, and his wife Priscilla”; but here, in order to state that Aquila had made a vow, he put it, “Priscilla and Aquila.” I think it very questionable that Paul ever shaved his head in that way. I think it was Aquila. If Paul did it, I think he must have been under a sort of mental aberration, as he once or twice besides may have been thought to have been. Even he who, above all men, had cast out Jewish rites and ceremonies, yet, you remember, took Timothy and circumcised him — a most extraordinary action to do, as in this case, if indeed it was he who had shorn his head.

[Acts 18:19](#). *And he came to Ephesus, and left them there: but he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews.*

Though he had turned away from them, yet still his heart is after his own country.

[Acts 18:20-21](#). *When they desired him to tarry longer time with them, he consented not: But bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem: but I will return again unto you, if God will.*

Oh! how wise it is to say that, when we are making plans and promises, “If God will.” The short way is to put a little “D.V.,” which means that you are ashamed to say, “If God will.”

[Acts 18:21-23](#). *And he sailed from Ephesus. And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up, and saluted the church, he went down to Antioch. And after he had spent some time there, he departed, and went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples.*

For you not only want planting, but strengthening. Young saints, like young plants, want much watering, and Paul took care of them. Evangelists have not half done their duty when they stir up a community unless they go and seek after those who are converted, to strengthen them. Hence the essential need of a permanent pastorate over churches.

[Acts 18:24-25](#). *And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man*

was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord knowing only the baptism of John.

He had not got farther than that; but it is always well to tell out what you do know. It is the way to learn more; and we doubt not that many a half-instructed Christian is doing good in his way, and it is not for us to stop him, or to find fault with him, but rather quietly to endeavor to tell him more of the truth. Paul did not say, “Now, Apollos, you must stop this, you know. You had better study. You do not know enough yet,” but he let him tell out what he did know.

[Acts 18:26-28](#). *And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly. And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace: For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ.*

Now let us sing ourselves an encouraging hymn that as Christ, the Lord, said to Paul, “Fear not,” so his Spirit may say to us tonight: “Give to the winds thy fears.”

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Acts Chapter 19

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

Acts Chapter 20

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

Acts Chapter 21

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER 22

Verses 1-16

[Acts 22:1-2](#). *Men, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defense which I make now unto you. (And when they heard that he spake in the Hebrew tongue to them, they kept the more silence: and he saith,)*

Men like to be addressed in their own language; they give the more heed to the message if it is spoken to them in words that they can understand.

[Acts 22:3-9](#). *I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day. And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women. As also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders: from whom also I received letters unto the brethren and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem, for to be punished. And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me. And I fell unto the ground and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, Why persecutest thou me? And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest. And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me.*

Paul's companions could not help sensing that extraordinary light, and though they did not understand what it was, they were alarmed by it. They also heard a supernatural sound, but they could not comprehend what the voice of Jesus said to their leader as he lay prostrate upon the ground.

[Acts 22:10-12](#). *And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do. And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus. And one, Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there,*

These particulars concerning the character of Ananias do not appear in the former part of the narrative. Paul was endeavoring to conciliate his

hearers, and therefore he mentioned that Ananias was a devout Jew, having a good report of all his brethren who dwelt in Damascus.

[Acts 22:13-14](#). *Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him. And he said, The God of our Fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth.*

If Paul was to be an apostle, it was necessary that he should see the Lord Christ, for one of the qualifications of an apostle was that he should be able to bear witness, from his eyesight, and from his hearing, to the existence of the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore it was that Saul did, at that time, “see that Just One,” and did “hear the voice of his mouth.”

[Acts 22:15-16](#). *For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard. And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.*

These two things were necessary; first, he was to be baptized on profession of his faith in Jesus, and then, he was to have in his soul a vivid consciousness that his sins were all washed away. This was not baptismal regeneration, for he was already regenerate. It was, however, the obedience to the Lord’s command, which brought with it a sweet reassurance of the forgiveness of his sins.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Acts 9:1-22](#); and [Acts 22:1-16](#).

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Acts Chapter 23

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

Acts Chapter 24

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER 25

Verses 1-27

[Acts 25:1](#). *Now when Festus was come into the province, after three days he ascended from Caesarea to Jerusalem.*

Porcius Festus had been appointed governor in the place of Felix, who had left Paul a prisoner so as to please the Jews, though he would have been willing enough to release him, if Paul or his friends, would have given him a sufficiently heavy bribe. He had trembled as Paul had “reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come,” but his conscience had not been so quickened as to make him act justly towards the apostle. Yet his unrighteous conduct was made to serve the Lord’s purpose, which was that Paul should testify before one earthly ruler after another until he should ultimately appear before the cruel Nero himself at Rome. Paul was at Caesarea, but he was not at once brought before Festus; and when the governor went up to Jerusalem, the apostle’s enemies renewed their plotting against him

[Acts 25:2-3](#). *Then the high priest and the chief of the Jews informed him against Paul, and besought him, and desired favor against him, that he would send for him to Jerusalem, laying wait in the way to kill him.*

They had been foiled in their previous attempt to assassinate the apostle but their malice led them to try again to put him to death in that dastardly fashion.

[Acts 25:4-5](#). *But Festus answered, that Paul should be kept at Caesarea and that he himself would depart shortly thither. Let them therefore, said he, which among you are able, go down with me, and accuse this man, if there be any wickedness in him.*

Whether Festus suspected their real reason for being so anxious for him to send for Paul, we cannot tell; but, at any rate, their scheme was once more a failure.

[Acts 25:6-7](#). *And when he had tarried among them more than ten days, he went down unto Caesarea, and the next day sitting on the judgment seat commanded Paul to be brought. And when he was come, the Jews which came down from Jerusalem stood round about, and laid many and grievous complaints against Paul, which they could not prove.*

It was easy for them to lay many and grievous complaints against Paul, yet it was not only difficult but impossible for them to prove their charge against the apostle.

[Acts 25:8-9](#). *While he answered for himself, Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Caesar, have I offended any thing at all. But Festus, willing to do the Jew's pleasure,-*

In that respect he was just like his predecessor, Felix. No doubt he took into account the number and position of Paul's accusers, and thought it would be the wiser policy to side with them rather than with the prisoner; and, therefore, "Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure," —

[Acts 25:9-11](#). *Answered Paul, and said, Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me? Then said Paul, I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest. For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Caesar.*

As a freeborn Roman citizen, he had the right of appeal to the emperor, and that right he exercised, it may be that he also realized that this was the way in which the Lord's prophecy should be fulfilled: "Be of good cheer, Paul; for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at home."

[Acts 25:12](#). *Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Hast thou appealed unto Caesar? unto Caesar shalt thou go.*

The die was cast, there was no need to argue the matter any further.

[Acts 25:13-16](#). *And after certain days King Agrippa and Bernice came unto Caesarea to salute Festus. And when they had been there many days, Festus declared Paul's cause unto the king, saying, There is a certain man left in bonds by Felix: About whom, when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed me, desiring to have judgment against him. To whom I answered, It is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die, before that he which is accused have the accusers face to face, and have licence to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him.*

Festus must have felt profound contempt for the chief priests and elders of the Jews who clamoured for Paul's death even before he had been tried, and he gave them plainly to understand that this was not the Roman if it was the Jewish method of dealing with accused persons.

[Acts 25:17-19](#). *Therefore, when they were come hither, without any delay on the morrow I sat on the judgment seat, and commanded the man to*

be brought forth. Against whom when the accusers stood up, they brought none accusation of such things as I supposed: but had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.

Festus may have supposed that they would have accused Paul of plotting against Rome, or of some other political crime. He would have thought such matters of far greater importance than the “certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.” Paul could make that affirmation with the utmost confidence, for Christ had appeared to him on the road to Damascus, proving without doubt that, though once dead, he was again alive.

[Acts 25:20-22](#). *And because I doubted of such manner of questions, I asked him whether he would go to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these matters. But when Paul had appealed to be reserved unto the hearing of Augustus, I commanded him to be kept till I might send him to Caesar. Then Agrippa said unto Festus, I would also hear the man myself. Tomorrow, said he, thou shalt hear him.*

So Paul’s witness-bearing was made to spread still further. It is scarcely possible to conceive of any other circumstances in which the gospel could have been made known to such an audience as the apostle was, on the morrow, to have the opportunity of addressing.

[Acts 25:23](#). *And on the morrow, when Agrippa was come, and Bernice, with great pomp, and was entered into the place of hearing, with the chief captains, and principal men of the city, at Festus’ commandment Paul was brought forth.*

It was such a congregation as Paul was only too glad to address, and the gospel could not have had a nobler or worthier advocate, yet we do not read of anyone who was present yielding up himself or herself to the Lord Jesus Christ.

[Acts 25:24](#). *And Festus said, King Agrippa, and all men which are here present with us, ye see this man, about whom all the multitude of the Jews have dealt with me, both at Jerusalem, and also here, crying that he ought not to live any longer.*

Festus took care that the Jews should not be able to forget that they had demanded the death of a man who had not even been put upon his trial.

[Acts 25:25-27](#). *But when I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death, and that he himself hath appealed to Augustus, I have determined*

to send him. Of whom I have no certain thing to write unto my lord. Wherefore I have brought him forth before you, and specially before thee, O King Agrippa, that after examination had, I might have somewhat to write. For it seemeth to me unreasonable to send a prisoner, and not withal to signify the crimes laid against him.

The governor talked like a man of sense, and he even went so far as to say that the prisoner before him “had committed nothing worthy of death.”

This exposition consisted of readings from Acts 25. and Acts 26; and 1 John 4.

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CHAPTER 26

Verses 1-28

Three times we have in Holy Writ a graphic report of the conversion of Paul. This may be accounted for partly from its being one of the most remarkable events of early sacred history, Paul having had a greater effect upon the Christian Church than any other living man. At the same time I think it teaches us that the Holy Spirit sets especial store by the facts connected with this very remarkable conversion. If he gives it three times, in the sacred volume, we ought to give it a triple attention, and see if we cannot learn therefrom.

[Acts 26:1-3](#). *Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Thou art permitted to speak for thyself. Then Paul stretched forth the hand, and answered for himself: I think myself happy, king Agrippa. because I shall never answer for myself this day before thee touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews. Especially because I know thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews: wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently.*

With what courtesy does he speak! Paul is bold; but see how he is all things to all men! And he begins an address for his life with great adroitness and skill; teaching us that we are to use all the courtesies of life to those to whom they belong, and never to cause needless irritation. There is enough offence in the Cross of itself, without our being offensive when uplifting it.

[Acts 26:4-7](#). *My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews, which knew me*

from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee. And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers. Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. For which hope's sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews.

For the Pharisees did hold very firmly the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, and Paul often instances this, as being the very thing, though no longer a Pharisee, to which he was glad to give witness.

[Acts 26:8-11](#). *Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead? I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem; and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.*

He had the courage of his convictions. Believing a thing, he did not let it lie idle. He regarded the Christians as a pestilent sect, and, therefore, he hunted them down. He abhorred the name of Jesus of Nazareth as that of an imposter, and, therefore, he determined that no stone should be left unturned to overthrow his power.

[Acts 26:12-14](#). *Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests. At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, Why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.*

Not “It is hard for me to bear it,” but “It is hard for thee”; as if, though conscious of being persecuted, our Lord, in that divine unselfishness which is so natural to him, forgot the kicks that were given to him, and only thought of the injury which Saul was doing to himself, when, like an ox that strikes cut against the goad, he injured himself.

[Acts 26:15-28](#). *And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise and stand upon thy feet; for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I*

will appear unto thee: delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: but shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance. For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill me. Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: that Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people, and to the Gentiles. And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad. But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness. For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner. King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest. Then Agrippa said unto Paul,

Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.

Verses 1-32

[Acts 26:1](#). *Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Thou art permitted to speak for thyself. Then Paul stretched forth the hand, and answered for himself:*

I do not suppose Agrippa imagined that Paul would take all the liberty that he did; but inasmuch as the king had said to him, “Thou art permitted to speak for thyself,” Paul, who, even when he was permitted to speak for himself, did not forget that he was the servant of God, and used that liberty as the servant of God, and so took the opportunity to seek to impress the truth upon the conscience and heart of the king. Thus Paul answered for himself:-

[Acts 26:2-3](#). *I think myself happy, King Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before thee touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews: especially because I know thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews: wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently.*

It is always well to try to be on good terms with the person whom you wish to impress with the truth of the gospel. Paul therefore did not begin bluntly, as some foolish people would have done, but he addressed the king most courteously and respectfully. I think I see the little man, as he doubtless was. Paul the man with feeble eyes, and with no great bodily presence to command attention, yet bravely stretching out his hand, and, like a preacher, thus addressing Herod Agrippa:-

[Acts 26:4-7](#). *My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews; which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee. And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers: unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. For which hope's sake, King Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews.*

The Jews still had hope concerning the promise of the Messiah, and all the promises in God's covenant with them; and Paul says that for the sake of this hope he had been led to do that which had now brought him as a prisoner before the king. Notice that the fiction concerning "the ten lost tribes" has no foundation in Scripture. There are no lost tribes, several of them are mentioned by name in the New Testament; the apostle James writes "to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad," and here Paul speaks of them as "our twelve tribes." The Jews whom we have among us at this day belong to all of the twelve tribes, as they will tell you if you ask them. There are no lost tribes yet to be discovered, neither are we, as a nation, those ten tribes that are supposed to have been lost. We are Gentiles, and not Jews. The apostle speaks here concerning the hope of the whole nation of the Jews. We who have believed in Jesus are the inheritors of that grand hope, as we have understood it aright, and have realized that it is fulfilled in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, the only-begotten Son of God.

[Acts 26:8](#). *Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?*

That great fact of the resurrection of Christ is the corner-stone of the temple of truth, the key-stone of the arch of the gospel. The apostles made this truth very prominent in their preaching, and here Paul began his address with it. It was the great difficulty of the Christian religion at that period, so Paul went straight to it at once.

[Acts 26:9-10](#). *I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem:*

For Paul was the kind of man who, if he thought he ought to do anything, he always did it. Even in his unregenerate state, his conscience, unenlightened as it was, swayed him; but now, with an enlightened conscience, he looked back upon that part of his life with deep regret, and he did not fail to acknowledge and mourn the wrong that he had ignorantly done to the Lord Jesus Christ and his faithful followers.

[Acts 26:10-11](#). *And many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.*

Paul was a whole-hearted man; whatever he did, he did intensely; so that, when he did wrong, he did it with a kind of madness. Such a furious hatred of Jesus of Nazareth was upon him that all Judaea was not large enough for the indulgence of his persecuting malice against the saints, so he “persecuted them even unto strange cities.”

[Acts 26:12-14](#). *Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, at midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.*

He was like a stubborn ox kicking against the goads; and the harder he kicked, the more the sharp points of the goads pricked him.

[Acts 26:15-18](#). *And I said. Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.*

Part of this address was spoken to Paul by Ananias when he came to open his eyes, hence some have thought that Paul here mixed up what was said to him by Christ, and what was said by Ananias, yet all the while recognizing it as being virtually all one message from Christ; but I think not so. I believe that Paul would have us understand that the Lord Jesus Christ actually said to him, on the road to Damascus, all that we have recorded here; and that when Ananias came to him, he, without having heard what the Lord had said to Paul, said the same thing to him; and this would be a kind of sign and token to the apostle that what was said to him was really a message from God. How often this happens under every true gospel ministry! The very thing that you were talking about while on your way to the service will be spoken to you by God's servant in the house of prayer. That which you were reading before you came here may be the very subject selected for our present consideration, for God has a wondrous way of making one of his calls tally with another, so that the two meeting without any collusion on our part shall confirm and establish one another, and the more deeply impress the heart of the hearer.

[Acts 26:19-23](#). *Whereupon, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: but shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance. For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill me. Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other thing than those which the prophet and Moses did say should come: that Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.*

Paul stuck to the Scriptures, and to the gospel revealed in them, and was not a teller-out of his own thoughts, and ideas, and notions; but he was a herald proclaiming what his King bade him say, and telling out what the grace of his Master made him only too glad to say.

[Acts 26:24](#); [Acts 26:23](#). *And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad. But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the word of truth and soberness.*

He had been "mad" once, as he had just confessed; but he had recovered from that madness. Now how calmly he replies to the taunt of Festus; there

is nothing of anger or resentment about his dignified answer, "I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness."

[Acts 26:26-27](#). *For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner. King Agrippa,*

Now the apostle comes to close grips with the king:-

[Acts 26:27-28](#). *Believest thou the prophet, I know that thou believest. Then Agrippa said unto Paul, almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.*

A great deal of effort has been put forth to prove that Agrippa did not say anything of the kind, but that he was only laughing at Paul when he ironically said, "Are you going to make me a Christian so easily as this?" If so, the reply of Paul was singularly inappropriate; but taking Agrippa's words to be as they appear here, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian," Paul's answer can be well understood.

[Acts 26:29](#). *And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.*

And in so speaking he adroitly hinted how unfairly he was chained before his judges, and yet how he wished ill to none, but only wished good to all.

[Acts 26:30-31](#). *And when he had thus spoken, the king rose up, and the governor, and Bernice, and they that sat with them: and when they were gone aside, they talked between themselves, saying, This man doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds.*

He had impressed Agrippa most favourably, and it is quite clear that the King was not jesting with him; he was at least convinced that Paul had done "nothing worthy of death or of bonds."

[Acts 26:32](#). *Then said Agrippa unto Festus, This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar.*

But it was not God's purpose that Paul should be set at liberty; he must go to Rome, and must there, before the emperor himself, bear witness which he could not bear as a free man, but which the emperor must hear when Paul was brought before him as a prisoner who had appealed to him, and must therefore be heard in person.

This exposition consisted of readings from Acts 25. and Acts 26; and 1 John 4.

ACTS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 27

Verses 1-26

Acts 27:1-3. *And, when it was determined that we should sail into Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners unto one named Julius, a centurion of Augustus' band. And entering into a ship of Adramyttium, we launched, meaning to sail by the coasts of Asia; one Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, being with us. And the next day we touched at Sidon. And Julius courteously entreated Paul, and gave him liberty to go unto his friends to refresh himself.*

Even a Roman centurion could see that Paul was no ordinary prisoner, and that it was quite safe to allow him privileges which others might have abused.

Acts 27:4-12. *And when we had launched from thence, we sailed under Cyprus, because the winds were contrary. And when we had sailed over the sea of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra, a city of Lycia. And there the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing into Italy; and he put us therein. And when we had sailed slowly many days, and scarce were come over against Cnidus, the wind not suffering us we sailed under Crete, over against Salmone; and, hardly passing it, came unto a place which is called the fair havens; nigh whereunto was the city of Lasea. Now when much time was spent, and when sailing was now dangerous, because the fast was now already past, Paul admonished them, and said unto them, Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives. Nevertheless the centurion believed the master and the owner of the ship, more than those things which were spoken by Paul. And because the haven was not commodious to winter in, the more part advised to depart thence also, if by any means they might attain to Phenice, and there to winter; which is an haven of Crete and lieth toward the south west and north west.*

It was quite natural that the centurion should think that the master and the owner of the ship knew more about seafaring matters than Paul did, but the sequel proved that the apostle knew more than they did, for he had access to information that was hidden from them.

[Acts 27:13](#). *And when the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, loosing thence, they sailed close by Crete.*

That was not the only voyage that commenced favourably and ended disastrously.

[Acts 27:14-15](#). *But not long after there arose against it a tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon. And when the ship was caught, and could not bear up into the wind, we let her drive.*

Apparently, that was the only thing they could do; and, at times, we may find that it will be well to follow their example. When we have done our best, and can make no headway, we had better commit our vessel to the care of God, and “let her drive” wherever he wills.

[Acts 27:16-19](#). *And running under a certain island which is called Clauda, we had much work to come by the boat: which when they had taken up, they used helps, undergirding the ship; and, fearing lest they should fall into the quicksands, strake sail, and so were driven. And we being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next day they lightened the ship; and the third day we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship.*

They used all the means in their power, and evidently Paul and his companions took their full share of the work that had to be done: “we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship.”

[Acts 27:20-22](#). *And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away. But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss. And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man’s life among you, but of the ship.*

Paul might well remind the officers of the wise advice he gave them in Crete, but he did not rest content with that, but went on to cheer them as far as he dared, though he again warned them that they would lose their ship. To prove that he was not speaking without due authority, he added: —

[Acts 27:23-26](#). *For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me. Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island.*

The next chapter tells us that the “certain island” was Melita, or Malta as it is now called. In that respect, as in all others, Paul’s prophecy was literally fulfilled, for the ship was lost, but all on board were saved.

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 90.; and [Acts 27:1-26](#).

Verses 11-44

Paul had advised the captain not to set sail for a while, —

[Acts 27:11-13](#). *Nevertheless the centurion believed the master and the owner of the ship, more than those things, which were spoken by Paul. And because the haven was not commodious to winter in, the more part advised to depart thence also, if by any means they might attain to Phenice, and there to winter; which is an haven of Crete, and lieth toward the south west and north west. And when the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, loosing thence, they sailed close by Crete.*

He is very unwise who trusts the winds, and equally so is he who sets his confidence upon any earthly thing, for fickle as the wind that blows are all things beneath the moon,

[Acts 27:14-15](#). *But not long after there arose against a tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon. And when the ship was caught, and could not bear up into the wind, we let her drive.*

You may have a calm at one moment, and a storm at the next, and unless your protection it from above, and your confidence in something more stable than can be found in this world, woe betide you. Sometime, it is well to yield to the stress of circumstances. If you have struggled hard, and can do no more, it is well to leave the result with God.

[Acts 27:16-21](#). *And running under a certain island which is called Clauda, we had much work to come by the boat: which when they had taken up, they used helps, undergirding the ship; and fearing lest they should fall into the quicksand, strake sail, and so were driven. And we being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next day they lightened the ship; and the third day we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship; and when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away. But after long abstinence —*

They had not the time or the heart to eat, and perhaps scarcely thought of doing so while they were in such imminent peril of their lives.

[Acts 27:21](#). *Paul stood forth in the midst of them,*

A prisoner, but the freest man there; despised, and yet the most honoured among them; the bravest heart of all that company of soldiers and sailors.

[Acts 27:21-24](#). *And said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss. And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship. For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.*

Oh, what a privilege it would be if God would say the same to us! If, in the night of trouble, when you are tossed to and fro, mother, father, the Lord should say to you, "Fear not, I have given you your whole family they shall all be saved," you would not mind how fiercely the storm might rage if you could be sure of that. And how happy would my heart be if all that sail in this big vessel were given to me! I should not be satisfied even then; I should want a great many more than that; but, still, what a blessed thing it would be to have every soul that sails with us saved!

[Acts 27:25-27](#). *Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me. Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island. But when the fourteenth night was come, as we were driven up and down in Adria, about midnight the shipmen deemed that they drew near to some country;*

They could hear the roar of the breakers.

[Acts 27:28](#). *And sounded, and found it twenty fathoms: and when they had gone a little further, they sounded again, and found it fifteen fathoms.*

They found that the water was shallowing very quickly, so they knew that they were getting near the shore.

[Acts 27:29](#). *Then fearing lest we should have fallen upon rocks they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day.*

Then they "wished for the day, "and how often the Christian throws his great anchor out, and wishes for the day, — waiting "till the day break", and the shadows flee away." Well, it will not be long. If night lasts through the whole of this life, the morning cometh, — the everlasting morning.

[Acts 27:30](#). *And as the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, when they had let down the boat into the sea, under colour as though they would have cast anchors out the foreship —*

These cowardly sailors meant to get away, and leave the prisoners and passengers and soldiers to perish.

[Acts 27:31](#). *Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved.*

Yet God had said that they should be, so that it is quite consistent to believe in divine predestination and yet to see the utility, nay, the necessity, of the use of means: “Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved.”

[Acts 27:32](#). *Then the soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat, and let her fall off.*

So that the sailors could not get away.

[Acts 27:33-34](#). *And while the day was coming on, Paul besought them all to take meat, saying, This day is the fourteenth day that ye have tarried and continued fasting, having taken nothing. Wherefore I pray you to take some meat; for this is for your health: for there shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you.*

What a grand speech this is! It is the utterance of faith. Talk of eloquence! This is real eloquence, — for Paul to be addressing the people in a storm-tossed ship as calmly as if he were safely on shore.

[Acts 27:35](#). *And when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in the presence of them all: and when he had broken it, he began to eat.*

He would not eat without giving thanks to God. There are some who do, even as the swine do; but the Christian finds it good at all times, before he eats, to bless the God that gave the food to him. It is a Christian habit which should not be given up. Paul gave thanks when it was most inconvenient to do so, — when a great storm was raging, and when there were only two or three on board who sympathized with him.

[Acts 27:36](#). *Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took some meat.*

Courage is contagious, as well as timidity. The holy bravery of one good man may make many others brave.

[Acts 27:37-39](#). *And we were in all in the ship two hundred threescore and sixteen souls. And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, and cast out the wheat into the sea. And when it was day, they knew not the land: but they discovered a certain creek with a shore, into the which they were minded, if it were possible to thrust in the ship.*

They wanted to let it go ashore, and break up, and so save their lives.

[Acts 27:40-42](#). *And when they had taken up the anchors, they committed themselves unto the sea, and loosed the rudder bands, and hoisted up the mainsail to the wind, and made toward shore. And falling into a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground; and the forepart stuck fast, and remained unmoveable but the hinder part was broken with the violence of the waves. And the soldiers' counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim out, and escape.*

The soldiers were responsible for them. It would be required at their hands if a prisoner escaped; so, with that cruelty, and yet that obedience to law which was characteristic of the Roman legions, “the soldiers counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim out, and escape.”

[Acts 27:43-44](#). *But the centurion, willing to save Paul, kept them from their purpose; and commanded that they which could swim should cast themselves first into the sea, and get to land: and the rest, some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship. And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land.*

So God had said, “and so it came to pass.”

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CHAPTER 28

Verses 1-31

[Acts 28:1-3](#). *And when they were escaped, then they knew that the island was called Melita. And the barbarous people shewed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold. And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, —*

It must have been a fine sight to see the great apostle of the Gentiles gathering a bundle of sticks to put on the fire. But the men who can do great things are usually the men who do not disdain to do little things.

[Acts 28:3-5](#). *And laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand. And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live. And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm.*

Was not this a fulfillment of the Master's words concerning the signs following faith in him? "They shall take up serpents." Whether this viper had bitten Paul so as to really fill his veins with venom, we do not know, and it is an equal miracle whether it had done so or not. Whether the sting had already poisoned him or not, his life was preserved, and that was sufficient.

[Acts 28:6](#). *Howbeit they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god.*

Those who saw what had happened to him regarded it as so marvellous that they thought he must be one of their heathen deities who had come down to the earth. He was not a god, however; but he was a man of God, and God had preserved him in the hour of peril.

[Acts 28:7-10](#). *In the same quarters were possessions of the chief man of the island whose name was Publius; who received us, and lodged us three days courteously. And it came to pass, that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and of a bloody flux: to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him and healed him. So when this was done, others also, which had diseases in the island, came, and were healed: who also honoured us with many honours; and when we departed, they laded us with such things as were necessary.*

Happy island of Melita to have such a missionary driven on its shore, to heal the sick, and preach the gospel to the people. The calamities of ministers are often a benediction to the people. The shipwreck of Paul resulted in blessing to that island which otherwise it might have missed. Let us, as God's servants, leave ourselves in his hands, and believe that he can sometimes use us better by means of a shipwreck than if he had given the winds and waves charge concerning us to bear us safely to our desired haven.

[Acts 28:11-13](#). *And after three months we departed in a ship of Alexandria, which had wintered in the isle, whose sign was Castor and Pollux. And landing at Syracuse, we tarried there three days. And from thence we fetched a compass, and came to Rhegium: and after one day the south wind blew, and we came the next day to Puteoli:*

Those who have ever been there regard the spot as almost sacred where Paul set his foot on his way to Rome. It is a place where there is an

abundance of hot springs, a place which of old was frequented for healing; I have stood there with intense delight: “We came the next day to Puteoli:”

—
[Acts 28:14](#). *Where we found brethren, —*

There were some Christians there. See how soon the gospel had spread as far as to this sea-port town; probably some Christian sailors carried it there. Blessed will it be when the ships of Tarshish shall bear not only men specially set apart as missionaries, but when every sailor shall be a missionary for Christ. “We came the next day to Puteoli: where we found brethren,” —

[Acts 28:14](#). *And were desired to tarry with them seven days: —*

So they were able to have one Lord’s day together. They were probably only a very small company of poor Christians, but what a joyful privilege it was for them to have the beloved apostle with them for that memorable week in their lives!

[Acts 28:14](#). *And so we went toward Rome.*

Now it was a matching band of soldiers taking them as prisoners to appear before the emperor at Rome.

[Acts 28:15](#). *And from thence, when the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us as far as Appii forum, and the three taverns: whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage.*

It must have cheered his heart to see that there were some who loved him sufficiently to make a weary tramp along the Appian Road, to meet him, and salute him in the name of their common Lord.

[Acts 28:16](#). *And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard: but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him.*

This was a great favor, no doubt, but do not forget that he had to have his right hand chained to the left hand of the soldier day and night and that was not very pleasant either for him or for the soldier. Yet he thus had an opportunity of personal intercourse with the soldiers of the Pretorian guard, and as they were continually being changed, Paul no doubt had opportunities of conversation with hundreds of them, and thus the gospel was spread in a very unlikely quarter. Would you like to be chained to a soldier day after day, and month after month? There are some who would not have that experience for half an hour without putting the gospel plainly before the soldier so that he should at least know what it is, even if he did

not accept it. That is a wonderful way of preaching, — man to man; when they were chained hand to hand, there was no getting away from what Paul had to say.

[Acts 28:17](#). *And it came to pass, that after three days —*

That was quick work; he had only got into his house three days when he began to work: “After three days” —

[Acts 28:17](#). *Paul called the chief of the Jews together: —*

There are said to have been seven synagogues in Rome at that time, so the apostle sent for a number of the chief men in the various congregations.

[Acts 28:17-20](#). *And when they were come together, he said unto them, Men and brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. Who, when they had examined me, would have let me go, because there was no cause of death in me. But when the Jews spake against it, I was constrained to appeal unto Caesar; not that I had aught to accuse my nation of. For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see you, and to speak with you: because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.*

They were all looking for the Messiah, for there was at that time a general expectation of his coming.

[Acts 28:21-22](#). *And they said unto him, We neither received letters out of Judaea concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came shewed or spake any harm of thee. But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, we know that everywhere it is spoken against.*

Although men did not understand it, they spoke against it. This is often a blessing. This is the kind of advertisement that helps the gospel, for if men will only be sufficiently interested in it to speak against it, they will be likely to come and hear it, and some of them will be almost certain to receive it. The truth never spreads so fast as when men oppose it.

[Acts 28:23](#). *And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening*

It was a long and blessed day, a grand opportunity for Paul thus to be able hour after hour to expound the gospel. But see the result, — the result which always seems to follow the faithful preaching of the truth: —

[Acts 28:24-28](#). *And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not. And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, saying, go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: for the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it.*

Oh, blessed confidence of the apostle! If some reject the gospel, others will receive it.

[Acts 28:29-31](#). *And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves. And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, —*

What a subject Paul had to preach about, “the kingdom of God, and those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ,” and how faithfully and fearlessly he proclaimed this great theme!

[Acts 28:31](#). *With all confidence, no man forbidding him.*

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CHAPTER FORTY-FOUR

Romans

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CHAPTER 1

Verses 1-17

[Romans 1:1](#). *Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,*

Paul has many titles, and he delights to mention them in writing to these Christians at Rome. He puts first his highest title: “A servant of Jesus Christ.” He glories in being a servant of the crucified Christ, a servant of him who was despised and rejected of men; so do we. Paul was called out from among men, effectually “called” of God “to be an apostle, separated” — set apart — “unto the gospel of God.” He believed that he was separated for that purpose at his birth; but he was specially “separated unto the gospel of God” on the road to Damascus. It is a happy thing when a minister feels that he has nothing to do with anything else but the gospel; that commands all his thought, all his talent, all his time.

[Romans 1:2](#). *(Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,)*

All the gospel is in the Old Testament as well as in the New, for the gospel which Paul was called to preach was promised afore by the prophets in the Holy Scriptures.

[Romans 1:3-4](#). *Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:*

He is as much the Son of God as he was the Son of man. The humanity is as true as the divinity, the divinity as true as the humanity.

[Romans 1:5](#). *BY whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name:*

Paul felt that he was sent to preach among all the, Gentiles. He had a large bishopric; James might keep to the Jews, but Paul’s diocese included every land, he was to preach “among all nations.”

[Romans 1:6-7](#). *Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ: to all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

The gospel is good news; and the man who has to preach it is full of good wishes. He wishes the best possible things to everybody with whom he comes in contact: “Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

[Romans 1:8](#). *First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.*

Oh, I would it were so with us, that we had faith that could be spoken of throughout the whole world! I am afraid that some have none to speak of; these saints in Rome had such faith that the noise thereof went abroad everywhere, and all people wondered at them.

[Romans 1:9](#). *For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers;*

No wonder that they prospered so well when Paul always made mention of them in his prayers. Some churches would prosper better if some of you remembered them more in prayer. Of course, you all pray for the church of which you are members; could you not set aside in your heart a little space for some poor church that is dwindling down to nothing? Could you not pray it up again? Who knows what blessing would come upon pastor and people if you bore them on your hearts?

[Romans 1:10](#). *Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you.*

Paul prayed about that matter, and we may pray about our journeys. I like to hear the old-fashioned expression, “Be pleased, O Lord, to grant journeying mercies,” for there are such things; and when the servants of God are going about, with a view to spread the gospel, we ought to pray that they may travel in safety.

[Romans 1:11](#). *For I long to see, you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established;*

He wanted to go to Rome because he felt that he would take something with him. He was a poor man, so he could not take any golden or silver gifts; but he was a chosen man, so he believed that he could impart unto them some spiritual gift. Oh, what a largess does a man of God distribute when his Lord is with him! I do pray tonight that, feeble as I am, and unqualified as I am to bless you, yet even this night all of you who are the people of God may get some spiritual gift. I do not know what you want; but our heavenly Father does. May every one of you get, distinctly from his

right hand, some spiritual gift to the end that you may be established, that you may get good root-hold, that you may be firmly fixed on the sure foundation!

[Romans 1:12-13](#). *That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me. Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles.*

Rome was a sink of iniquity; it was the den of the lions, where Nero was, who would speedily devour, like a lion, the minister of Christ. Paul wanted somehow to get into that old city on the seven hills, and to pluck some fruit for God even from the vine that was planted there; but he was hindered.

[Romans 1:14-15](#). *I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.*

I do not suppose that Paul guessed that he would be sent there at the government expense, but he was. The Roman Empire had to find a ship for him, and a fit escort for him, too; and he entered the city as an ambassador in bonds. When our hearts are set on a thing, and we pray for it, God may grant us the blessing; but, it may be, in a way that we never looked for. You shall go to Rome, Paul; but you shall go in chains. He had not thought of that plan; still, it was the best way in which he could go. I do not know how he could have preached to the Emperor except as a prisoner; but when he was brought before him to be tried, then he had an opportunity of speaking even to the brutal creature who was called the Emperor of Rome.

[Romans 1:16-17](#). *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.*

That is the sum and substance of the gospel: “The just shall live by faith.” The law is, “He that doeth these things shall live by them;” but the gospel is, “The just shall live by faith.” “Wherefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God.” The Lord give to us all that saving faith, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

Verses 1-25

[Romans 1:1-2](#). *Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God. (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures.)*

Paul had not seen the Romans when he wrote this epistle. They were strangers to him, and therefore he begins by asserting his apostleship. “called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God.” That expression should be true of every Christian minister. We are not apostles; but we are “separated unto the gospel of God.” I do not think that we are called to have anything to do with party politics, or social problems, or any such questions; we are set apart for this purpose. “separated unto the gospel of God.” There are plenty of people who can attend to those things better than we can/ If we mind our own business, or rather, if we mind our Master’s business, we who are ministers will have quite enough to do. “Separated unto the gospel of God.” There are some brethren who in preaching are as timid as mice; but on a political platform they can roar like lions. Had not they better take to what they like best, and give up the work at which they are not at home? For my part, I believe that I am like Paul when he says that he was “separated unto the gospel of God.” I am set apart unto the gospel, cut off from everything else that I may preach the glorious gospel of the blessed God to the perishing sons of men. (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures.) Notice, brethren, how reverent the apostles were to Holy Scripture. They had no doubt about its inspiration. They quoted the old Testament, and delighted to make it a kind of basis for the New Testament: “which he had promised afore by his prophets in the Holy Scriptures.”

[Romans 1:3-4](#). *Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:*

What a glorious Lord we serve! He is God’s Son: “Jesus Christ our Lord.” In his human nature, he is a Man of royal race: “of the seed of David.” He was a man, therefore he died: but he rose again, for he was more than man:

“declared to be the Son of God with power.”

[Romans 1:5-6](#). *By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name: among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ:*

That is a sweet name for every truly converted man. “called of Jesus Christ.” He has called you personally, he has called you effectually, he has called you out of the world, he has called you into fellowship with himself: “the called of Jesus Christ.” The revised version has it: “call to be Jesus Christ’s.” those who are called by Christ, are called to be his.

[Romans 1:7-8](#). *To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.*

What contrasts we have in the seventh verse! “In Rome, beloved of God.” “In Rome called to be saints.” God has beloved ones in the darkest parts of the earth. There is all the more reason for them to be saints because they are surrounded by sinners. They must have had true faith, or they could not have confessed Christ between the jaws of a lion, for they lived in Rome, with Nero hunting after Christians, as if they had been wild beasts, and yet they were not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.

[Romans 1:9](#). *For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers;*

This man, Paul, did a great deal by prayer. I remember a minister, who is now with the Lord, who was thanked by his people for his wonderful sermons; but he said to them, “You never thanked me for my prayers, yet they were the best part of my service for you.” When men of God are mighty in prayer, we owe much to them.

[Romans 1:10](#). *Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you.*

Paul wanted to go to Rome; but I do not suppose that he ever thought that he would go there at the expense of the government, with an imperial guard to take care of him all the way. We pray, and God gives us the answer to our petitions; but often in a way of which we should never have dreamed. Paul goes to Rome as a prisoner for Christ’s sake. Now suppose Paul had gone to Rome in any other capacity, he could not have seen Caesar, he could not have obtained admission into Caesar’s house. The prison of the Palatine was just under the vast palace of the Caesars; and everybody in the house could come into the guard-room. And have a talk with Paul if they were minded so to do. I suppose that, whatever I might be willing to pay, I could not have preached in the palace of the Queen, even in this nominally

Christian country; but Paul was installed as a royal chaplain over Caesar's household in the guard-room of the Palatine prison.

How wonderfully God works to accomplish his divine purposes!

[Romans 1:11-12](#). *For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established; that is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.*

Paul wanted his faith to establish theirs, and their faith to establish his. Christians grow rich by and exchange of spiritual commodities; and I am afraid some Christians are very poor because they do not engage in the spiritual bartering with one another. You know how it was in the old time, "They that feared the Lord spake often one to another." Shall I tell you how it is now? They that fear not the Lord speak often one against another. That is a very sad difference. Oh, for more Christian communion; for when we blend our "mutual faith:", we are "comforted together"; each believer grows stronger as he cheers his brother in the Lord!

[Romans 1:13](#). *Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles.*

Ah! Paul, you could not go when you wished. Caesar must convoy you.

Your Master would have you go to Rome under the protection of the eagles of your empire. God has servants everywhere: he can make Satan himself provide the body-guard for his faithful apostle's journey.

[Romans 1:14](#). *I am a debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise.*

Paul felt a debt to everybody. The God who saved him, had saved him that he might preach the gospel in every place he could reach. Brethren, if you have received much from God, you are so much the debtor to men; and you are debtors not only to the respectable, but to the disreputable, debtors not only to those who come to a place of worship, but to the dwellers in the slums, "to the Greeks, and to the barbarians; to the wise and to the unwise."

[Romans 1:15-16](#). *So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ:*

Many other people were ashamed of the gospel of Christ. It was too simple; it had not enough of mystery about it; it had not enough of worldly wisdom about it. Paul says, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ," and then gives his reason for not being ashamed of it, —

[Romans 1:16-17](#). *For it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.*

The gospel tells us about this living by faith, this believing, this receiving righteousness through believing, and not through working. This is the sweet story of the cross, of which Paul was not ashamed.

[Romans 1:18](#). *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;*

Those last words may be read, “Who hold down the truth in unrighteousness.” They will not let the truth work upon their hearts; they will not allow it to operate in their minds; but they try to make it an excuse for their sin. Is there anybody here who is holding down the truth to prevent its entering his heart? I fear that there are some such persons, who have come here for years, and the truth has pricked them, troubled them, made them lie awake at night; but they are holding it down, like one who grasps a wild animal by the ears, and holds it down for fear it should bite him. Oh, sirs, when you are afraid of the truth, you may be well be afraid of hell! When you and the truth quarrel, you had better end your fighting soon, for you will have the worst of it if you do not yield: “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold down the truth in unrighteousness.”

[Romans 1:19-20](#). *Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:*

Men who never heard the gospel can see God in his works if they open their eyes. There is written upon the face of nature enough to condemn men if they do not turn to God. There is a gospel of the sea, and of the heavens, of the stars, and of the sun; and if men will not read it, they are guilty, for they are willfully ignorant of what they might know, and ought to know.

[Romans 1:21-22](#). *Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,*

The way to be a fool is to pretend to be wise. A short cut to wisdom is the confession of folly. The near way to folly is the profession of wisdom.

[Romans 1:23-24](#). *And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lust of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves:*

It is very easy to make a beast of yourself when you have made a beast to be your god, as the Egyptians did, when they worshipped the god that they had made in the form of an ox, or a crocodile, or a cat.

[Romans 1:25](#). *Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.*

There are many preachers who have “changed the truth of God into a lie”; and by their exaltation of man, they have “worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever.” God save all of us from such idolatry as that! Amen.

[ROMANS CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 2

Verses 25-29

[Romans 2:25](#). *For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision.*

Paul is dealing with the Jew, who was apt to think that he must have a preference beyond the Gentiles on account of his circumcision.

[Romans 2:26-29](#). *Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision? And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature if it fulfill the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law? For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.*

If this principle were fully recognized everywhere, it would certainly put an end to all that notion of sacramentarianism which some men hold. It is

not the outward, not the external, not the form and ceremony; it is the inward work of the spirit; it is holiness and change of heart. Let none of us ever fall into the gross error of those who imagine that there is attached to certain ceremonies a certain degree of grace. It is not so. He is not a Christian which is one outwardly, he is a Christian who is one inwardly.

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 110; [Romans 2:25-29](#); Romans 3.

ROMANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

Verses 1-31

[Romans 3:1-2](#). *What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.*

It was a great thing to be a Jew in those old times. When all the rest of the world was in the dark, the Jews had the light: “Unto them were committed the oracles of God.”

[Romans 3:3](#). *For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?*

That is to say, if they did not believe God, did that make him untrue?

[Romans 3:4](#). *God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.*

Whatever men did under the old law, however faithless they might be. God was true and faithful still.

[Romans 3:5-6](#). *But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man) God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?*

Whenever anybody insinuates that God is not just, Paul protests against such an idea. “No,” says he, “he must of necessity be just because he is God; for how could he judge the world if he were unrighteous?”

[Romans 3:7-8](#). *For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory, why yet am I also judged as a sinner? And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just.*

No Christian man ever did say, "Let us do evil that good may come." If anybody else ever does say it, his condemnation is most just. Albeit that God, in infinite wisdom, does cause even the sin of man to illustrate the greatness of his grace, yet that by no means excuses his sin, but leaves it an abominable evil, most hateful in the sight of the thrice-holy Jehovah.

[Romans 3:9](#). *What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin;*

Read the earlier chapters of this Epistle, chapters that are enough to make the heart sick to read them, and to make the head ache with the memory of them, and when you have read them, you will say that Paul has proved that both Jews and Gentiles are under sin.

[Romans 3:10](#). *As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:*

Note in the passage we are going to read how Paul rings the changes upon those two words, "All" and "none." He begins with the word "none."

[Romans 3:11-12](#). *There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.*

Yet men come and talk to us about the righteous heathen whose virtues they extol, the imaginary good people, for there are none such actually in existence. Here the Lord himself is speaking, and the Spirit of God is quoting from passages of the Old Testament, which he puts together to describe the character of humanity. How sweeping are all the terms! "There is none righteous, no, not one. There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one."

[Romans 3:13-16](#). *Their throat is an open sepulcher, with their tongues they have used deceit, the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways:*

How true that last verse is of many today! Their sins are destroying them, the lusts of the flesh destroy the body, drunkenness and such like sin are destructive habits, and they make those who practice them to be miserable: "Destruction and misery are in their ways." What miserable persons, what miserable families, what miserable countries, are made by indulgence in sin! There is no true happiness without holiness.

[Romans 3:17](#). *And the way of peace have they not known:*

Quietness, happiness, and rest are not known by sinful men. They are not in the way of finding peace.

[Romans 3:18](#). *There is no fear of God before their eyes,*

How true is this terrible accusation, especially of this present age! Men seem to be casting off all fear of God. Anyone who reads human history will, I think, detect that the present condition of society in our country, religiously, is wonderfully like the condition of France before the great Revolution, which brought so much bloodshed with it. Everything seems loosening, and broadening, and tending downwards; and especially “there is no fear of God before their eyes.”

[Romans 3:19](#). *Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all, the world may become guilty before God.*

Every man by nature tries to open his mouth, and say the best he can for himself, but it is the object of God’s law to shut every man’s mouth; and when we come to that condition, then there is hope for us. When we have nothing to say for ourselves, then the Lord Jesus will open his mouth for the dumb, and plead for the guilty in the courts of God.

[Romans 3:20](#). *Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin,*

All the law can do is to show us our sin. The law is a mirror, and looking in it you can see your spots; but you cannot wash in a looking-glass. If you want to be cleansed from your stains, you must go somewhere else. The object of the law of God is not to cleanse us, but to show us how much cleansing we need; to reveal our disease, not to find a remedy for it.

[Romans 3:21-22](#). *But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe:*

You see, we cannot become righteous by the law. Paul says that there is no one who has ever obtained righteousness in that way. We, on the contrary, have so sinned that we never can become righteous through the law; but there is a new way of righteousness, the way of the righteousness of God; and God’s righteousness is much better than the best human righteousness can ever be conceived to be. There is a righteousness which comes to us by faith in Jesus Christ, not by doing, but by believing, a righteousness which is freely bestowed upon all them that believe.

[Romans 3:22-24](#). *For there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:*

I have heard persons ask, “Why do you say, ‘free grace’? If it is grace, it must be free.” Well, we say “free grace”, because the Scripture says, “freely by his grace”; and as the Lord never uses superfluous words, we conceive that we are not guilty of tautology when we say “free grace,”

[Romans 3:25-26](#). *Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God, to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.*

Not of him who works for salvation, but of him who believes; not of him who merits, but of him who trusts. This is God’s way of righteousness, and we are sent to declare it. Oh, that the Spirit of God may be given to make the declaration acceptable to your hearts!

[Romans 3:27](#). *Where is boasting then? It is excluded.*

Shut out, done with.

[Romans 3:27](#). *By what law? of works?*

No, no, the law of works would have allowed us to boast. We should have merited whatever we earned by our own excellence, and we might have gloried in it.

[Romans 3:27-31](#). *Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yea, of the Gentiles also: seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.*

This exposition consisted of readings from Romans 3, and [Romans 4:16-25](#).

Verses 9-27

[Romans 3:9](#). *What then? are we better than they?*

The first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans contains so horrible an account of the manners of the Gentiles, the heathen of Paul’s day, that it is one of the most painful chapters in Scripture to read. Not long ago, one of our missionaries, out in China, was attacked concerning the Bible on this very ground. One of the learned men said to him, “This Bible of yours

cannot be as ancient as you say that it is, for it is quite clear that the next chapter of the Epistle to the Nomads must have been written by somebody who had been in China, and who had seen the habits and ways of the people here,” — so accurate is the Holy Spirit, who knew right well what the ways and manners and secret vices of the heathen were, and still are. But the Jews said, “Ah, but this is a description of the Gentiles.” So Paul replies, “What then? are we better than they?”

[Romans 3:9-10](#). *No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentile, that they are all under sin; as it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:*

Then he selects passages out of different parts of Scripture to show what man is by nature.

[Romans 3:11-18](#). *There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulcher, with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways: and the way of peace have they not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes.*

These are all quotations from Old Testament Scriptures, from their own psalmists and prophets, from whom Paul quotes to the Jews so that they might see what their own character was by nature.

[Romans 3:19](#). *Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.*

The law was given to the Jews, and the descriptions which it gives must be descriptions of the Jews “Therefore,” says Paul, “as Gentile mouths have been already stopped by the descriptions of their vices, you also, the favored people of God, have your mouths stopped by the descriptions of yourselves taken from your own prophets.”

[Romans 3:20](#). *Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh — Whether Jew or Gentile, —*

[Romans 3:20-21](#). *Be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now —*

Since man is lost, since man is guilty, —

[Romans 3:21-27](#). *The righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets: even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past through the forbearance of God, to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting then?*

If salvation is given to the guilty, and if all are guilty, — if no one can claim exemption, and yet salvation is freely given, — what then? Why, salvation must be purely by the grace of God; so let grace have all the honour. “Where is boasting then?”

[Romans 3:27](#). *It is excluded. By what law of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.*

The law of works sometimes aids boasting, for a man rejoices and glories in what he has done; yet the law of works ought to stop our boasting because we are guilty in God’s sight. The law of faith does stop our mouth, because we are under obligation to God, and do not dare to boast, seeing that we have nothing of good but what we have received from God.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Romans 3:9-27](#); [Romans 5:6-11](#); [Romans 8:1-32](#).

Verses 9-31

[Romans 3:9-18](#). *What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulcher: with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood.’ Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way ,of peace have they not known .’ There is no fear of God before their eyes.*

This is a description of man given ‘by prophets in the olden times. “Now,” says Paul, “we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law.” So that this is a description of the Jews, a

description of the people who had the light, the best people that then were upon the face of the earth, and if these be the good people, where are the Gentiles, the bad ones, without the light?

[Romans 3:19-22](#). *Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets: Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:*

There is no righteousness of works on the face of the earth. The law 'itself describes men as being sinful from their throat to their feet. Almost every member of the body is mentioned and described as being foul with sin. But, says Paul, there is another righteousness on the face of the earth, and that is the righteousness of God's grace, which comes through believing in Christ.

[Romans 3:23-31](#). *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God: To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. Is he the God of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.*

Verses 19-31

[Romans 3:19-20](#). *Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.*

The law can convict and condemn, but it can never justify the guilty. Its special work is to prove that they are not justified in sinning, and to stop their mouths from uttering any excuse for their sin.

[Romans 3:21-24](#). *But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:*

Now there comes in a new principle, — the principle of grace, which accomplishes what the law never could accomplish; that is, the free justification of all the guilty ones who believe in Jesus. And this justification is a righteous one, seeing that it is based upon “the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:” —

[Romans 3:25-27](#). *Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.*

Faith’s empty hand receives the free gift of grace, and that very fact excludes all boasting.

[Romans 3:28-31](#). *Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.*

This exposition consisted of readings from [Romans 3:19-31](#); and [Romans 4:1-21](#).

[ROMANS CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 4

Verses 1-20

[Romans 4:1-3](#). *What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.*

He stands as the great Father of believers, and this is the charter given to him, and given to all believers in him. “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness.”

[Romans 4:4](#). *Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.*

That is to say, to him who hopes to be saved by his works, to whom salvation is of merit. He has worked for the reward. He has earned it. Do not talk about grace in that case.

[Romans 4:5](#). *But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.*

This is the man who does not go upon the line of works — who does not rest in his works at all, or bring them as a price to God. “His faith is counted for righteousness.” It is a very wonderful thing that faith should stand in the stead of righteousness, and should make righteous all those that believe in God by Jesus Christ.

[Romans 4:6-8](#). *Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works. Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.*

Instead of being a worker, this man had been an offender — a sinner. God did not impute it to him. He was a believer, and God imputed righteousness to him on account of his faith, and did not impute sin to him. Then comes a very important inquiry.

[Romans 4:9](#). *Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also?*

Is circumcision so necessary that a man is justified by faith after he is circumcised, and could not be so justified if he were an uncircumcised man?

[Romans 4:9-10](#). *For we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness.*

How was it then reckoned? When he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Look back to the history. See in what condition Abraham was when faith was reckoned to him for righteousness. Was it when he was in circumcision or in uncircumcision? The answer is: —

[Romans 4:10-11](#). *Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised:*

But the sign is to follow the thing signified. He is, first of all, justified by his faith, and then afterwards he receives the token of the covenant.

[Romans 4:11](#). *That he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised: that righteousness might be imputed unto them also:*

It is a very remarkable fact. A great many readers of the Book of Genesis would never have noticed it if the Holy Ghost had not called attention to the fact that father Abraham was justified by his faith before he was circumcised; and this is the reason of it — that he might be the father of all believers, whether they be circumcised or uncircumcised. “That righteousness might be imputed to them also.”

[Romans 4:12-13](#). *And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised. For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.*

For the law was not even given when that covenant promise was made. The law was 400 years afterwards. The covenant of grace was the oldest covenant of all, and it shall stand fast, whatever shall happen.

[Romans 4:14](#). *For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect:*

If you are upon that tack of salvation by the law, then what have you to do with faith? And what have you to do with promise, and what have ye to do with Christ? You are on a different line altogether.

[Romans 4:15](#). *Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression.*

That is plain enough. You cannot break a law if there is not any; and thus, through our sinfulness, the law becomes a cause of sin, and never does it become the cause of justification.

[Romans 4:16](#). *Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace:*

Salvation is by faith alone, that it may be seen to be of the free favor of God, that we may not look to merit or look to human strength, but may look away to the abounding mercy of God in Christ Jesus.

[Romans 4:16-17](#). *To the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all.*

What a God we trust in — a God who quickeneth the dead. We have no faith unless we believe in such a God as this. We shall need such a God in order to bring us safely to his right hand at last.

[Romans 4:18-20](#). *Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb; He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God:*

Men seem to think that only workers can give glory to God; but there is more glory given to God by one drachma of faith than by a ton of works. After all, works usually generate conceit and pride in us. But faith lays itself low before its God, and gives to him all the glory. God is never more glorified than he is by the believing confidence of his people when difficulties seem to come in the way. He was “strong in faith, giving glory to God.”

Verses 1-21

[Romans 4:1-8](#). *What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.*

There is a special blessedness, therefore, which comes to those who, by faith, are under the dispensation of grace. It came to Abraham, and it came to David; yet both Abraham and David were circumcised men belonging to a special race. So the question naturally arises, —

[Romans 4:9-12](#). *Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. How was it then reckoned? when he was in*

circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also: and the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised.

The historical argument is a very forcible one. The blessing was not given to Abraham as a circumcised man, but as a believing man; and hence it comes also to all of us who believe. What a mercy it is that there is, in this sense, no distinction between Jew and Gentile now! I hate that plan of reading the Scriptures in which we are told, when we lay hold of a gracious promise, "Oh, that is for the Jews." "Then I also am a Jew, for it is given to me." Every promise of God's Word belongeth to all those who have the faith to grasp it. We who have faith, are all in the covenant, and are thus the children of faithful Abraham; so be not afraid, ye who are the true seed, to take every blessing that belongs to your father Abraham and to all the seed.

[Romans 4:13-14](#). *For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect:*

But that would also make void circumcision and the whole of the ancient covenant, seeing that the blessing was given to a man whom God had chosen before his circumcision, and before the ceremonial law had been promulgated.

[Romans 4:15-17](#). *Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression. Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all, (as it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,)*

Not a father of one select race of people only, but a father of all who, in any land, and speaking any language, are believers in the glorious Jehovah, who is the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob.

[Romans 4:17](#). *Before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.*

Abraham was a believer in the God of resurrection, expecting to see Isaac raised up from the dead if he did actually offer him as a sacrifice to God. He was a believer in things that were not yet apparent to him, looking forward to them, and expecting to see them in due time; believing in them because he believed in God, who “calleth those things which be not as though they were.”

[Romans 4:18-21](#). *Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.*

This exposition consisted of readings from [Romans 3:19-31](#); and [Romans 4:1-21](#).

Verses 1-25

[Romans 4:1](#). *What shall we say then that Abraham our father as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?*

What blessings did really come to Abraham, the father of the faithful? What is the nature of that covenant of grace which God made with him?

[Romans 4:2](#). *For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God.*

Certainly, before God, Abraham neither gloried nor yet was justified by his works.

[Romans 4:3](#). *For what saith the scripture?*

That is the question for us always to ask, “What saith the Scripture?”

[Romans 4:3](#). *Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.*

There is no doubt about that point, for in [Genesis 15:6](#) we read, “He believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness.”

[Romans 4:4](#). *Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.*

He gets what he earns, what he deserves to have, what he receives is “not reckoned of grace, but of debt.”

[Romans 4:5-8](#). *But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth*

righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.

So then it seems that the blessings of salvation come to men through faith, and not through their own efforts,-not as the reward of merit, but as the simple gift of God's grace.

[Romans 4:9](#). *Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also?*

Is this blessing entailed upon the natural seed of Abraham alone, or is it for others besides the Jews?

[Romans 4:9-10](#). *For we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.*

If you turn again to [Genesis 15:6](#), and then to 17:10, you will find that Abraham was justified by faith before the rite of circumcision was instituted. The blessing came to him "not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision."

[Romans 4:11-12](#). *And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also: and the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised.*

The vital question is not, "How were we born?": or "What rites and ceremonies have been practiced upon us?" but, "Do we believe in God? Have we true faith in God's Word? Are we trusting our souls to the keeping of God's Son?"

[Romans 4:13](#). *For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.*

The law was promulgated on mount Sinai four hundred years after the covenant of grace was made with Abraham the father of believers, and so made with all believers, for they are his true seed, and God has entered into a covenant of grace and salvation with them.

[Romans 4:14-15](#). *For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect: because the law worketh wrath:*

for where no law is, there is no transgression.

So that the law is not for justification, but for condemnation. It is the law that reveals sin, and that shows sin to be sin; so men can never become right with God by the law.

[Romans 4:16](#). *Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed;*

That is, to all believers, who are the true seed of Abraham. He is the father of the faithful, and if thou art one of the faithful, he is thy father; and the covenant which God made with Abraham and his seed was made with thee, and on thy account, if thou art indeed a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.

[Romans 4:16-22](#). *Not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all, (as it is written. I have made thee a father of many nations, before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness..*

O soul, if thou art like one who is dead, if thou art devoid of all strength, and grace, and savor, if thou canst but believe in God who can quicken the dead, if thou wilt but trust thy soul in the hands of him who is able even to raise dry bones out of their graves, and make them live, thy faith shall be imputed unto thee for righteousness! Thy faith is that which shall justify thee in the sight of God, and thou shalt be “accepted in the Beloved.” Oh, what marvels faith works! This is the root-grace, all manner of good things spring from faith, but there must be faith as the root if there are to be other graces as the fruit. Do thy God the honour to believe him,-to believe that he cannot lie,-to believe that he has never promised what he is not able to perform. If thou wilt do that, it is clear that thou art one of Abraham's seed, and the covenant made with Abraham was made with thee also.

[Romans 4:23-25](#). *Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe*

on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

See the great object of saving faith,-Christ, once dead, has been raised from the dead, and if thou wouldst be saved, thou must rely upon the crucified and risen Saviour. If thou thus believest that Jesus the crucified is the Christ of God, the anointed Messiah and Redeemer, thou provest that thou art born of God; and if thou trustest thyself to the risen and glorified Christ, thou hast risen in him, and thou shalt rise to be with him for ever and ever.

This exposition consisted of readings from Romans 4, and [Romans 5:1-2](#).

Verses 16-25

[Romans 4:16](#). *Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed, not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all,*

Abraham is the father of all who believe, whether they be circumcised or not; and the promises made to him belong to them also.

[Romans 4:17-18](#). *(As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be.*

He was an old man, with a very aged wife, yet the Lord promised that he should be “the father of many nations.” He firmly believed that which was spoken, and in due time it came to pass.

[Romans 4:19-21](#). *And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah’s womb: he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.*

That is the kind of faith we want, the faith that does not enquire how God can perform his promise, but believes that he will do it.

[Romans 4:22-23](#). *And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him*

The imputation would be enough for Abraham without any writing; but as it is written, it is for our instruction, and for our comfort.

[Romans 4:24-25](#). *But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.*

May the Lord bless to us our meditation upon this precious portion of his Word!

This exposition consisted of readings from Romans 3, and [Romans 4:16-25](#).

[ROMANS CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 5

Verse 1-2

[Romans 5:1](#). *Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:*

My friend, are these words true concerning you? Can you put your finger on this verse, and say, “this is true of me, ‘Therefore being justified by faith, we have-I have-peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ’”? We who have believed in Jesus enjoy that peace, a deep, profound calm is upon our spirit whenever we think of God. We are not afraid of him; we are not afraid to meet him even on his judgment-seat: “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God.” Have you peace with God? Are you sure that you have it? If not, mayhap you are not justified by faith, for that is the root of it: “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

[Romans 5:2](#). *By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*

This is a golden staircase, justification brings peace, and peace brings access into this grace wherein we are established; and then comes the joy of hope, and that hope fixes its eye on nothing less than the glory of God. Grace is the stepping-stone to glory; and they who are justified by faith shall in due time be glorified by love.

This exposition consisted of readings from Romans 4, and [Romans 5:1-2](#).

Verses 1-5

[Romans 5:1](#). *Therefore-*

The apostle Paul had the logical faculty largely developed, so his writings are full of “therefores.” And the Christian religion, as a whole, stands logically connected,—doctrine with doctrine, truth with truth. Error is inconsistent with itself, but truth is consistent, logical, and unerring. “Therefore” —

[Romans 5:1](#). *Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:*

Are you enjoying that peace, dear friend, at this moment? if you are, indeed, justified by faith, you are at peace with God. Therefore, know it, and feel no disquietude. Draw near to God as a dear child might to a loving father. “We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:—

[Romans 5:2](#). *By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*

When a man is at peace with God, then he has the desire to draw near to him. When he is justified, he has the right to draw near; so that, being justified, and having peace, we have access by faith; and this is not a transient privilege, but the grace into which we have access is a grace in which we stand. We abide in it; the Lord has given us, through our justification, a permanent standing near to himself. “We have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand; and this gives us joy,—the joy of sweet hope concerning the bright future that lies before us: “We rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”

[Romans 5:3](#). *And not only so,—*

Whenever the apostle begins to talk of the Lord’s bounties to his people, he abounds in “also’s” and in “not only so’s? As if he had not said enough already, when he had reminded us of the joy of hope in God’s glory, he says, “And not only so.” We have something in possession as well as something to hope for; we have a present glory as well as glory laid up in store: “And not only so,”—

[Romans 5:3-5](#). *But we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.*

Beloved, it is a mark of great grace to be able to acquiesce in tribulation, and to accept it with patient resignation at the Lord’s hands; but it is a sign of a still higher state of grace when we glory in tribulation,—when we welcome it and say, “Now, the Lord is about to elevate me to the upper

class in his school,—to teach me some deeper truths than I have hitherto learned, to give me a closer acquaintance with some mystery of his kingdom than I have previously had,—to work in my heart some new grace which has never been there before. “We glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience.” You cannot learn to swim on dry land, and you cannot learn to be patient without having something to endure. “Tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience.” There are some who think that they will get; experience through tribulation. So they do, in a certain sense; but not experience of the right kind. There is a middle term—patience,—which keeps its right place: “Tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience.” I know some people, who have had a thousand troubles, but they have no more experience now than they had when they began; I mean, they are just as foolish,—just as untaught in the things of God,—just as ready as before to blunder into a fresh trouble, because they have lacked that middle term. Then, further Paul says, “and experience, hope.” Our experience of the Lord’s goodness in the past leads us on to hope for still greater things in the future and, thus, experience worketh hope. I have seen some persons, who were called experienced Christians, in whom it seemed to me that experience had worked despair; for their faces were always very long and very sad, and their speech was as dolorous as it well could be. But here I find that true Christian experience worketh hope,—a hope that maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.”

Verses 1-9

[Romans 5:1](#). *Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:*

We have it tonight. We enjoy it. We delight in it, “through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

[Romans 5:2](#). *By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*

Not only have we peace, but we get into the favor of God, and we stand in it. This is the grace or favor which comes of being justified. We feel a freedom now to come into our Father’s presence, because he has forgiven us for Christ’s sake. We feel at home with him now though once we were prodigal sons, and had wandered far away, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. We have something yet in reserve — present peace, but future

perfection. We have present rest, but there still remaineth a rest for the people of God. We rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

[Romans 5:3-5](#). *And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.*

So that even what might seem to be the disadvantages of this present life are made to work into advantages; and what at one time might threaten our prosperity, really conduces to it. Patience, which we never could have if we never had a trouble, is given to us, and experience, which we never could have if we did not patiently endure the trouble, we obtain. We get pearls out of these deep seas. We get treasures out of these blazing furnaces which seem to smelt our blessings, that they may come to us rich and pure. And, above all, there rises a glorious hope, never to be drowned — never to be made ashamed — because we feel the love of God shed abroad in our hearts like a sweet perfume, making every part of our nature fragrant, because the Holy Ghost is there.

[Romans 5:6](#). *For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.*

That was our character. There was no good point about us. We were ungodly and we had no strength to mend ourselves or to be other than ungodly. The strength for reformation had all gone. The strength for regeneration we never had. We were without strength, and then Christ died for us — died for the ungodly.

[Romans 5:7](#). *For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man*

A benevolent, loving-spirited man.

[Romans 5:7-8](#). *Some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*

And that is the glory of his love. While we were rebels against his government, he redeemed us. While we were far off from him by wicked works he sent his Son to die and bring us near. Free grace, indeed, was this — not caused by anything in us, but springing freely from the great heart of God.

[Romans 5:9](#). *Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.*

You see the force of the argument. If he loved us when we were still dead in sin, much more will he keep us and preserve us now that he hath justified us. Were his enemies redeemed? Shall not his friends be kept? Did he love those who were still far off? Will he not love those who are brought near, and love us even to the end?

Verses 1-10

[Romans 5:1-3](#). *Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also:*

Faith has such wondrous power that it makes us rejoice even in trial; it helps Christians to be glad even in the midst of sorrow.

[Romans 5:3](#). *Knowing that tribulation worketh patience; —*

The more trial you have the more spiritual education you receive. You cannot learn the virtue of patience without tribulation, any more than a man can learn to be a sailor if he stops on shore: “Tribulation worketh patience;”

[Romans 5:4](#). *And patience, experience;*

If you bear the trial patiently, it leaves the mark of its graving tool upon your spirit, and you thus become fashioned into an experienced Christian.

[Romans 5:4](#). *And experience, hope:*

What God has once done, he may do again; and as he has shown us so much favor we may reasonably hope that he will show us more, and that he who has given us grace will give us glory.

[Romans 5:5](#). *And hope maketh not ashamed; —*

Our hope brings us courage, no longer are we trembling and diffident, but we feel like children do towards a loving father, we are happily, restfully at home with our God. “Hope maketh not ashamed;” —

[Romans 5:5](#). *Because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.*

When Mary, the sister of Lazarus, anointed the feet of Jesus with the very costly ointment of spikenard, “the house was filled with the odour” of it, and in a similar fashion the love of God perfumes every part of our nature.

[Romans 5:6](#). *For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.”*

What a wonderful statement! “Christ died for the ungodly.” Yet it was no slip of the pen, for the apostle takes up his own expression, and preaches the following little sermon upon it: —

[Romans 5:7](#). *For scarcely for a righteous man will one die:*

If a man is known to be sternly just, like Aristides, nobody would care enough for him to die for him.

[Romans 5:7](#). *Yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.*

For a benevolent man, a true philanthropist, a lover of his race, there are some who might say that they would die for him. Yet the apostle only says, “Peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.” It is not very likely, but it is just possible.

[Romans 5:8](#). *But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*

Certainly we were not “good” men, we were not even “just” men, but we are included in this black description “sinners”; and “while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” He died for us as sinners, he did not come to save saints, but to save sinners; and it was for sinners that he died.

[Romans 5:9](#). *Much more than, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.*

This is a fine piece of argument, and strictly logical. If, when we were sinners, Christ died for us, will he let us be condemned now that he has washed us in his precious blood? Is it possible that, after dying for us, he will let us fall from grace, and perish after all? That will never be. Notice the same kind of argument again: —

[Romans 5:10](#). *For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.*

There is a threefold argument here. If Christ died for us when we were his enemies, will he not save us now that we are his friends? If he died to reconcile us to God, will he not completely save us now that this great work has been accomplished? And as we were reconciled to God by Christ’s death, shall we not much more be saved by his life? There are three arguments, and each one is sound and conclusive. The believer in Jesus must be eternally saved. If Christ died for sinners, what will he not do for believers, who are no longer enemies, but are reconciled unto God by the death of his Son?

This exposition consisted of readings from [Romans 5:1-10](#); and 2 Corinthians 4; and 2 Corinthians 5.

Verses 1-11

[Romans 5:1](#). *Therefore being justified by faith, —*

But why “therefore”? Because of the verge preceding it: “Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.” Christ died to atone for our sins, Christ rose again to secure our justification, “Therefore being justified by faith,” —

[Romans 5:1](#). *We have peace with God through our lord Jesus Christ;*

We have peace, we know that we have, we enjoy it, it is not a thing of the future, we have peace, a deep calm like that which came to the disciples when Christ hushed the winds and waves to sleep. “We have peace with God,” his peace has entered into us, we possess it now; but it is all “through our Lord Jesus Christ.” It is all war apart from him, but all peace through him. We poor sinners, being justified by faith, have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

[Romans 5:2](#). *By whom also we have access by faith —*

That is to say, we come near to God; we have the entry of the King’s palace; “we have access by faith” —

[Romans 5:2](#). *Into this grace wherein we stand,*

With firm foot and confident heart, we stand in God’s presence. Happy people!

[Romans 5:2](#). *And rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*

What a window hope is! It looks toward heaven; we have only to look out that way, and then we can “rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”

[Romans 5:3](#). *And not only so, but we glory —*

We hope for glory, — “the glory of God,” and we already “glory.” But in what do we glory? “We glory” —

[Romans 5:3](#). *In tribulations also: —*

That is the blackest thing a Christian has, — his tribulations; so, if we can glory in them, surely we can glory in anything. “We glory in tribulations also:” —

[Romans 5:3](#). *Knowing that tribulation worketh patience;*

A man cannot prove that he has patience if he has never been tried. Christian patience is not a weed, it is a cultivated plant; we only get patience through our trials.

[Romans 5:4](#). *And patience, experience; and experience, hope:*

You cannot make an experienced Christian without trouble. You cannot make an old sailor on shore, nor make a good soldier without fighting. Here is that window of hope again, standing at the back of our experience, we look out of the window, and what God has done for us is a token of what God will do for us.

[Romans 5:5](#). *And hope maketh not ashamed;*

Peace gives us courage, hope takes the blush out of the cheek when we confess Christ, for we remember the glory that is to be revealed in him and in us, so how can shame come in?

[Romans 5:5](#). *Because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.*

God's love is like sweet perfume in an alabaster box; the Holy Spirit breaks that box, pours out the love of God into our souls, and the perfume fills our entire nature.

[Romans 5:6](#). *For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly."*

When we had no power to do anything that was good, when we were strengthless and hopeless, then Christ died for us. This is a wonderful gospel expression, which ought to bring comfort to those here who have no pretence of godliness, "Christ died for the ungodly."

[Romans 5:7](#). *For scarcely for a righteous man will one die:*

However upright and just a man may be, nobody thinks of dying for him.

[Romans 5:7](#). *Yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.*

That is to say, for a generous, kind, noble-hearted man, some might dare to die.

[Romans 5:8](#). *But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*

We were neither righteous nor yet good, yet Christ died for us. "Oh!" said a little boy once to his mother, "I do not think so much of Christ dying for men, I think I would be willing to die if I could save a hundred men by dying." But his mother said, "Suppose it was a hundred mosquitoes, — would you die for them?" "Oh, no!" he said, "I would let the whole lot of them die." Well, we were much less, in comparison with Christ than mosquitoes are in relation to men, yet he died for us, good-for-nothing creatures that we are. Well does one say, "God shows part of his love to us

in many different ways, but he shows the whole of his love in giving Christ to die for us.” Here you see his heart laid bare, the very heart of God laid open for the inspection of every believing soul. To die for saints would be great love; but to die for sinners, while they are yet sinners, and regarding them as sinners, — this is love with emphasis, the very highest commendation that even divine love can have.

[Romans 5:9](#). *Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.*

See; it is a less thing for God to preserve us when we are justified than it is for him to justify us while we are yet sinners. The final perseverance of the saints may well be argued from their conversion, their entrance into glory is guaranteed by the ransom price that Christ has paid for their redemption. He died to save sinners, so how is it possible that he should let saints perish? Oh, no; that can never be! “Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.”

[Romans 5:10](#). *For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.*

Notice that while we were his enemies, he blessed us, so now that we are reconciled to him, will he not still bless us? If he reconciled us to him by the death of his son, will he not save us by his life now that we are reconciled to him? Does he make us his friends, intending afterwards to destroy us? Perish such a thought. This verge is like a trident, it is a three-pronged argument for our eternal safety. I will read it again: “For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be raved by his life.”

[Romans 5:11](#). *And not only so, —*

Surely we have got high enough when we have reached an absolute certainty of our eternal salvation. Yet we are to go still higher: “And not only so,” —

[Romans 5:11](#). *But we also joy in God —*

Even now we joy in God, “although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olives shall fail, and the field shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls,” yet do “we joy in God” —

[Romans 5:11](#). *Through our Lord Jesus Christ, —*

Every blessing comes to us through him. How Paul delights to harp upon that string! He says continually, “through our Lord Jesus Christ,” — [Romans 5:11](#). *By whom we have now received the atonement.*

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, we are at one with God, we are reconciled to him by the death of his Son. All our sin is for ever put away we have received the atonement, and we rejoice in the God of our salvation Glory be to his holy name for ever and ever!

Verses 1-21

[Romans 5:1](#). *Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:*

These are matters of fact; not of fanatical delusion, but of logical conclusion, for Paul begins with a “therefore.” God’s people are justified on solid grounds, on reasonable grounds, on grounds that will bear the test even of the last great judgment day. “therefore, being “ — now, at the present time, this very moment, — “justified by faith, we have peace:” not only we hope to have it, and trust we shall have it, but we have it. “We have peace,” — not only peace of conscience, and peace with our fellow-men, but “we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.:’ Mark that; we have it. O dear people of God, do not be satisfied unless you can talk in this confident fashion: “therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

[Romans 5:2](#). *By whom also —*

What! is not that first verse all? Oh, no! there is more to follow. When you get a hold of one golden link of the blessed chain of grace, it pulls up another, and then another, and then another: “By whom also “ —

[Romans 5:2](#). *We have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand,*

We come into this grace by Jesus Christ, and to this heavenly standing, this justified condition, through Jesus Christ who is the door.

[Romans 5:2](#). *And rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*

Our joy is in the past and the present in some measure, but it is still more in the future: “We rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” We have three windows. — the one out of which we look back with gratitude upon the past, the one out of which we look with joy in the present, and the one out of which we look with expectation upon the future.

[Romans 5:3](#). *And not only so,-*

There is for every child of God grace upon grace; every line of the apostle’s writing tells of more blessing: “And not only so.” Is not that

enough? Justified, enjoying peace, having access into grace, rejoicing in hope of the glory of God; what can there be more? Why, there is something on the road as well as at the end of it: “And not only so,”-

[Romans 5:3](#). *But we glory in tribulations also: —*

We are not only acquiescent in the divine will; but, tutored by the Spirit of God, we come even to “glory in tribulations also: “ —

[Romans 5:3](#). *Knowing that tribulation worketh patience; —*

“Knowing.” Paul was no agnostic, he was a “knowing” man, and all God’s people ought to be the same. they are a very dogmatic people when they are what they ought to be; they have nothing to do with “ifs “, and “ands”, and “butt”, and “peradventures”; but they believe and are sure: “Knowing that tribulation worketh patience.” the natural tendency of tribulation is to work impatience, it produces peevishness in many; but where the Spirit of God is, there is a heavenly counteraction of natural tendencies, and “tribulation worketh patience;” —

[Romans 5:4](#). *And patience, experience; and experience, hope:*

Again I cannot help observing how we seem to go through one door just to pass through another. We get into a silver chamber that we may go into a golden one; and before we can take stock of all the gold, we are ushered into a gorgeous palace of pearls and rubies and diamonds of priceless value.

[Romans 5:5](#). *And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.*

If you have the Holy Ghost given unto you, then the love of God fills your nature like a sweet perfume. As when the woman broke the alabaster box, and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment, so, when the Spirit of God comes, and brings the broken alabaster of the Saviour’s sacrifice, and we feel the love of God poured out among us, what a delightful perfume there is! “thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee.” the way to make us love God is for the love of God to be shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost.

[Romans 5:6](#). *for when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.*

Are not these very wonderful words? “Christ died for the ungodly.” Pick out all those who are the naturally good people, and this text has nothing to do with them; but find out the ungodly, the sinful, the wicked, and here is a text exactly suitable for them: “Christ died for the ungodly.”

[Romans 5:7](#). *for scarcely for a righteous man will one die:*

He is very righteous, but he is very stern; nobody cares much about him. [Romans 5:7](#). *Yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.*

He is “a good man” — benevolent, kind, and tender.

[Romans 5:8](#). *But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*

While we were neither righteous nor good, “while we were yet sinners, Christ” did the most he ever could, or ever can do for us, he “died for us.” this is the best gift for the worst of men, and that best gift given to them when they are at their worst state: “While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

[Romans 5:9](#). *Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.*

“Much more.” Paul has been giving us “alsos” and “ands”; now he takes a bigger leap still, for he says, “Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.” If he saved us when we were sinners, he will certainly save us now that we are justified. If he called us when we were dead, he will not leave us now we are alive.

[Romans 5:10](#). *For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.*

You see, there are three points here. When we were enemies, he blessed us; much more, now that we are reconciled, will he do so. If, in the second place, when we were enemies he reconciled us, how much more, after he has reconciled us, will he save us! And, thirdly, if he did all this for us by the death of his Son, much more will he do for us by his life; reconciled by his death, we shall be saved by his life.

[Romans 5:11](#). *And not only so,-*

there is no end to the blessing, dear brethren and sisters. the apostle seems to be always going up, and up, and up. this Paul, calm and cool and logical as he is, makes the fire burn most wondrously: “And not only so,”

—

[Romans 5:11](#). *But we also joy in God —*

We are glad that he is God, glad that he is such a God as he is; we would not wish to have him altered. the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, — the God of the Old testament, and the God of the New testament, — we love him altogether just as he is, and “we joy in God —

[Romans 5:11-21](#). through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement. Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned .. (for until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. for if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

I have not expounded the latter part of the chapter, as time fades me, and I shall dwell upon it somewhat in the sermon.

This exposition consisted of readings from Jonah 3; [Jonah 4:1-2](#); and Romans 5.

Verses 6-11

5:6. For then we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

What a wonderful sentence that is! Not, "Christ died for the saints," not, "Christ died for righteous men;" but, "when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly."

[Romans 5:7-9](#). For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

What an argument this is for the final safety of believers! If Christ died for us when we were enemies, surely he will give us now that he has died for us and made us his friends, his reconciled subject”: “Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.”

[Romans 5:10](#). *For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.*

There is a threefold argument there. We were enemies, yet God blessed us even then, so will he not bless us even more now that we are reconciled to him? When we were enemies, he reconciled us unto himself. Having done that, will he not certainly save us? We were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; so much more shall we be saved by the life of the risen and glorified Jesus, which has almighty, irresistible power.

[Romans 5:11](#). *And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.*

This exposition consisted of readings from [Romans 3:9-27](#); [Romans 5:6-11](#); [Romans 8:1-32](#).

Verses 6-21

[Romans 5:6](#). *For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.*

This is one of the most surprising sentences on record. If it had not been inspired, there are many who would cavil at it. Indeed, many do cavil at it even now, for it is still currently believed that Christ must have died for the righteous. Yet thus is it written: “In due time Christ died for the ungodly.” And this is the commendation of that death, and of the love which suggested it:—

[Romans 5:7](#). *For scarcely for a righteous man will one die:*

For a merely just man, scarcely would anybody die.

[Romans 5:7](#). *Yet peradventure for a good man—*

For a benevolent man—

[Romans 5:7-8](#). *Some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us,*

It is under that aspect that Christ is to be regarded as dying for the ungodly, dying for sinners. Ungodly man, guilty sinner, is there not hope for you in this blessed truth? Does anyone say, “I shall be lost, for I am ungodly; I must necessarily perish, for I am a sinner”? Your logic is at fault,

dear friend. “Christ died for the ungodly;” “while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us;” therefore, the ungodly,—sinners—be saved because of his death, and all who trust him shall be saved.

[Romans 5:9](#). *Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.*

Did he die for us while we were sinners? Will he not, then, surely keep us now that we are Saved? Yes, that he will.

[Romans 5:10](#). *For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.*

What an invincible argument this is for the safety of all true believers in Jesus! Did he die for them, and reconcile them unto his Father by his death, when they were enemies? Then, will he not certainly save them now that they are reconciled, seeing that he ever lives to intercede for them? Will he not save them by his life? Assuredly, he will.

[Romans 5:11](#). *And not only so,—*

We cannot get to the end of these priceless boons. These precious pearls are too numerous even for the apostle to count, although he was a man who knew how to “reckon” up spiritual treasures: “And not only so,—

[Romans 5:11-14](#). *But we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement. Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned—*

Personally—

[Romans 5:14](#). *After the similitude of Adam’s transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.*

So that the sin of Adam took effect upon the human race before the law came, and even Upon those who had no personal transgression,—unconscious infants, I mean,—causing them to die.

[Romans 5:15-17](#). *But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For if by one man’s offence—*

By Adam's one sin,—the sin of one man,—

[Romans 5:17-18](#). *Death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.*

That is to say, upon the “all” who are in Christ, as the condemnation came upon the “all” who were in the first Adam. He who believeth not in Jesus has no part in “the free gift unto justification of life;” but he who believeth is a partaker of the glorious justification which comes by Christ.

[Romans 5:19-20](#). *For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound.”*

It was the practical result of the giving of the law that men became greater sinners than they were before, and it was the design of the law that they should see themselves to be greater sinners than before. The law is the looking-glass in which we see our spots, but it is not the basin in which we wash them away. The law has a provoking power, for such is the perversity of our nature that, no sooner do we hear the command, “You shall not do so-and-so,” than at once we want to do it. Our nature is very much like quicklime. Throw cold water upon it, and straightway it generateth heat; acting, as it were, against the nature of that which is cast upon it. So, the more God says to a man, “Thou shalt,” the more the man says, “I will not;” and the more God says to him, “Thou shalt not,” the more doth the man resolve that he will. “The law entered, that the offence might abound.” It reveals the depravity and disobedience of human nature, and lays us low before God as convicted criminals.

[Romans 5:20](#). *But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:*

Blessed be God for that! Sin may be a river, but grace is an ocean. Sin may be a mountain, but grace is like Noah's flood, which prevailed over the tops of the mountains fifteen cubits upward.

[Romans 5:21](#). *That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Do you know, dear friends, by personal experience, all about this of which we have been reading? I know that many of you do. Would God that all did,—that they understood, by a living faith, what it is to be justified, having first understood, by sorrowful experience, what a sense of

condemnation the guilty soul must feel. The Lord bring you all to himself, by Jesus Christ! Amen.

Verses 10-21

[Romans 5:10](#). *For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God, by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.*

Grand argument for the safety of all believers having a three-fold edge to it. If he reconciled his enemies, will he not save his friends? If he reconciled us, will he not save us? If he reconciled us by the death, will he not save us by the life of his Son?

[Romans 5:11](#). *And not only so,*

The blessings of the covenant of grace rise tier upon tier, mountain upon mountain, Alp on Alp. When you climb to what seems the utmost summit, there is a height yet beyond you. “And not only so” —

[Romans 5:11](#). *But we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.*

Then he begins to explain the great plan of our salvation.

[Romans 5:12](#). *Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:*

In that one man.

[Romans 5:13-14](#). *For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.*

Children died who had not actually sinned themselves, but died because of Adam’s sin.

[Romans 5:15-17](#). *But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For if by one man’s offence—*

By Adams’ sin.

[Romans 5:17-18](#). *Death reigned by one: much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. Therefore, as by the offence of one judgment cam upon*

all men to condemnation: even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.

All who are in Christ are justified by Christ, just as all who were in Adam were lost and condemned in Adam. The “alls” are not equal in extent — equal as far as the person goes in whom the “alls” were found. And this is our hope — that we, being in Christ are justified because of his righteousness.

[Romans 5:19-20](#). *For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Moreover the law entered,*

The law of Moses.

[Romans 5:20](#). *That the offence might abound, but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:*

It makes us see sin where we never saw it. It comes on purpose to drive us to despair of being saved by works. It bids us look to the flames that Moses saw, and shrink and tremble with despair.

[Romans 5:21](#). *That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.*

This exposition consisted of readings from [Psalms 116:1-6](#); [Romans 5:10-21](#).

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CHAPTER 6

Verses 1-19

Paul finishes the last chapter by saying, “That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.” “What shall we say, then?” What inference shall we draw from the super-abounding of grace over sin?

[Romans 6:1](#). *What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?*

“Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?” That were very horrible inference. It is one great instance of the shocking depravity of man that the inference has been drawn sometimes, I hope not often, for surely Satan himself might scarcely draw an inference of licentiousness from love. Still, some have drawn it.

[Romans 6:2](#). *God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?*

Now, he goes on by an argument to prove that those in whom the grace of God has wrought the wondrous change cannot possibly choose sin, nor live in it.

[Romans 6:3](#). *Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?*

That is the very hinge of our religion. His death, not into his example merely, nor primarily into his life, but “into his death.” In this we have believed — with a dying Saviour we are linked, and our baptism sets this forth. We “were baptized into his death.”

[Romans 6:4](#). *Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in the newness of life.*

The operations, therefore, of the Spirit of God forbid that a saved man should live in sin. He is dead; he is raised into newness of life: at the very entrance into the church, in the very act of baptism, he declares that he cannot live as he once did, for he is dead: he declares that he must live after another fashion, for has not he been raised again in the type and raised again in very deed from the dead?

[Romans 6:5-6](#). *For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.*

There has a death taken place in us, and though there be relics of corruption still alive, yet they are crucified: they will have to die, they must die they are nailed fast to the cross to die in union with the death of Christ.

[Romans 6:7](#). *For he that is dead is freed from sin.*

The man is dead. The law cannot ask more of a criminal than to yield his life. If, therefore, he should live again after death, he would not be one who could suffer for his past offences. They were committed in another life, and “he that is dead is freed from sin.”

[Romans 6:8-9](#) *Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.*

Or, death will have dominion over him no more: he will never come a second time under death, and neither shall his people. “For in that he died,

he died unto sin once.” There was an end of it in the sense of once for all, no second death for Christ.

[Romans 6:10-12](#). *For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.*

Peradventure, there were some who would say that in their spirits truth and righteousness were supreme, but that in their bodies sin had the mastery Aye, but that will not do. There must be left no lurking piece for sin within the complete system of our manhood: it must be hunted out and hunted down thoroughly, out of the body as well as out of the mind.

[Romans 6:13](#). *Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.*

We do not, I think, make enough of the passive part of our religion We are often for doing, and quite right, too, and the more active we can be the better; still, before the doing there must come a yielding, because we remember who it is that worketh in us, “both to will and to do of his own good pleasure,” and our activities after all are not so much our own as we deem, if they are right. They are the activities of the divine life within us, of the Spirit of God himself working in us to the glory of the Father. One great point, therefore, is to yield ourselves up, our members, to be weapons in God’s hands for the fighting of the spiritual war.

[Romans 6:14](#). *For sin shall not have domination over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.*

The reigning, ruling principle now, is not “You must, you shall,” for reward, or under fear of punishment, but God has loved you, and now you love him in return and what you do springs from no mercenary or self-serving motive. You are not under law, but under grace; yet in another sense you never were so much under law as you are now, for grace puts about you a blessedly sweet, delightful law, which has power over us as the word of command never had. “I will write my law in their hearts, in their inward parts will I write them.” Aye, that is the glory of the new life, the delight of him who hath passed from death unto life.

[Romans 6:15](#). *What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace?*

Oh! this old question keeps coming up. Somebody wants to sin. Well, if he wants to sin, why does not he leave this business alone and go and sin? What has he to do with these theological questions at all? But still, he wants, if he can, to make a coverlet for his wickedness; he wants to enjoy the sweets of the child of God, and yet live like an enemy of God, and so he pops in his head over and over again: “May we not sin because of this or that?” To which the apostle answers again, “God forbid.” Oh! may God always forbid it to you, and to me: may the question never be tolerated among us.

[Romans 6:15-16](#). *God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?*

If you are doing the deeds of sin, you are the servants of sin and only as you are doing the will of God can you claim to be the servant of God. “Hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.” That becomes the index of our condition. The man, then, that lives in sin and loves it, need not talk about the grace of God he is a stranger to it, for the mark of those that come under grace is this, that they serve God, and no longer serve sin.

[Romans 6:17-18](#). *But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.*

“Bondservants,” you have got in our new translation, for so it was, and the apostle seems to excuse himself for using such a word by saying: —

[Romans 6:19](#). *I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.*

As you submitted yourselves to sin most cheerfully and voluntarily, and yet were slaves under it, so now come, and be slaves under Christ with most blessed cheerfulness and delight: endeavor now to lose your very wills in his will, for no man’s slavery is so complete as his who even yields his will. Now, yield everything to Christ. You shall never be so free as when you do that, never so blessedly delivered from all bondage as when you absolutely

and completely yield yourselves up to the power and supremacy of your Lord.

Verses 1-23

[Romans 6:1](#) *What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?*

The fifth chapter ends up in this way, that “where sin abounded, etc... Jesus Christ our Lord.” Then he goes on to say, “What shall we say then?” What inference shall we draw from the fact that where sin abounded, grace did much more abound? Shall we be base enough to draw a wicked inference from a gracious statement? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? It is a horrible suggestion, and yet it is one which has come into the minds of many men, for some men are bad enough for anything; they will curdle the sweet milk of love into the sourest argument for sin. “Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid.” With all the vehemence of his nature, he saith: —

[Romans 6:2](#). *God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?*

The grace of God makes us dead to sin. This is the grace of God, which delivers us from the power of evil, and if this be so, how can we live any longer therein?

[Romans 6:3](#). *Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?*

If we are in Christ at all, we are partakers of his death; and as his was a death for sin and a death to sin, we are made partakers of it; we are really dead because Christ died, and we are in him. Therefore we are dead to the old life, to the old way of sin. We signify that by our baptism.

[Romans 6:4](#). *Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*

Our baptism, solemn as it was, was a great acted falsehood, a living pretense, unless we are dead to our former way of living, and have come to live unto God in a new life altogether, by virtue of the resurrection of Christ from the dead.

[Romans 6:5](#). *For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:*

If we have partaken of his death, we partake also of his rising power. We live because he lives, and we live as he lives, not after the old manner, but

in newness of life.

[Romans 6:6](#). *Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.*

We are to regard ourselves as persons that have been dead. We are ourselves, it is true; and yet in another sense we are not our own selves. We are not to look upon ourselves as though we owed any kind of service to the power which we obeyed before we knew the Lord. We are new people, we have got a new life, and have entered upon a new existence — the old man is crucified with him

[Romans 6:7-8](#). *For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him:*

There was no getting free from the power of sin, except by dying to it; but, being dead to it, we are free from it; and, now being dead that way, we have entered into a new life that we might live as Christ lives.

[Romans 6:9](#). *Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.*

So we, being raised from our former death, shall die no more; death hath no more dominion over us. That is to say, sin cannot reign in us again; we are dead to it, we are brought into a new life that can never end, even as our Lord Jesus Christ is. There is a parallel between us and Christ, even as there is a union between us.

[Romans 6:10](#). *For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.*

And so do we; we have died unto sin once, but now that we live, we live unto God.

[Romans 6:11-12](#). *Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.*

It is in the body that it tries to reign. These poor things, these mortal frames of ours, have so many passions, so many desires, so many weaknesses, all of which are apt to bring us under the dominion of sin, unless we watch with great care.

[Romans 6:13](#). *Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.*

“Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin” — neither eyes, nor ears, nor hands, nor feet, neither suffer any of these to become the tools of sin, “but yield yourselves unto God.” He is ready to use you, lay all the powers of your nature out as tools, for him to use. “Yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead.” He is not the God of the dead; he cannot use the dead, but he is the God of the living, and as you profess to have received a new life in Christ, yield up all the faculties of this new life unto the living God, “and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.”

[Romans 6:14](#). *For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.*

When you were under the law, sin did get dominion over you; that law which was ordained to life, worked towards death. The evil concupiscence of your nature revolted against the command, and led you astray. But now, beloved, it is of love and grace, and now sin cannot get in: stronger motives shall hold you to holiness than ever held you before, and the grace of God itself, like a wall of fire, shall guard you from the dominion of sin.

[Romans 6:15](#). *What then? shall we sin because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.*

That must not be. Again the evil spirit crops up, trying to turn the grace of God into licentiousness, and to make us feel free to sin because of God’s love — that must not be.

[Romans 6:16](#). *Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?*

It is a wonderful heart-searching text, is this: let us put ourselves under its power. Whatever you obey, that is your master: and if you obey the suggestions of sin, you are the slave of sin: and it is only as you are obedient to God that you are truly the servants of God. So that, after all, our outward, walk and conversation are the best test of our true condition. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord, nor can he have any reason to believe that he belongs to God.

[Romans 6:17](#). *But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.*

Or into which you were delivered. God has taken you, melted you down, and poured you into a new mold. God be thanked for flint; you are not what

you used to be. Although you are not what you hope to be, yet you have reason to bless God you are not what once you were—you have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine into which you were delivered.

[Romans 6:18](#). *Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.*

The fetters are struck off, the lusts of the flesh do not hold us any longer. We are the Lord's free men, and out of gratitude for this glorious freedom, we become the willing servants of the righteous God.

[Romans 6:19](#). *I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.*

It wants no explanation. In the days of our sin, we sinned with all our power. There was not one part of us but what became the willing servant of sin: and we went from iniquity into iniquity, and now the Cross has made us entirely new, and we have been melted down, poured out into a fresh mold. Now, let us yield every member of our body, soul, and spirit to righteousness, even unto holiness, till the whole of us, in the wholeness and consequently the holiness of our nature, shall be given unto God.

[Romans 6:20](#). *For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.*

You did not care about righteousness then. When you served sin you felt it was utterly indifferent to you what the claims of righteousness might be. Well, now that you have become the servant of righteousness, be free from sin, let sin have no more dominion over you now, than righteousness used to have when you were the slaves of sin. "What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?" What profit did they ever bring you? There was a temporary delight, like the blossom on the tree in spring, but what fruit find you? Did it ever come, to anything? Is there anything to look back upon with pleasure in a life of sin? Oh no, those things whereof we are now ashamed were fruitless to us, "for the end of those things is death."

[Romans 6:22-23](#). *But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

[ROMANS CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 7

Verses 1-25

[Romans 7:1-3](#). *Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress, but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.*

He merely states this as an illustration.

[Romans 7:4](#). *Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.*

While we were under the law, we could not come into the bonds of the new covenant, — the covenant of grace. But, through the death of Christ, we are dead to the law, and therefore we are set free from the principle and covenant of law, and we have come under the covenant of grace.

[Romans 7:5](#). *For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.*

Sin is the transgression of the law. Therefore, out of the law, by reason of our corruption, springs sin. And, in our past lives, we did indeed find sin to be very fruitful. It grew very fast in our members, and it brought forth much “fruit unto death.”

[Romans 7:6](#). *But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.*

No longer is the message to us, “This do, and thou shalt live.” No more are we slaves under bondage; but we have come into a new state, we are free, rejoicing in the glorious liberty of the children of God; and what we now do is done out of a spirit of love, and not of fear. We are not seeking after holiness in order to be saved by it, neither do we seek to escape from sin because we are under any fear of being cast into hell. We have another spirit altogether within us.

[Romans 7:7](#). *What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid.*

Nay, so far from being sin, the law is the great detective of sin, discovering it, and letting us know what sin really is.

[Romans 7:7-8](#). *Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence.*

Or, “covetousness.” The very fact that God said to us, “Do it not,” wrought upon our nature so that we wanted to do it, and that which God commanded, which was a matter of indifference to us while we were in ignorance of his will, became, by reason of the depravity of our hearts, a thing to be resisted just because he had enjoined it upon us. Ah, me! what wicked hearts are ours that fetch evil even out of good!

[Romans 7:8-9](#). *For without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.*

“I did not know how sinful I was until God’s commandment came to me.

Sin seemed to be dead within me, and I thought myself a righteous man; but when the law of God came home to my heart and conscience, and I understood that even a sinful thought would ruin me, that a hasty word had the essence of murder in it, and that the utmost uncleanness might lurk under the cover of what seemed a mere custom of my fellow-men, — when I found out all this, sin did indeed live, but I died so far as righteousness was concerned.”

[Romans 7:10-13](#). *And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid.*

“If I sinned the more when God’s commandment was revealed to me; and if, by the light of the law, sin was made more apparent to me, and became so exceeding sinful that it drove me to despair, and so to commit still worse sin; the fault was not in the law, but in sin, and in me, the sinner.”

[Romans 7:13-14](#). *But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful. For we know that the law is spiritual:*

The law of the Lord is a far higher thing than it seems to be in the esteem of many people. Talk not of it as a mere “decalogue.” It has far-reaching hands, and it affects the secret thoughts and purposes of men, and even their stray imaginations come under its supremacy. “The law is spiritual.”

[Romans 7:14](#). *But I am carnal, sold under sin.*

“I am carnal.” There is the source of all the mischief, — a disobedient and rebellious subject, not an irksome law. The law is good enough, it is absolutely perfect; “but,” says the apostle, “I am carnal,” — fleshly, — “sold under sin.”

[Romans 7:15](#). *For that which I do I allow not:*

The man himself does that which is evil, but his conscience revolts against it.

[Romans 7:15](#). *For what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.*

This is a strange contradiction, — a man who has grace enough to will to do good, and yet does it not. There are two men in the one man, — the new nature struggling against the old nature. This must be a renewed man who talks in this fashion, or else he could not say that he hated sin; yet there must be a part of him still imperfect, or else he would not do that which he hates.

[Romans 7:16](#). *If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good.*

“If I do that against which and my conscience rebel, so far, the better part of me owns the goodness of the law, though the baser part of me rebels against it.”

[Romans 7:17](#). *Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.*

The renewed man still stands out against sin. His heart is not wishful to sin, but that old nature within him will sin even to the end.

[Romans 7:18-19](#). *For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.*

Oh, how often have men, who have been struggling after holiness, had to use these words of the apostle! The more holy they become, the more they realize that there is still a something better beyond them, after which they struggle, but to which they cannot yet attain; so still they cry, “The

good that we would we do not: but the evil which we would not, that we do.”

[Romans 7:20](#). *Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.*

The true man — the newborn man — is struggling after that which is right. The real “I”, the immortal “ego”, is still pressing forward, like a ship beating up against wind and tide, and striving to reach the harbor where it shall find perfect rest. Oh, what struggles, what contentions, what rightings, there are within the men and women in whom the grace of God is working mightily! Those who have but little grace can take things easily, and swim with the current; but where grace is mighty, sin will fight for the mastery, though it must yield ultimately, for there can never be any true peace until it is subdued.

[Romans 7:21](#). *I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.*

Speaking for myself, I can say that, often, when I am most earnest in prayer, stray thoughts will come into my mind to draw me off from the holy work of supplication; and when I am most intently aiming at humility, then the shadow of pride falls upon me. Do not gracious men generally find it so? If their experience is like that of the apostle Paul, or like that of many another child of God whose biography one delights to read, it is so, and it will be so.

[Romans 7:22-24](#). *For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*

These are birth-pangs, the throes and anguish of a regenerated spirit. The Christian man is fighting his way to sure and certain victory; so, the more of this wretchedness that he feels, the better, if it be only caused by a consciousness that sin is still lurking within him, and that he longs to be rid of it.

[Romans 7:25](#). *I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.*

This exposition consisted of readings from Romans 7, and [Romans 8:1-4](#).

Verses 7-25

This is Paul's own account of his inward conflicts. He longed to conquer sin. He wanted to become a free man, and live always a godly and holy life, but he found that there was a battle within his nature.

[Romans 7:7](#). *What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.*

There are some who hope to overcome their evil propensities by the law. They think that if they can know and feel the authority of the law of God, that will have an awe over their minds, and they shall become holy. Now the law is in itself supremely holy. It cannot be improved. We could not add to it, or take from it without injuring it. It is a perfect law. But what is its effect upon the mind? When it comes into an unrenewed mind, instead of checking sin, it causes sin. The apostle says that he not known lust, except the law had said, "Thou shalt not covet." There is a something about us which rebels against law the moment we come to it. There are some things we should never think of doing if we were not prohibited from them, and then there becomes a tendency at once in this vile nature of ours to break the law.

[Romans 7:8](#). *But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead.*

If there had never been any law, there could not have been any sin, because sin is a breaking of law. The law is good. We are not speaking about that. The law is necessary, but, still such is our nature that the very existence of law argues and creates the existence of sin. And when the law comes, then sin comes immediately. "Without the law sin was dead."

[Romans 7:9](#). *For I was alive without the law once;*

I thought that I was everything that was good. I imagined that I was doing everything that was right. I felt no rebellion in my heart. I was alive.

[Romans 7:9](#). *But when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.*

I kicked at that commandment. My holiness was soon gone. The excellence which I thought I had in my character soon vanished for I found myself breaking the law.

[Romans 7:10-13](#). *And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But, sin, that it might appear sin, working death*

in me by that which is good: that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.

There was sin in his nature, but he did not know it. But when the commandment came, then that evil nature said, "I won't keep that commandment," and it took occasion at once to show itself by breaking that commandment. It was something like a medicine which many a wise physician has given to his patient. There is a deadly disease in the internals of the man, and he gives him a medicine that throws it out. You see it on the skin. You feel the pain of it. It would have been his death anyhow. It can only be his death now; but now it is a part of the process of the cure to bring the disease where it can be seen. And so the law comes into a man's heart, and because of the rebellion of his nature, he kicks against the law and sins. It does not make him sinful. It only shows that he was sinful, for a perfect law would not make a perfect man sin. It would lead and guide him in the way of holiness. But a perfect law coming into contact with an imperfect nature soon creates rebellion and sin. It is an illustration that is not good throughout, but still it is of some use. You have seen quicklime; and you throw water on it. The water is of a cooling nature. There is nothing in the water but that which would quench fire, and yet when it is thrown upon the lime the consequence is a burning heat. So is it with the law cast upon man's nature. It seems to create sin. Not that the law does it of itself, but, coming into contact with the vicious principles of our nature, sin becomes the product of it. It is the only product. You may preach up the law of God till everybody becomes worse than he was before. You may read the ten commandments till men learn what to do in order to provoke God. The law does not create holiness. It never can.

[Romans 7:14](#). *For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, fleshly.*

[Romans 7:14](#). *Sold under sin.*

Even now that I have become a Christian and am renewed by grace.

[Romans 7:15](#). *For that which I do I allow not:*

I often do that which I do not justify, which I do not wish to do again, which I abhor myself for doing.

[Romans 7:16](#). *For what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.*

This is the believer's riddle. To say that this is not a believer's experience is to prove that the man who says it does not know much about how believers feel. We hate sin, and yet, alas! alas! we fall into it! We

would live perfect lives if we could, we that are renewed. We make no justification for our sin: it is evil and abominable; yet do we find these two things warring and fighting within.

[Romans 7:16](#). *If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good.*

My inmost heart, says the law, is good, though I have not kept it as I wish I had, yet my very wish to keep it is the consent of my nature to goodness of that law, and proves that there is a vitality about me which will yet throw out the disease, and make me right in the sight of God.

[Romans 7:17](#). *Now then it is no more I that do it,*

The real “I,” the true “I,” the new-born “ego.” Thank God for that—to have a will to do good, to have a strong, passionate desire to be holy. “To will is present with me.”

[Romans 7:17](#). *But sin that dwelleth in me.*

I would be earnest in prayer, and my thoughts are distracted. I would love God with all my heart, and something else comes in and steals away a part of it. I would be holy as God is holy, but I find myself falling short of my desires. So the apostle means.

[Romans 7:18-20](#), *For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me: but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it,*

The true and real “I.”

[Romans 7:20](#). *But sin that dwelleth in me.*

Oh! this accursed indwelling sin! Would God it were driven out. We do not say this to excuse ourselves—God forbid—but to blame ourselves that we permit this sin to dwell within us. Yet must we rejoice in God that we are born again, and that this new “I” the true “I,” will not yield to sin, but fights against it.

[Romans 7:21](#). *I find then a law,*

Or rule.

[Romans 7:21-24](#). *That, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*

Now, the more holy a man gets the more he cries in this fashion. While he is low down in the scale, he puts up with sin, and he is uneasy, but when he gets to see Christ and get somewhat like him, the more nearly he approximates to the image of his Master, the more the presence of the least sinful thought is horrifying to him. He would, if he could, never look on sin again—never have the slightest inclination to it, but he finds his heart getting abroad and wandering when he would tether it down, if he could, to the cross and crucify it there. And so the more happy he is in Christ the more desperately does he cry against the wretchedness of being-touched with sin, even in the least degree. “Oh! wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”

[Romans 7:25](#). *I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

It will be done. I shall be delivered. I shall be perfect.

“Oh, blissful hour! oh, sweet abode!

I shall be near and like my God.”

Oh! to be without fault before the throne, without tendency to sin without the possibility of it, immaculately clean, with a heart that sends forth pure waters like the river of life that flows from beneath the throne of God! This is our portion. We are looking for it, and we will never rest until we get it, blessed be his name. “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

[Romans 7:25](#). *So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God;*

With the new nature.

[Romans 7:25](#). *But with the flesh the law of sin.*

With the flesh—this old rubbishy stuff that must die and be buried, and the sooner the better. With my old corrupt nature I serve the law of sin. But what a mercy it is that the next verse is, that, notwithstanding that, “There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.”

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 51. and [Romans 7:7-25](#).

[ROMANS CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 8

Verses 1-4

[Romans 8:1](#). *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

Some people talk about “getting out of the 7th chapter, into the 8th.” But who made this into an eighth chapter? Certainly, the Holy Spirit did not. There are no chapters in the Epistle as he inspired Paul to write it, the whole of it runs straight on without a break: “Therein therefore now no condemnation” — while struggling, fighting, warring, contending, —

[Romans 8:2](#). *For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.*

“Hath made me free” — that is, the real “I” of which he wrote a little while before — the true man himself: “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.’ I have broken its bonds, I am a free man. Contending against its usurpation, I have escaped from under its yoke, and I shall yet tread sin under my feet, and God shall bruise even Satan himself under my feet shortly.”

[Romans 8:3](#). *For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:*

That he has done most effectually.

[Romans 8:4](#). *That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

Oh, what a blessed thing it is to walk, freely, “not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” even though, all the while, there is, within the soul, this strife that the apostle has been describing!

This exposition consisted of readings from Romans 7, and [Romans 8:1-4](#).

Verses 1-9

[Romans 8:1](#). *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

My hearers, we are each of us, by nature, under the condemnation of God. We are not only subject to condemnation, but we are condemned already; and, on account of sin, there is judgment recorded in God’s book against every one of us, considered in our fallen state. But if we “are in Christ Jesus,” if we are made partakers of Jesus, if we have hidden ourselves in the cleft of the rock, Christ, and if our trust is solely in him, oh, precious thought, “there is therefore now no condemnation” for us. It is blotted out. The old judgment that was recorded against us is now erased;

and in God's book of remembrance there is not to be found a single condemnatory syllable, nor one word of anger written against any believer in Christ Jesus. Glorious freedom from condemnation! How may I know whether I have been thus set free? This is the question that should enter into each of our hearts. The answer is: "Who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." My hearers, after which of these are you and I walking? Are we following the flesh? Are we seeking to please ourselves, to indulge our bodies, to gratify our lusts, to satisfy our own inclinations? If so, we are not in Christ Jesus; for those who are in Christ Jesus "walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit," and every one of you who is fleshly and carnal is not in Christ, but is still under condemnation.

[Romans 8:2-3](#). *For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:*

He did accomplish it. The law could not condemn sin so truly and so thoroughly as God did when he condemned sin in the person of Christ. O believer, let not thy sins grieve thee,-however great or however tremendous they may have been; weep over them, but do not be distressed about them, for they have been condemned in Christ Jesus. They may have been enormous, but if thou art in him, Christ was punished for thee, and God's justice asks not for a second punishment for one offence. Christ offered once a complete atonement for all believers, and if I am a believer in him, there is no possible fear of my ever being condemned. There cannot be; for Christ was condemned for me, my sins were laid upon his head; and in the awful moment when he sustained the stroke of his Father's vengeance, those sins ceased to be; and "there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus."

[Romans 8:4](#). *That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

Mark, again, how Paul brings us to this as the great evidence of our being in Christ Jesus,-the not walking after the flesh. Now, every man, as he is born into the world, left to himself, is sure to "walk after the flesh." It is only the man who has the Spirit of God put into his soul, who has the heavenly gift from on high, who will "walk after the Spirit." It is not talking after the flesh, but it is walking after it, that condemns us, and it is not talking after the Spirit that will save us, it is walking after the Spirit that is

the evidence of salvation; not talking, but walking. How many of you are there who are talkatives, who can talk religion, and give us as much as we like of it, but whose life and conversation are not such as become godliness! “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” If ye sow to the flesh, ye “shall of the flesh reap corruption,” but if ye sow to the Spirit, ye “shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.”

[Romans 8:5-7](#). *For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God:*

That mind with which we are all born is enmity against God, and however much refined or polished a man may be, however amiable or polite, however he may shine amongst his fellow-creatures, if he has not had a new heart and a right spirit, he is at “enmity against God,” and he cannot enter heaven until there has been a divine change wrought in him. Some of you suppose because you have never been guilty of any vice, because you have not indulged in any great transgression, that therefore you do not require the work of regeneration in your hearts. You will be mightily mistaken if you continue under that delusion until the last great day. “For to be carnally minded,” even though that carnal mind is in a body that is dressed in silks and satins, “To be carnally minded is death,” even though it be whitewashed till it looks like a spiritual one. “To be carnally minded,” even though you sow the carnal mind with a few good garden seeds of the flowers of morality, will still be nothing but damnation to you at the last. “To be carnally minded is death;” only, “to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God:”

[Romans 8:7](#). *For it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.*

The opponents of the free-grace gospel, which it is our delight to preach, assert that men can be saved, if they will, and that men most certainly can repent, and can believe, and can come to God of their own free will, and that it is not through any defect in any powers that they have if they are not saved. Now, we are not over prone to controvert that point; but, at the same time, we do not understand the meaning of this verse if what they say is correct. It says here, “The carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” Some say that men could repent if it were their

inclination. Exactly so; but that is what we assert,-that it never will be and never can be their inclination, except they are constrained to do so by the grace of God. Rowland Hill uses a very singular and odd metaphor in his "Village Dialogues." Two parties are speaking together on this subject, and one of them, pointing to the cat sitting on the hearth says, "Do you see that cat? She sits there, and licks her paws, and washes herself clean." "I see that," said the other. "Well," said the first speaker, "did you ever hear of one of the hogs taken out of the sty that did so?" "No," said he. "But he could if he liked," said the other. Ah, verily, he could if he liked; but it is not according to his nature, and you never saw such a thing done, and until you have changed the swine's nature, he cannot perform such a good action; and God's Word says the same of man. We do not care about fifty thousand aphorisms, or syllogisms, or anything else; God's Word against man's any day. Jesus said, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." "The carnal mind is enmity against God." Men cannot come to Jesus, unless the Father draws them to him. We assert that, from first to last, the work of salvation is all of grace; and we are not afraid of any licentious tendency of that doctrine, or anything of the kind. God's Word, in all its simplicity, must be preached, and we leave him to take care of his own truth. Blessed be God, this humbling truth is of far more use than the other doctrine, which puffs men up with pride, telling them that they can perform what most assuredly they cannot do. "It is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."

[Romans 8:8](#). *So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.*

No man "in the flesh" can please God. Oh, what a sword this is,-a sharp two-edged sword against many of you, my friends! Some of you who regularly attend this house of prayer, and others of you who stray in here in the evening, you "are in the flesh," and you "cannot please God." Perhaps you have been attempting to do it. You have said, "I will attend the house of prayer regularly." You cannot please God by doing that, so long as you are "in the flesh." You may be as moral as you please, and we beseech you so to be; but unless you have the Spirit of God unless you are really changed in heart, and made new creatures in Christ Jesus, all that you can do, as long as you are "in the flesh, cannot please God." Virtues, in unregenerate men, are nothing but whitewashed sins. The best performance of an unchanged character is worthless in God's sight. It lacks the stamp of grace upon it; and that which has not the stamp of grace is false coin. Be it ever so

beautiful in model and finish it is not what it should be. "So then they that are in the flesh cannot praise God."

[Romans 8:9](#). *But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any may have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*

O beloved, we have need each of us to put ourselves in this scale! Come, preacher, be not too sure of thine own salvation. Come, church-member, do not be too certain of thine own regeneration. Come, Christian, put thyself in this scale: "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." If he has not the Holy Ghost really dwelling in him, guiding him, directing him, teaching him, comforting him, supporting him, he is none of Christ's. And if we do not exhibit the Spirit of Christ in our character,-if we have not gentleness, meekness, purity, holiness, benevolence, we are none of Christ's. Ah, this will take some of your flimsy Christians to pieces. Half of your professors, we fear, will at the last be found not to have had "the Spirit of Christ." It is one thing to profess religion, beloved, it is quite another thing to possess vital godliness. We may sit down at the communion table, but oh! if we never had the Spirit of Christ, we "are none of his." We may plead our own goodness before the throne of God at the last; but Jesus Christ will say, "You have not my Spirit; you are none of mine;" and then, however much we may have striven to serve God, unless we have the Spirit of Christ, there shall be nothing for us but the fearful curse, "Depart! depart! depart!" "O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker." Let us ask him for his Spirit; let us plead with him for his grace; and though some of you have never had it, yet if you now ask for it, our God is a gracious God, full of mercy, and exceedingly pitiful; whosoever calleth upon his name shall be saved; and though the chief of sinners, if you sincerely ask for pardon and for grace, you shall receive it at his hand. The Lord help you so to pray, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 66.; and [Romans 8:1-9](#).

Verses 1-14

This wonderful chapter is the very cream of the cream of Holy Scripture. What a grand key-note the apostle strikes in the first verse !

[Romans 8:1](#). *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

“No condemnation” — that is the first note of the chapter. In the last verse it is “no separation.” What glorious music there is here, — no condemnation to those who are in Christ, no separation of them from Christ! Happy are the people who have a share in this double blessing, and unhappy are the men and women who know nothing of it. We will read it again: “There is therefore now no condemnation, “There is a great deal of accusation, and a great deal more of tribulation, but there is no condemnation not the least hint of it. Some condemnation we might have expected, but “there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

[Romans 8:2](#). *For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.*

I have broken away from its thralldom; the new law, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, the law of grace has set me free from the domination of the law of sin and death. Happy is the free man who is thus liberated by the grace of God.

[Romans 8:3](#). *For what the law could not do, —*

God has done by his grace: “What the law could not do,” —

[Romans 8:3](#). *In that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, —*

Or, as the marginal reading renders it, “by a sacrifice for sin,” —

[Romans 8:3-5](#). *Condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh;*

Unregenerate men, the men who remain in the state in which they were born, the men who allow their lower nature to have the predominance, “they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh.” That is all that they care about, all that they think about, all that they toil for, all that they really “mind.”

[Romans 8:5](#). *But they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.*

Those in whom there is a new life begotten by the Holy Ghost — these mind the things of the Spirit. Each nature seeks its own things, — the flesh seeks the things of the flesh, the spirit seeks the things of the Spirit. Judge ye, my hearers, to which case ye belong by this test, — for what are you living? That which you live for is the true index of your nature. Do you mind spiritual things or the things of the flesh?

[Romans 8:6-7](#). *For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.*

The old nature never will obey the law of God; it never can do so. What then is to be done with it? Improve it? Nay, my brethren, the only thing to be done with it is to let it die, and then to bury it. In baptism you have a most significant symbol of what is to be done with the flesh; you are to treat it as a dead thing, and therefore to bury it. Let the old life be crucified and put to death with Christ, and let the new life take its place.

[Romans 8:8](#). *So then they that are in the flesh —*

Those who are still in the old nature, living for it, living to it, —

[Romans 8:8](#). *Cannot please God.*

Men may wash this old nature, they may clothe it, they may decorate it, they may educate it, but there is no evolution which can produce grace out of nature. The child of nature may be finely dressed, but it is a dead child however gaudily it is attired. There is a vital eternal difference between the old nature and the new.

[Romans 8:9](#). *But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.*

Ye saints of Rome to whom Paul was writing, and ye who believe in Christ now: “Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.”

[Romans 8:9](#). *Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*

If Christ’s Spirit has not quickened you, you do not belong to Christ. Some ministers preach a very general sort of gospel in which everybody has a share, but the Bible knows nothing of that sort of gospel. “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” Do you know what it is to have the Spirit of Christ? If not, my hearer, do not deceive yourself you are none of his. “If any man” — be he prince or magistrate, a member of Parliament or a doctor of divinity, — “if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”

[Romans 8:10](#). *And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.*

Hence the body suffers, the body is sick, the body decays, the body is under the dominion of death because of sin, but the Spirit is full of life because of righteousness.

[Romans 8:11](#). *But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.*

You believers may have a good hope concerning your bodies: “He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies.” Wait a while, therefore; what God has done for your souls he will in due time do for your bodies also. This should make you long for the day of Christ’s appearing, as Paul says in the 23rd verse of this chapter, “waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body,” when Christ shall appear, and we shall be raised — “From beds of dust and silent clay,” — the body itself born a second time, regenerate like the soul.

[Romans 8:12](#). *Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.*

We owe the flesh nothing; I mean the law of sin in our members, we owe nothing to that. It has been a curse and a plague to us; we are not debtors to the flesh, so we must not “live after the flesh.”

[Romans 8:13](#). *For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die:*

If you live simply to gratify your ambition, if you live for avarice, if you live to please yourself, if you live for any earthly object which can be comprised under the term “after the flesh,” you will certainly be disappointed, for you will die, and your hope will die with you.

[Romans 8:13](#). *But if ye through the spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.*

If you seek, by the Holy Spirit’s power, to kill sin, if you try to crush all sinful desires, if you keep evil with a rope about its neck, if you mortify it put it to death, then you shall live. Holiness is the mode of the Christian; life, sin is the way of the sinner’s death

[Romans 8:14](#). *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.*

Verses 1-22

This precious chapter reminds us of the description of the land of Havilah, “where there is gold, and the gold of that land is good.”

[Romans 8:1](#). *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus,*

There is no condemnation to them; that is gone, and gone for ever. Not only is part of it removed, but the whole of it is gone: “There is therefore

now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” This is their legal status before God,—in Christ Jesus, without condemnation; and this is their character:—

[Romans 8:1](#). *Who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

Their daily conversation is according to their new spiritual nature, and according to the guidance of the Holy Spirit; and not according to their fleshly nature, and the guidance of self and Satan.

[Romans 8:2](#). *For the law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.*

“It cannot any longer rule me; and it cannot now condemn me. I am free from it, for I am now under the new and higher ‘law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.’”

[Romans 8:3-4](#). *For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

If there are any men in the world who do keep the law of God, they are the very persons who do not hope to be saved by the keeping of it, for they have by faith found righteousness in Christ, and now by love and gratitude are put under the power of the law of the spiritual life in Christ, and they so live, by God’s grace, that they do manifest the holiness of the law in their lives.

[Romans 8:5](#). *For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh;*

They care for nothing else: they are satisfied so long as their appetites are gratified. They are of this world, and the things of this world fill them to the brim.

[Romans 8:5](#). *But they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.*

Spiritual joys, spiritual hopes, spiritual pursuits,—these belong only to those who are spiritual.

[Romans 8:6](#). *For to be carnally minded—*

To be fleshly minded

[Romans 8:6](#). *is death;*

That is what it comes to, for the flesh comes to death at last; and, after death, it goes to corruption. If we live after that carnal fashion, this will be the end of our living: “death.”

[Romans 8:6](#). *But to be spiritually minded is life and peace.*

For the spirit will never die, and the spirit has that within it which will bring it perfect peace.

[Romans 8:7-8](#). *Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.*

Those that have never been born again, so as to be “in the Spirit,” are still just as they were born “in the flesh,” so they cannot please God. Do what they may, there is an essential impurity about their nature so that they cannot be well pleasing unto God. We must be born again, we must become spiritual by the new birth which is wrought by the Holy Spirit, or else it is impossible for us to please God. O you who are trying your best to please God apart from the new birth, and apart from Christ, see how this iron bar is put across your path: “they that are in the flesh cannot please God.” Go then to him, and ask him to give you of his Spirit, that you may be spiritual, and no longer carnal.

[Romans 8:9](#). *But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*

It does not matter what he calls himself; he may be a preacher, he may be a bishop; but if he has not the Spirit of Christ, “he is none of his;” and if he has the Spirit of Christ, though he may be the most obscure person on earth, he belongs to Christ.

[Romans 8:10](#). *And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin;*

The grace of God has not changed that body; it still remains earth, dust, worms’ meat, and it must die unless Christ should come, and transform it by his coming. “The body is dead because of sin;” and hence come those aches and pains, that heaviness, that weariness, that decay, those infirmities of age which we experience so long as we bear about with us this body of death.

[Romans 8:10](#). *But the Spirit is life because of righteousness.*

There is a living power within us which triumphs over this dying, decaying body. So we rejoice notwithstanding all our afflictions, trials, and depressions.

[Romans 8:11](#). *But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.*

There is to be an emancipation even for this poor flesh, a translation and a glory for it yet in Christ.

[Romans 8:12](#). *Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.*

Certainly not, for we owe the flesh nothing. It keeps us down and hampers us, it is a hindrance to us, but we certainly owe it nothing; so let us not be subservient to it, let us not consult or even consider it, and especially let us never come under its fatal bondage.

[Romans 8:13](#). *For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die:*

It is a dying thing, and “ye shall die” if ye live after its dying fashion..

[Romans 8:13](#). *But if ye through the Spirit—*

That living, immortal power—

[Romans 8:13-14](#). *Do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God:*

Oh, high dignity and blessed privilege! As soon as ever we get away from the dominion of the flesh, and come to be led by the Spirit of God, and so become spiritual men, we have the evidence that we are the sons of God, for “God is a Spirit,” so his sons must be spiritual.

[Romans 8:15](#). *For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear;*

We did have it once, and it wrought some good effect upon us for the time being; when we were under the Law, we felt ourselves to be in slavery, and that made us go to Christ for liberty.

[Romans 8:15](#). *But ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.*

Oh, blessed, blessed state of heart to feel that now we are born into the family of God, and that the choice word which no slave might ever pronounce may now be pronounced by us, “Abba”! It is a child’s word, such as a little child utters when first he opens his mouth to speak, and it runs the same both backwards and forwards, -AB-BA. Oh to have a childlike spirit that, in whatever state of heart I am, I may still be able to say, in the accents even of spiritual infancy, “Abba, Father”!

[Romans 8:16](#). *The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God :*

What better testimony can we have than that of these two witnesses, first of our own spirit, and then of the Holy Spirit himself, “that we are the children of God”? Note that this is not spoken concerning everybody. The

doctrine of the universal Fatherhood of God in a doctrine of the flesh, and not of the Spirit; it is not taught anywhere in God's Word. This is a Fatherhood which relates only to those who are spiritual; we are born into it by the new birth, and brought into it by an act of grace in adoption. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God;" this is a special privilege that belongs only to those who are spiritual.

[Romans 8:17-18](#). *And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*

Do we suffer now? Then let us wait for something better that is yet to come. Yes, we do suffer, and in this we are in accord with the whole creation of God, for the whole creation is just now, as it were, enduring birth pangs. There is something better coming; but, meanwhile, it is troubled and perplexed, moaning and groaning.

[Romans 8:19-22](#). *For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.*

See how it often weeps in the superabundant rain that seems like a minor deluge. Note how, at times, creation's very bowels seem to be tossed and torn with pain and agony by volcanoes and earthquakes. Mark the tempests, tornadoes, hurricanes, and all kinds of ills that sweep over the globe, leaving devastation in their track; and the globe itself is wrapped in swaddling bands of mist, and shines not out like its sister stars in its pristine brightness and splendour. The animal creation, too, wears the yoke of bondage. How unnecessarily heavy have men often made that yoke!

Verses 1-31

[Romans 8:1](#). *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

To my mind one of the sweetest words of that verse is that little word now.

"There is, therefore, now no condemnation" — at this very moment.

Walking under the power of the Spirit of God in Christ Jesus, there is, therefore, now no condemnation to believers. It is a logical conclusion, too,

from something that went before. You and I are not absolved from sin apart from the truth, but there is a great truth at the back of it which necessitates it. “There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

[Romans 8:2](#). *For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.*

Sin and death cannot govern me — cannot condemn me — cannot destroy me. Another law has come in. The Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has brought me into another kingdom wherein I cannot be affected, so as to condemn me, by the law of sin and death.

[Romans 8:3-4](#). *For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

The law of God was a good law, a just and holy law. It was weak, not in itself, for, verily, if righteousness could have been by any law, it would have been by the law of God. But it was weak through our flesh. We could not keep it. We could not fulfill the conditions of life laid down under it. Therefore, what the law could not do, God has now done for us. He has found a way of making us righteous through the righteousness of his own dear Son, whom he has sent in the likeness of sinful flesh. He has found out a way of condemning sin, without condemning us. He condemned sin in the flesh, but we escaped. And he has found out a way of making us practically righteous, too, through the abundance of his grace, enabling us to walk no longer after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Blessed be God for this, for when we had broken his law, he might justly have left us to take the consequences; but he has stepped aside: he has gone beyond all that might have been expected of him, and brought in a law by which a remedy is applied to all our ills. Glory be to his name!

[Romans 8:5](#). *For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh;*

They live to eat and drink. They live for self-aggrandizement. They live for the world and its pleasures alone. It is according to their nature. Everything acts according to its nature. The wolf devours; the sheep patiently feeds. They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh.

[Romans 8:5](#). *But they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.*

God has given us, then, the Spirit to dwell in us, and now I trust we can say that we desire holiness, and righteousness, and peace, and joy, in the Holy Ghost, for these things are the things of the Spirit.

[Romans 8:6-7](#). *For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.*

It is so deeply vitiated, so thoroughly depraved, that so long as the fleshly mind exists, it will be in rebellion against God. “Ye must be born again,” for that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and only that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Unless we are renewed, then, by the Spirit of God, we never shall be subject to the law of God; neither, indeed, can we be.

[Romans 8:8-9](#). *So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*

Christ does not own any that are not indwelt by his Spirit. They may wear the Christian name; they may perform some acts which look like Christian acts; but all this avails nothing. You must have the Spirit of God within you, or else you are none of his; and what a thing it is to be “none of his.” “Verily,” says Christ, “I never knew you.” “But, Lord, we ate and drank with thee: thou didst preach in our streets.” But he says, “I never knew you.” They are none of his. Oh! dear friends, the highest point to which human nature can reach of itself falls short of being in Christ. There must be the Spirit of God dwelling in us, or else we are none of his.

[Romans 8:10](#). *And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin;*

Therefore, it suffers disease and pain, for the soul is regenerated, but not the body. If I may so speak, the regeneration of the body happens at the resurrection. It is then that it will receive its full share of the blessed work of Christ. “The body is dead because of sin.”

[Romans 8:10-11](#). *But the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.*

So there is a complete deliverance provided for body, soul, and spirit. As Moses said to Pharaoh when he agreed to let the people of Israel go, but said that they must leave behind their flocks, “Not a hoof shall be left behind,” so no particle of our real manhood shall be left under the thralldom

of sin and death. The soul is already emancipated, and the body shall be, by the Spirit which dwells in you.

[Romans 8:12](#). *Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.*

For we owe the flesh nothing by way of gratitude or service. The flesh has dragged us down. The flesh has ruined us. We owe it nothing, except mastery of it. We are not debtors to it, to live after it.

[Romans 8:13](#). *For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die:*

It will die, and so will you, who make it your master.

[Romans 8:13](#). *But if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.*

“Mortify,” kill, put to death.

[Romans 8:14](#). *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the Sons of God.*

There may be a great many weaknesses and infirmities about them, but if they follow the divine leadership of the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

[Romans 8:15](#). *For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father.*

Is this true of you? “Ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” Dear friends, hearing these words, can you respond to them? Are they true of you?

[Romans 8:16](#). *The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:*

Many of you make a profession of being the children of God. Can your own spirit say that it is true? And is there, in addition to the witness of the Spirit within you that it is true? If not, unless there is a witness to our testimony, it avails nothing. Our Lord Jesus Christ said, “If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true”; and if he chooses to put himself on a level, as it were, with the rest of humanity in that respect, we cannot expect that our witness will stand for ought if it stands alone. No, there must be the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.

[Romans 8:17](#). *And if children, then heirs: heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ;*

Oh that if — “if children.” There are some that get over all that. They believe in a universal fatherhood, which is not worth the words in which they describe it. This is a different fatherhood altogether.

[Romans 8:17](#). *If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.*

Oh! this blessed co-partnership — this fellowship: joint-heirs with Christ: taking part in the whole heritage — as well the heritage of suffering as the heritage of glory. “It shall bruise thy heel, but thou shalt bruise his head.” There is to be the heel-bruising for the Christ, as well as for us; but there is to be the head-crushing of sin and Satan for him and for us, too.

[Romans 8:18](#). *For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*

Glory in us! Only think of that! You know the revelation that is in the book; but how grand will be the revelation that is in the man! “The glory which shall be revealed in us.” We shall be full of glory. And a part of God’s glory, which otherwise must have lain concealed, will be revealed in his people to his own praise forever and ever; but also to our own eternal joy.

[Romans 8:19](#). *For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.*

There is something that the whole creation is waiting for, and it cannot come, till God’s children are manifested — till the glory is revealed in them.

[Romans 8:20-22](#). *For the creation was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope. Because the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.*

“The whole creation.” It is the same word all through; so I have put the same word. The whole world is in its pangs and birth-throes, and there can never come its complete deliverance into the new heavens and the new earth, except there shall also be the manifestation of the children of God, and their deliverance from all that now hampers and hinders the divine life that is within them.

[Romans 8:23](#). *And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.*

This is what we are looking for. Our manhood is not all soul: it is body, too. And here, as yet, this poor body seems to lie outside the gate, like Lazarus, while the soul rejoices in God. But its time of glorifying is coming. The trump of the archangel shall proclaim it.

[Romans 8:24](#). *For we are saved by hope:*

As yet we are saved by hope.

[Romans 8:24-26](#). *But hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doeth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it. Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.*

That is a grand thing. We have got the first-fruits of the Spirit to be the pledge of all the glorious harvest. The very fact that the Spirit dwells in us is the conclusive proof that our bodies shall be raised from the dead. Meanwhile, the Spirit of God is helping us, as we groan and labour, towards the complete perfection. “The Spirit helpeth our infirmities.”

[Romans 8:27](#). *And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.*

Nor is it only the Holy Spirit who is thus helping us onward towards the grand finale.

[Romans 8:28-29](#). *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.*

And you know that he is the first-born in this sense — not only as the greatest, but that as the first-begotten from among the dead, he has risen from the dead. He has risen from the dead, and in this he leads the way for us all. “That he might be the first-born among many brethren.”

[Romans 8:30](#). *Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.*

No slips, no gaps or chasms, by the way. The foreknown are predestinated: the predestinated are the called: the called are justified: the justified are glorified.

[Romans 8:31](#). *What shall we then say to these things?*

Shall we succumb under the sufferings of the body? Shall we yield to doubt because of all our heavy feelings, and the dullness that comes of the flesh? By no manner of means.

[Romans 8:31](#). *If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?*

We can get through all these difficulties, if God be with us.

Verses 1-32

[Romans 8:1](#). *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, —*

Observe that Paul writes “There is therefore,” for he is stating a truth which is founded upon solid argument. “There is therefore now” — at this very day, at this very moment, — “no condemnation” — none of any sort, — none that will lie in the Court of Conscience or in the Court of King’s Bench above: “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” Our forefathers used to read this verse, “There is therefore now no damnation.” One of the martyrs, being brought before a Popish bishop, the bishop said to him, “Dying in thy heresy, thou wilt be damned.” “That I never shall be,” answered the good man, “for there is therefore now no damnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” He had sought the very spirit of the text, for there is nothing that can condemn the man who is in Christ Jesus.

[Romans 8:1](#). *Who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

This is the distinctive mark of a man in Christ Jesus. He does not let the flesh govern him, but the Spirit. The spiritual nature has come to the front, and the flesh must go to the back. The Spirit of the living God has entered into him, and become the master-power of his life. He walks “not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

[Romans 8:2](#). *For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.*

And nothing else can do that. Every man is, by nature, under bondage to that which Paul describes as “the law of sin and death.” There is a law in our nature, which is so powerful that, even when we would do good, evil is present with us, and we cannot get away from that law, except by introducing another, which is “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus,” Dr. Chalmers has a remarkable sermon upon it. The Expulsive Power of a New Affection;” and it is this new affection for Christ, which is the

accompaniment of the new life in Christ, which expels the old forces that used to hold us under bondage to sin and death.

[Romans 8:3-4](#). *For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

The law never made anybody holy, and it never will do so. The law says to a man, “This is what you ought to do, and you will be condemned if you do not do it.” That is quite true, but the law supplies no power to enable us to do this. It says to the lame man, “You must walk,” and to the blind man, “You must see;” but it does not enable them either to walk or to see. On the contrary, our nature is such that, when the law issues its commands, there is a tendency in us at once to disobey them. There are some sins, which we never should have thought of committing if we had not been commanded not to do them, so that the law — not because of its own nature, but because of the wickedness of our nature, is weak and ineffectual for the producing of righteousness. But the Lord Jesus Christ has come, has lived, and has died, — died for us who are his people, and has put away our sins. Now we love him; now, being delivered from all condemnation, we love him who has delivered us, and this becomes the forge by which we are inclined to holiness, and led us further and further in a course, not merely of morality, but of holiness before God. What a blessed system this is, which saves the sinner from the love of sin, delivers a man from sinning, gives him a new nature, and puts a right spirit within him!

[Romans 8:5](#). *For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh;*

Flesh cares for flesh. The man who is all body cares only for the body. The man, whose mind is under subjection to his body, minds “the things of the flesh.”

[Romans 8:5](#). *But they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.*

Where the Holy Ghost is Supreme where the spiritual world has become predominant over the heart and life. There, men live for something nobler than the worldly man’s trinity, “What shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed?” The carnal life is only becoming to a beast, or a bird, or an insect. But when a man cares for his immortal spirit, and lives for divine and spiritual things, he has attained to the life that is life indeed.

[Romans 8:6-7](#). *For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.*

As long as a man lives only for this present evil world, lives for self, lives under the domination of the flesh, he cannot really know God, or truly serve him. Such a mind as his “is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.”

[Romans 8:8](#). *So then they that are in the flesh —*

That is, those who are under its condemnation and power —

[Romans 8:8-10](#). *Cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.*

So that although Christ dwells in a man, he must not reckon that he will be free from suffering, and pain, and sickness, for the body has not yet risen from the dead, and does not yet feel the full effect of regeneration. The soul is risen from the dead by regeneration, and it therefore “is life because of righteousness;” and the body will, in due time, also share in the power of Christ’s Spirit. The day draweth near when we “shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God.”

[Romans 8:11-12](#). *But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.*

We have got nothing good out of the flesh at present, for it is not yet “delivered from the bondage of corruption,” though it is to be delivered.

[Romans 8:13](#). *For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die:*

For the flesh is to die.

[Romans 8:13](#). *But if ye through the Spirit do mortify —*

Or, kill —

[Romans 8:13](#). *The deeds of the body, ye shall live.*

Shall a dying body, then, be my master? Shall the appetite for eating and drinking, or anything else that comes of the flesh, dominate my spirit? God forbid! Let death go to death, and the flesh is such; but the newly-given spirit of God, the spirit who has quickened us with immortal life shall rule and reign in us evermore.

[Romans 8:14-21](#). *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God. And if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.*

For I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed anew. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the Son of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope. Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. We are part and parcel of creation, and we shall draw it along with us. There shall be new heavens and a new earth. The curse shall be taken from the garden, thorns and thistles shall no longer grow there; and there shall be no killing or devouring in all God's holy mountain. The galling yoke, which we have laid on the whole of creation by our sin, shall be taken off from it by our Redeemer.

[Romans 8:22-23](#). *For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.*

We groan in unison with a groaning creation, and we shall not at present get rid of our aches, and pains, and sicknesses altogether.

[Romans 8:24-32](#). *For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it? Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the heart knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he*

called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

This exposition consisted of readings from [Romans 3:9-27](#); [Romans 5:6-11](#); [Romans 8:1-32](#).

Verses 1-34

The words we are about to read follow a passage in which the Apostle describes the conflict of his soul. It is rather singular that it should be so.

To catch the contrast, let us just begin at the end of the 7th chapter, 22nd verse.

[Romans 8:22-25](#) and [Romans 8:1](#). *For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin. There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

Some simpletons have said that Paul was not a converted man when he wrote the closing verses of that 7th chapter. I venture to assert that nobody but an advanced Christian, enjoying the highest degree of sanctification could ever have written it. It is not a man that is dead in sin that calls himself “wretched,” because he finds sin within him; it is a man made pure by the grace of God, who, because of that very purity, feels more the comparatively lesser force of sin than he would have done when he had less grace and more sin. I believe that the nearer we get to absolute perfection, the more fit to enter the gates of heaven, the more detestable will sin become to us, and the more conflict will there be in our souls to tread out the last spark of sin. Bless God, beloved! if you feel a conflict, bless him and ask him that it may rage more terrible still, for that shall be one evidence to you that you are indeed out of all condemnation because you are struggling against the evil.

[Romans 8:2](#). *For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.*

I am not the bond-slave of it; I am the enemy of it; I am free from it, fighting against it, struggling like a free man against one who would bring

him into captivity; but even though I sometime feel as if I were a captive, I know I am not, I am free.

[Romans 8:3-4](#). *For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not niter the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

This is our victory, that let the flesh lust as it may, we do not walk after it; we are kept by God's grace; we are preserved, so that the bent and tenor of our life is after the rule of the Spirit of God.

[Romans 8:5-6](#). *For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.*

Oh! what a death it is to us if ever the flesh gets the mastery; and if it had the mastery in us, we should know that we were in death still; but oh! what a joy, what life, what peace it is to have the Spirit ruling in us, so that we are spiritually minded. God give us this to the full!

[Romans 8:7-8](#). *Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.*

We must be born again then. It is no use improving the flesh. The taking away of the filth of the flesh was the old law, but the burying of the flesh, that is the new. The plunging of it into the death of Christ is the very sign of the new covenant. Oh! to know to the full, the power of the life of God for the death of the flesh!

[Romans 8:9-10](#). *But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because off sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.*

That is why we have aches and pains, and infirmities, because the body is dead; that is, doomed to die, must die; it must see corruption unless the Lord come, and even in that case it must undergo a wondrous change; so we regard our body as dead. No wonder, then, that all those aches and pains and troubles of body do come upon us. The day shall come when, however, even it shall be delivered from the power of death; meanwhile, blessed be God, "the Spirit is life because of righteousness."

[Romans 8:11](#). *But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your*

mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.

The blessing of life is to come to the body too; it shall be immortal by-and-bye, delivered from all the infirmities and sorrows which sin and death have brought upon it.

[Romans 8:12-13](#). *Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.*

It is a live thing, and a quickening thing, for ye shall live.

[Romans 8:14](#). *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.*

God has not got a dead child; never had one. God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.

[Romans 8:15](#). *For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.*

First, love, and then sonship; he rises in his strain.

[Romans 8:16](#). *The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.*

It is first a quickening spirit, and then a witnessing spirit, witnessing with our spirit that we are the children of God. Now up again.

[Romans 8:17](#). *And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him,*

Up again: —

[Romans 8:17](#). *That we may be also glorified together.*

Oh! what a rise is this from groaning under, “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” up to this point, “That we may be also glorified together.”

[Romans 8:18-19](#). *For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.*

It is not merely that the Spirit will bless the body, but that spiritual men will bless the whole creation. Materialism, which is like the body inhabited by the spirits of saints, is to share in the bliss which Christ has come to bring.

[Romans 8:20-22](#). *For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope,*

Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.

Just as our body is, so to speak, the world, the earth in which our spirit dwells: so this big earth is the body in which the Church dwells; and this body has its pains, so this creation has its pains; but as this body is to rise again, so this creation also, though it “groaneth and travaileth,” is to be brought into the “glorious liberty of the children of God.” And What a world it will be when the curse that fell on it through the sin of Eden shall be removed by the glorious Atonement of Calvary; and when the blood of Christ which fell to the ground, which you will remember has never gone away from the earth, but is somewhere still, shall have fully redeemed the world, the whole world shall be a trophy of the Redeemer’s power.

[Romans 8:23](#). *And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.*

Of course, we do groan within ourselves. Who said. we did not? And those brethren who say they never groan, I wish they would learn better. It is one of the signs of grace and marks of a child of God that he is not perfect, and does not think he is, but groans after it, cries after it. “We groan without ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.” For this poor body still lies in measure under a curse, still with its pains, still with its carnal appetites and fleshly tendencies to hamper and to trouble it, but this we groan after — that this flesh of ours, and the whole creation in which we dwell, shall yet have a joyous deliverance.

[Romans 8:24-30](#). *For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it. Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.*

Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

He speaks as if it were all done, because the major part of it is done in the saints, and it will only be a wink of the eye and it will all be done in every one of us who are believers. Let us look at it as done quite fully, even now, by hope that we are already glorified together.

[Romans 8:31-32](#). *What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things!*

What, indeed, what can we say? We are lost in wonder, love, and praise. Thus much, however, we can say, for it concerns our struggles while we are here below. Paul has got that shadow still ever him — of struggling against the flesh. What shall we say in the view of these blessed things concerning that struggle? Why, this: “If God be for us, Who can be against us?”

[Romans 8:33-34](#). *Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.*

Equally impossible; and if neither God nor Christ will condemn, what judge have we to fear? The Judge of all the earth, and the Judge of the quick and the dead — if neither of these condemn, condemn away who likes.

Verses 1-39

[Romans 8:1](#). *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

“No condemnation”: that is the beginning of the chapter. No separation: that is the end of the chapter. And all between is full of grace and truth. What a banquet this chapter has often proved to the souls of God’s hungry servants! May it be so now as we read it. No condemnation even now. Many doubts, but no condemnation. Many chastisements, but no condemnation. Even frowns from the Father’s face apparently, but no condemnation. And this is not a bare statement, but an inference from powerful arguments. “There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” This is where they are. “Who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” This is how they behave themselves, not under the government of the old nature, but under the rule of the divine Spirit of God.

[Romans 8:2-4](#). *For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.*

None keep the law so well as those who do not hope to be saved by it, but who, renouncing all confidence in their own works, and accepting the righteousness which is of God by faith in Christ Jesus, are moved by gratitude to a height of consecration and a purity of obedience which mere legalism can never know. The child will obey better without desire of reward, than the slave will under the dread of the lash, or in hope of a wage. The most potent motive for holiness is free grace. A dying Saviour is the death of sin. As we have been singing, we strove against its power until we learnt that Christ was the way, and then we conquered it.

[Romans 8:5](#). *For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.*

Everything according to its nature. Water will rise as high as its source, but it will not naturally flow any higher. The great thing, then, is to be brought under the dominion of the Holy Spirit, and of that new nature which is the offspring of the Spirit. Then we try to rise up to our source, and we rise vastly higher than human nature ever can under any force that you can apply to it. The new nature can do what the old nature cannot do.

[Romans 8:6](#). *For to be carnally minded*

To have the mind of the flesh.

[Romans 8:6](#). *Is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.*

Flesh must die. Its tendency is to corruption; but the spirit never dies. Its tendency, its instinct, is growth, advance, immortality.

[Romans 8:7](#). *Because the careful mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.*

The old nature is hopelessly bad. There is no mending it. It is enmity, not merely at enmity; but it is absolutely enmity. It is not subject to God's law, and you cannot make it so.

[Romans 8:8](#). *So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.*

So long as we are under the dominion of the old nature, the depraved and-fallen nature, there is no pleasing God.

[Romans 8:9](#). *But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.*

Oh! this is a very wonderful fact, that the Spirit of God should dwell in us. I have often said to you that I never know which of two mysteries most to admire — God incarnate in Christ, or the Holy Spirit indwelling in man; they are two marvelous things, miracles of miracles.

[Romans 8:9-10](#). *Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.*

The regeneration of the body, so to speak, is not performed in this life; Resurrection is tantamount to that. The body is still under the old law of death, and so we have pain and weakness, and we die; but the spirit, oh! how it triumphs, even in the midst of pain and weakness. “The Spirit is life, because of righteousness.” That will not die.

[Romans 8:11](#). *But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.*

So there is coming a time for your body to experience the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body. He does not say that he will give you a new body. Do not believe this modern doctrine. But he shall quicken your mortal body; that is to say, the same body, which is now subject to death, and so is mortal, is to be quickened at the resurrection.

[Romans 8:12](#). *Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh*

What do we owe the old nature? Nothing, surely. Give it a decent burial. Let it be buried with Christ in baptism. Let the Spirit of God come and renew it. But we owe it nothing, and we are not debtors to it.

[Romans 8:13-14](#). *For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.*

Your “universal fatherhood” is rubbish. “As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God,” and none others. This is the essential to sonship — that we should have the Spirit of God within us.

[Romans 8:15-16](#). *For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear: but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:*

That is, when we have the Spirit, when we are renewed in the Spirit of our minds, when we come into the domain of Spirit, and quit the tyranny of the flesh. Then the Spirit beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.

[Romans 8:17](#). *And if children, then heirs;*

It is not, of course, so in human families. All children are not heirs; but it is so in the family of God.

[Romans 8:17](#). *Heirs of God,*

What a heritage! God himself becomes our heritage. We are heirs to all that God has, and all that God is.

[Romans 8:17](#). *And joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.*

The whole chapter is rather too long for our reading, so we will pass on to the 28th verse.

[Romans 8:28](#). *And we know*

This is not a matter of opinion. This is scarcely a matter of faith. "We know." We are sure of it. We have proved it.

[Romans 8:28](#). *That all things work together for good to them that love God,*

They all work. They work in harmony. They work for one purpose. That purpose is for good.

[Romans 8:28](#). *To them who are the called according to his purpose.*

That is their private character, which God knows, and which he reveals to them in course of time.

[Romans 8:29](#). *For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren.*

This is their character, which they perceive, which others may in a measure perceive. We are to be like him then, conformed to his image; and if we be joint-heirs with him, what a joy it is that we are to be partakers of his nature, made like to him! Christ will be reflected, and in a measure repeated, in all his people; and this shall be the very glory of heaven, that, look which way you will, you shall see either Christ himself or his likeness in his people. If you have ever stood in a room that was full of mirrors everywhere, how wonderfully your own likeness has been repeated! And heaven shall be a mirror chamber, wherein Christ shall be seen in every one

of his people. He did predestinate them to be conformed to the image of his Son.

[Romans 8:30](#). *Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified?*

That glorification we cannot see as yet. It is in the excessive brightness of the future, just as his divine election is in the brightness of the past. These are the two columns on either shore; but the swinging bridge in between is this — calling and justification. These are joined in one, stud if thou hast either of these, thou mayest know thy predestination and thy future glorification

[Romans 8:31](#). *What shall we then say to these things?*

Oh! have you not often said that? When you have studied the plan of grace, the covenant of God, have you not said to yourself, “What can I say to all this? It is passing wonder; It exceeds the power of comprehension, for the greatness of this glory. What shall we then say to these things?” Well, we will say something practical that shall cheer our hearts.

[Romans 8:31-33](#). *If God be for us who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth.*

It may be read, “God that justifieth?” and properly may be read as a question.

[Romans 8:34](#). *Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, He is the Judge. Will he who died condemn?*

[Romans 8:34](#). *Yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.*

He alone is Judge. Has he done all this, and will he condemn us?

[Romans 8:35](#). *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?*

These have been tried on the saints for ages.

[Romans 8:36](#). *As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long: we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.*

But has this divided them from Christ? Hear them all, as with united voice they answer.

[Romans 8:37-38](#). *Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded,*

Somebody asked, "Pray, what persuasion may you be?" Well, this is my persuasion.

[Romans 8:38](#). *That neither death, nor life, nor angels, Good or bad.*

[Romans 8:38](#). *Nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, Hard and grinding as they may be.*

[Romans 8:38](#). *Nor things to come. Unknown mysteries dreaded.*

[Romans 8:39](#). *Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Verses 14-17

[Romans 8:14](#). *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.*

You can judge yourself, dear friend, by this test. Do you follow the Spirit's leading? Do you desire continually that he should be your supreme Guide and Leader? If you are led by the Spirit of God, then you have this highest of all privileges, you are one of the sons of God. Nothing can equal that honour; to be a son of God, is more than anything of which ungodly kings and emperors can boast, with all their array of pomp and wealth.

[Romans 8:15](#). *For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear;*

Ye did receive it once, and it was a great blessing to you. This came of the law, and the law brought you under bondage through a sense of sin, and that made you first cry for liberty, and then made you accept the liberating Saviour; but you have not received that spirit of bondage again to fear.

[Romans 8:15](#). *But ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.*

We who believe in Jesus are all children of God, and we dare to use that name which only children might use, "Abba;" and we dare use it even in the presence of God, and to say to him, "Abba, Father." We cannot help doing it, because the spirit of adoption must have its own mode of speech; and its chosen way of speaking is to appeal to the great God by this name, "Abba, Father."

[Romans 8:16](#). *The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:*

There are two witnesses, then, and in the mouth of these two witnesses the whole truth about our adoption shall be established. Our own spirit — so changed as to be reconciled to God, and led in ways which once it never trod, — our own spirit bears witness that we are the sons of God; and then God's own Spirit bears witness, too, and so we become doubly sure.

[Romans 8:17](#). *And if children, then heirs;*

For all God's children are heirs, and all equally heirs. The elder-born members of God's family, such as Abraham and the rest of the patriarchs, are no more heirs of God than are we of these latter days who have but lately come to Christ. "If children, then heirs." Heirs of what?

[Romans 8:17](#). *Heirs of God,*

Not only heirs of what God chooses to give, but heirs of himself. There need be nothing else said, if this is true: "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul." "Heirs of God,"

[Romans 8:17](#). *And joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.*

Do you ever have in your heart a longing to behold the glory of God? Do you feel pressed down when you see abounding sin? Are your eyes ready to be flooded with tears at the thought of the destruction of the ungodly? Then, you are having sympathy with Christ in his sufferings, and you shall as certainly be an heir with him, by-and-by, in his glory.

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 27 and [Romans 8:14-17](#).

Verses 14-30

[Romans 8:14](#). *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.*

Not those who say they are "the sons of God," but those who undoubtedly prove that they are, by being led, influenced, gently guided, by the Spirit of God.

[Romans 8:15](#). *For ye have yet received the spirit of bondage again to fear: but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.*

We did receive the spirit of bondage once. We felt that we were under the law, and that the law cursed us. We felt its rigorous taxation, and that we could not meet it. Now that spirit 'has gone, and we have the spirit of

freedom, the spirit of children, the spirit of adoption. I suppose that the apostle, when he thus spake and said. “ye,” felt so much of the spirit of adoption in his own bosom that he could not talk of it as belonging to others alone. He was obliged to include it thus’, and so he puts it, “Ye have received the spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” He wanted to intimate that he himself also was a partaker of this blessed spirit. And woe to the preacher who can preach an adoption which he never enjoyed. Woe to any of us if we can teach to others concerning the spirit of sonship, but never feel it crying in our own souls, “Abba, Father.”

[Romans 8:16](#). *The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:*

It corroborates the testimony of conscience. We feel that we are the children of God; and the Spirit of God comes forward as a second, but still greater and higher witness, to confirm the testimony that we are the children of God.

[Romans 8:17](#). *And if children then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.*

It is to be all with him. With him in the suffering; with him in the glory; with him in the reproach of men; with him in the honour at the right hand of the Father. But if we shun the path of humiliation with him, we may expect that he will deny us in the day of his glory.

[Romans 8:18](#). *For I reckon*

Judge, count it up, and calculate.

[Romans 8:18](#). *That the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*

These sufferings, however sharp, are short, compared with eternal glory, infinitesimal, not worthy to be taken account of; like one drop falling into a river and lost in it.

[Romans 8:19-21](#). *For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope. Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.*

There is a future even for materialism. That poor, dusky clod in which we dwell is yet to be illuminated with the light of God; and these poor bodies which are akin to the dust of the earth, and still remain as if they

were not delivered, being subjected to pain, and weakness, and death — even they are yet to be brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

[Romans 8:22-23](#). *For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.*

The soul has obtained its redemption. Therefore, our heart is glad, and our glory rejoicing. But our body has not yet obtained its redemption. That is to come at the resurrection. Then will be the adoption. “Waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.” Oh! blessed fact! Though now, in common with the whole creation, the body is subjected to bondages, yet it shall be delivered, and we — the whole man, body as well as soul and spirit — shall be brought into the liberty of the children of God.

[Romans 8:24-25](#). *For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.*

Ah! brethren, if we could be all we should like to be, there would then be no room for the exercise of hope. If we had all that we are to have, then hope, which is one of the sweetest of the graces, would have no room in which to exercise herself. It is a blessed thing to have hope. Though I have heard that faith and hope are not to be found in heaven, I very much question it. I do not think they will ever die. “Now abide these three — faith, hope, and love”; for in heaven there will be room, surely, for trust in the ever blessed God that he will never cast us out from our blessedness — room for the expectation of the second advent — room for the expectation of the conquest of the world — room for the fulfilled promise of bringing all the elect to glory; still something to be hoped for; still something to be believed. Yet here is the main sphere of hope, and therefore let us give it full scope; and when other graces seem to be at a non-plus, let us still hope. I believe the New Zealand word for hope is “swimming thought,” because that will swim when everything else is drowned. Oh! happy is that man who has a hope that swims on the crest of the stormiest billow.

[Romans 8:26](#). *Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities:*

And especially our infirmities in prayer, for there is where infirmities are mostly seen.

[Romans 8:26](#). *For we knew not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.*

I should have thought that it would have read, “But the Spirit itself teaches us what we should pray for.” But it does more than that. He goes beyond teaching us what we should pray for. He “maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered.” Do you know what those groanings are? I am afraid that those who never had groanings which cannot be uttered will never know anything of that glory which cannot be expressed, for that is the way to it. The groanings that cannot be uttered lead on to unutterable joy.

[Romans 8:27](#). *And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.*

That is the philosophy of prayer. Whatever God’s will is, the Spirit of God writes it on the hearts of praying saints, and they pray for the very thing which God intends to give. As the barometer often foretells the weather that is coming, so the spirit of prayer in the Christian is the barometer which indicates when showers of blessing are coming. It is well with us when we can pray. If we cannot do anything else, if we feel that we can pray, times are not so bad with us as we might think.

[Romans 8:28](#). *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*

We know it: we are assured of it.

[Romans 8:29-30](#). *For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.*

No breaking of these links. Where God gives one of these blessings, he gives the rest. There is no intimation of a failure somewhere in between. The predestinated are called, and the called are justified, and the justified are glorified.

[Romans 8:31-33](#). *What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?*

Who shall? Who may? Who dares?

[Romans 8:33-35](#). *It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?*

All these have done their worst.

[Romans 8:36](#). *As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.*

But have they divided the saints from the love of Christ? Have they made the saints leave off loving Christ, or Christ cease from loving his people?

[Romans 8:37-39](#) *Way, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come. Nor height nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

For which blessed be the name of the adorable Trinity, world without end!

Verses 14-39

[Romans 8:14](#). *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.*

Leading implies following; and those who are enabled to follow the guidance of the Divine Spirit are most assuredly children of God, for the Lord ever leads his own children. If, then, you are following the lead of God's Spirit, you have one of the evidences of sonship.

[Romans 8:15](#). *For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.*

The spirit of bondage is the spirit of servants, not of sons; but that servitude is ended for us who are made free in Christ Jesus. We are no longer afraid of being called the children of God. We are not afraid of our own Father; we have a filial fear of him, but it is so mixed with love that there is no torment in it. Whether Jew or Gentile, we cry, "Abba, Father."

[Romans 8:16](#). *The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:*

Our spirit knows that we are God's children and then God's Spirit adds his testimony to the witness of our spirit that we are the children of God.

[Romans 8:17](#). *And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.*

This would not necessarily be true of any man's family, for he might have children who were not his heirs; but, in God's family, all who are born into it are born "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." We must take our part of Christ's portion,— his portion here, and his portion hereafter; the rule for us who are in him shall be, "share and share alike." He himself has said, "Where I am, there shall also my servant be;" and all that he has he will divide with us. Are you willing, dear brother, to take shares with Christ? If not, then I question whether you can be rightly reckoned among his saints.

[Romans 8:18](#). *For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*

"Light afflictions" are contrasted with "an exceeding weight of glory." Temporary afflictions, but for a moment, are to be followed by everlasting crowns that fade not away. What a contrast!

[Romans 8:19](#). *For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.*

All creation is, as it were, watching and waiting on tip-toe for the day when God shall manifest his sons who are at present hidden. In due time, they shall come forth, acknowledged of God, and then shall the whole creation rejoice.

[Romans 8:20-23](#). *For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.*

We have already obtained salvation for our souls, but our body is still under bondage,— subject to weariness,— to pain,— to infirmity,— to death; but, by-and-by, with the new creation, our newly-moulded bodies

shall be fit to live in the new world, and fit for our newborn souls to inhabit. This is the full redemption for which we are waiting.

[Romans 8:24-28](#). *For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it. Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*

“We know that all things work together for good.” That is a wonderfully positive statement, Paul. There are certain persons, nowadays, who say that we know nothing; yet the apostles constantly say, “We know this,” and “We know that.” These people tell us that there is a great distinction between believing and knowing,— but, evidently, it is a distinction of which the inspired apostles knew nothing at all. Read the Epistles of John, and note how he continually says, “We know, we know, we know,” and how frequently he adds, “We believe,” as though believing and knowing were the same thing. Agnostics may declare that they know nothing, if they please; but, as for us who do know, because we believe what we are taught of God in this Book, we will speak. He who has something to say has a right to say it; we know, and therefore we speak. Mark, brethren, how the apostle speaks here; he does not say that all things shall work together for good; no, but that they do work together, they are now working for your present good. This is not merely something which shall eventually turn out right; it is all right now, “We know that all things are working together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” No sooner does the apostle mention that word “purpose” than he must needs found a long discourse upon it. He was not afraid or ashamed to speak of the purposes of God. There are some preachers who say nothing about God’s purpose, or God’s decree; they seem to be afraid of it, they say it is “Calvinistic doctrine.” Why, it was here, in the Scriptures, long before Calvin was born, so what right have they to call it by his name? Listen to what the apostle has to say:

[Romans 8:29-30](#). *For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed, to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among*

many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

There is no separating these golden links of love and mercy. That foreknowledge, to which all things future are open and present, begins the deed of love. Predestination comes in, and chooses a people for God who shall be eternally his. Upon this, in due time, follows effectual calling, by which the chosen ones are brought out, from the impure mass of mankind, and set apart unto God. Then follows justification by faith, through the precious blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ; and where this is, glory will certainly come, for “whom he justified, them he also glorified.”

[Romans 8:31-32](#). *What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things ?*

Notice, it is not simply “freely give us all things;” but, “with him also freely give us all things.” You shall get all things with Christ; but you shall get nothing without Christ, for all the other gifts come in this one. God first gave us his Son; and he gives us everything in him.

[Romans 8:33](#). *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth.*

Ring out the challenge in heaven itself; trumpet it through all the caverns of hell; let the whole universe hear it: “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect ?” None can, for “it is God that justifieth,” and his justification blocks every charge that is brought against his people.

Who shall the Lord’s elect condemn?

‘Tis God that justifies their souls;

And mercy like a mighty stream,

O’er all their sins divinely rolls.

[Romans 8:34](#). *Who is he that condemneth ?*

None will answer to that challenge, for

[Romans 8:34-35](#). *It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ ?*

Oh, this blessed question — this touching question! It seems to come at the end of all the others,— a rear-guard which effectually prevents our treasures from being taken from us. “Quis separabit?” “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?”

[Romans 8:35](#). *Shall tribulation ?*

That has been tried. Have not the saints been beaten like wheat upon the threshing-floor? Has not addiction been to them a stern test of the reality of their faith? But Christ has loved them none the less for all the suffering that he has permitted to fall upon them.

[Romans 8:35](#). *Or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?*

When they have been in famine or poverty, has Christ ever forsaken his saints? Ah, no! he has loved them all the more. Have any of these things separated us from our Saviour? No; but they have, to our own consciousness, knitted us even more closely to our Divine Lord. Cruel men have tried every form of persecuting the saints of God; they have been more inventive in the torments which they have applied to Christians than in almost anything else; yet no torture, no rack, no imprisonment, has ever divided them from Christ. They have clung to him still, after the manner of John Bunyan, who, when they said, that he might go free if he would promise not to preach the gospel, said, "I will lie in prison till the moss grows on my eyelids rather than I will ever make such a promise as that. If you let me out of prison today, I will preach tomorrow, by the grace of God."

[Romans 8:36](#). *As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.*

But there has been no triumph over the saints in this case.

[Romans 8:37-39](#). *Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Not all that men on earth can do,
Nor powers on high, nor powers below,
Shall cause his mercy to remove,
Or wean our hearts from Christ our love.
Glory be unto his holy name! Amen.

Verses 15-31

[Romans 8:15](#). *For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear;*

You did receive it once. You needed it. You were in sin, and it was well for you when sin became bondage to you. It was grievous, but it was salutary; but you have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear.

[Romans 8:15](#). *But ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.*

Does your spirit cry in that way tonight? Even if you be in the dark, yet if you cry for your Father, you will soon be in the light. There is no need to be distressed with any form of doubt so long as the Spirit makes this continual breathing, “Abba, Father, show thyself to me. Do what thou wilt to me. Let me taste thy love. Let me at least bow under thy hand.”

[Romans 8:16](#). *The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.*

Our spirit feels the spirit of adoption, and so there is a double witness, the witness of our spirit, and the witness of God’s Spirit, that we are the children of God. In the mouth of these two witnesses the whole shall be established.

[Romans 8:17](#). *And if children, then heirs;*

That does not follow in other cases, but it does in the case of the family of God. In a man’s family, only one son can be an heir; but in God’s family, of all is it declared “if children, then heirs.”

[Romans 8:17](#). *Heirs of God,*

Not only heirs to God, but heirs of God. God himself is the heritage of his people; he belongs to them now, as an eternal endowment. “Heirs of God.”

[Romans 8:17](#). *And joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.*

We are to take the rough and the smooth, the bitter and the sweet, with Christ; and who will make any demur to that? If we are to be heirs with Christ, we do not wish to split the inheritance in pieces. Nay! we will take the cross as well as the crown — the reproach as well as the honour.

[Romans 8:18](#). *For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*

He had just mentioned the sufferings. They are too little. They are mere specks in the sun. They are too small to be weighed in comparison with the exceeding weight of glory which God has prepared for us.

[Romans 8:19](#). *For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestly, of the sons of God.*

So great is to be the glory of God's children that all the world is waiting for it. Every creature stands on tip-toe, looking for the coming of Christ and the manifestation of the redeemed. What must be the greatness of this thing which the whole creation has learned to expect?

[Romans 8:20-21](#). *For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope. Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.*

We were in bondage, and we have come out in a measure into the liberty of the children of God. Now the world in which we live is in sympathy with us, and it is part under bondage because of sin, but it is only temporary bondage. There will come a day when the whole creation shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God — a new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

[Romans 8:22](#). *For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.*

Deep groans are in the world. Have you not heard of earthquakes? Do you not know how the whole world is in a tremor? There is something coming, and all the world is groaning for that coming. God makes the universe to be like an instrument of music played upon by the fingers of mortal men: so that when they are sorrowful, the world is sorrowful, and when they go forth with joy and are led forth with peace, then the mountains and the hills shall break forth before them into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. "We know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now."

[Romans 8:23](#). *And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.*

As yet the body is under bondage. The body is dead because of sin: hence those headaches — this palpitation of the heart — this heaviness of the day which incases us: but by-and-bye, as the material world is to be delivered from its bondage, so shall these bodies also pass away from all the encumbrance of weakness, and disease, and death, into a better state.

[Romans 8:24](#). *For we are saved by hope:*

As yet.

[Romans 8:24-25](#). *But hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do*

we with patience wait for it.

What a lesson that is, and how seldom do we learn it! Oh! in this present state our main duty is, “Then do we with patience wait for it.” You want to have your cake and keep it. but you cannot eat it and keep it too. With patience wait for it. There see some fruits of the earth that are not ripe yet. You lay them by in store, and there are many good things that God has laid by in store for his people, and he says to us, “With patience wait for it:” Oh! but you would fain have heavenly joy on earthly ground. It would be a sorry misfit if it were so. But God keeps time and season, and there is harmony in his music. You shall have earthly sorrow on earthly ground, and you shall have heavenly bliss on the heavenly shore: but not till then. We do with patience wait for it.

[Romans 8:26](#). *Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities;*

Especially our infirmities in prayer. I think that if anywhere our infirmities come out, it is in prayer: even the strongest are, on their knees, comparatively weak. How few there are among us that prevail with God. as Elias did! We ought to do so. We need, none of us, stop short of the fullest stature of a man in Christ Jesus. and a man of full stature in Christ would surely carry the keys of heaven’s treasury at his girdle. He would have but to ask, and to receive — to seek and to find. May the Spirit help our infirmities.

[Romans 8:26](#). *For we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.*

See what little worlds we are. Microcosms, — to use a harder word; for as there are groanings and travailings in the whole creation, so are there such in the little world of our own heart. Only nature’s travail is but natural; but our travail is supernatural. It is the Spirit himself groaning within chosen breasts with groanings that cannot be uttered.

[Romans 8:27](#). *And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.*

When we ourselves hardly know the mind of the Spirit, he that searches all hearts knows it. When we feel as if we could not pray, yet the Spirit of God makes intercession in us, and the great Father reads the purport of the intercessions, and blesses us, not according to our knowledge of our own prayer, but according to his knowledge of what the Spirit means by those

prayers. Have you never noticed that holy men of old sometimes spoke much greater things than they thought they should, for the Spirit of God in them spoke by them more than they themselves understood; and I believe that it is so in prayer. Oh! oftentimes the groaning, wrestling believer may have no inkling of the full purport of his own prayer, but he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

[Romans 8:28](#). *And we know –*

Now we are getting upon a dear old passage which reads like music. There is no eloquence in the world that ever touches the eloquence of the Apostle here.

[Romans 8:28](#). *That all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*

I do not like to hear this text quoted, as I often do, only in part — only half of it. “All things work together for good,” say people. “Oh! yes; somehow or other, good will come of it.” It does not say so here. It says, “All things work together for good to them that love God; to them that are the called according to his purpose.” A special purpose and object of God for a special people. And if you do not belong to this people, things are not working together for your good. No; but you may find that they will work together for your banishment from life and from the presence of God. Take your heed to this. The stars in their courses fight against you, if you fight against God; and the very earth groans and complains of bearing up your weight if you are a rebel against the Most High. You must, first of all, be reconciled so as to love God, and the eternal purpose must be wrought in you by your effectual calling from out of the world, or else you must not dare to intrude into the holy sanctuary of my text. “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God.” Of course, they do, for God loves them. “To them that are the called according to his purpose.” Of course, they do, for that purpose which called them is not consistent with anything, but a purpose of infinite love to them. The great eternal purpose encompasses all things that happen, and bends all to the grand object of the good of the called ones.

[Romans 8:29-30](#). *For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called:*

and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

He spoke of it as if it were done because it is so sure, so certain to be done; he puts it down as a fact.

[Romans 8:31](#). *What shall we then say to these things?*

Ah! indeed, what shall we say? If we had the tongues of men and angels, what could we say? Well, we will say this much at any rate.

[Romans 8:31](#). *If God be for us, who can be against us?*

Those afflictions that we read of just now — these reproaches which we share with Christ — what of them? They are not worth calling anything. “If God be for us, who can be against us?”

Verses 18-39

[Romans 8:18](#). *For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*

Paul made “the sufferings of this present time” into a matter of simple arithmetic and careful reckoning. He added them all up, and saw what the total was, he seemed to be about to state a proportion sum, but he gave it up, and said that the sufferings were “not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed.” Did they stand as one to a thousand? No, else they had been worthy to be compared. Did they stand as one to ten thousand, — or one to a million, — or one to a million of millions? If so, they would still have been worthy to be compared; but Paul saw that there was no proportion whatever between them. The sufferings seemed to be but as a single drop, and the glory to be as a boundless ocean.

“Not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”

That glory is not yet fully revealed; it is revealed to us, but not yet in us. What, then, shall we do in the meantime? Why, wait with patience, and bear our appointed burden until the time comes for us to be relieved of it; — wait, however, with hope, — wait, too, as we must, quietly enduring the pains and pangs which precede so glorious a birth. In this respect, we are not alone, as the apostle goes on to say, —

[Romans 8:19-22](#). *For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage*

of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.

We live in a world that is under a curse, — a world that was made subject to bondage through human sin. What means this cold? What mean these fogs? What mean the general mourning and sighing of the air all through the winter? What mean the disturbances, and convulsions, and catastrophes that we hear about on all hands? It is the creation groaning, travailing, waiting, — waiting till there shall be a new heaven and a new earth, because the former things shall have passed away.

[Romans 8:23](#). *And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.*

Our soul has been delivered from the curse. The redemption of the soul is complete, but not yet that of the body. That must suffer pain and weariness, and even descend into the tomb, but its day of manifestation shall surely come. At the appearing of our Lord from heaven, then shall the body itself be delivered, and the whole creation shall also be delivered, so we wait in a travailing condition; and we may well be content to wait, for these pangs within us and around all signify the glorious birth for which we may wait in hope.

[Romans 8:24-25](#). *For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.*

This is our attitude and our condition now, — waiting for the glory which is to be revealed in us, and accepting the sorrow which is appointed to us as an introduction to the joy which is to come to us mysteriously, through it but while we are waiting, we are not without present comfort.

[Romans 8:26](#). *Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.*

You must, I am sure, as children of God, often have felt that Spirit within you groaning in prayer what you could not express. How often have you risen from your knees feeling the utter inadequacy of words to express the desires of your heart! And you have felt that you had larger desires than you have been able to interpret. There have been mighty pangs within you telling of the presence of this wrestling spirit.

[Romans 8:27](#). *And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit,*

When you do not know your own mind, God knows the mind of the Spirit, and that is the very essence of prayer. He “knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit,” —

[Romans 8:27](#). *Because he maketh intercession for (or, in) the saints according to the will of God.*

Whatever the spirit of God prompts us to pray for, is according to the mind of God, for it is not possible that the Holy Spirit should ever be otherwise than in perfect accord with the Divine Father. The eternal degrees, if we could read them, would convey to us the same truth as the impulses of the Spirit in our heart. And this is the true exploration of prayer, — that what God intends to do, his spirit leads his people to ask him to do; and thus there is no conflict between the eternal predestination of God and the earnest entreaties of his people. They are, in fact, the outcome of that very predestination.

[Romans 8:28-30](#). *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.*

These great truths must never be separated. Any one of these things befog true of us, it is most certain that the rest are also true. Now, my dear brother, you cannot read God’s foreknowledge, neither can you enter into the secrets of predestination; but you can tell whether you are called, or not; you can know whether you are justified by faith, or not; and if you get hold of those links, you have got a grip of that endless chain which is firmly fastened to the granite rock of eternity past, and which is also fastened to the rock of the glorious eternity which is yet to be revealed.

[Romans 8:31-33](#). *What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth.*

For so we think it ought to be read. That is another question. Can God lay anything to our charge after having justified us? Will he contradict

himself?

[Romans 8:34](#). *Who is he that condemneth?*

There is only One who can, for there is only one Judge, and that Judge is Jesus. So, the apostle puts it again in the form of a question, — shall he condemn us?

[Romans 8:34](#). *It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.*

Shall he condemn us? It is altogether impossible.

[Romans 8:35](#). *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword ?*

What a long list of ills! They seem to make up a Jeremiah's roll of sorrow. Can they separate us from the love of Christ? They have all been tried; have they ever succeeded?

[Romans 8:36](#). *As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.*

But did they succeed in separating saints from the love of Christ even in the days of martyrdom?

[Romans 8:37-39](#). *Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

“Wherefore, comfort one another with these words.”

Verses 19-39

[Romans 8:19](#). *For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.*

The whole creation is in a waiting posture, waiting for the glory yet to be revealed.

[Romans 8:20-21](#). *For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.*

Everything here is blighted, and subject to storm, or to decay, or to sudden death, or to calamity of some sort. It is a fair world, but there is the shadow of the curse over it all. The slime of the serpent is on all our Edens now. “The creature itself was made subject to vanity,” but it “also shall be

delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.”

[Romans 8:22](#). *For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.*

The birth-pangs of the creation are on it; the living creature within is moving itself to break its shell, and come forth.

[Romans 8:23](#). *And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.*

That is our state now; at least, it is the condition of the most of us. Some of our brethren have gone ahead so tremendously that they have passed out of the world of groaning altogether; they are perfect. I regret that they are not in heaven; it would seem to be a much more proper place for them than this imperfect earth is. But as for us, our experience leads us, in sympathy with the apostle, to say that we are groaning after something better. We have not received it yet; we have the beginnings of it, we have the earnest of it, we have the sure pledge of it; but it is not as yet our portion to enjoy; we are “waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body;” for, though the soul be born again, the body is not. “The body is dead,” says the apostle, in the tenth verse of this chapter, “because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness.” There is a wonderful process through which this body shall yet pass, and then it shall be raised again, a glorious body, fitted for our regenerated spirit; but as yet it remains unregenerate.

[Romans 8:24](#). *For we are saved by hope:*

Hope contains the major part of our salvation within itself.

[Romans 8:24-26](#). *But hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it. Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities:*

That same Spirit who gave us the spirit of adoption, that same Spirit who set us longing for something higher and better, “also helpeth our infirmities;” and we have so many of them that we show them even when we are on our knees.

[Romans 8:26](#). *For we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.*

There seems to be a good deal of this groaning; it is only in heaven that there are- “No groans to mingle with the songs which warble from immortal

tongues.” But down here a groan is sometimes the fittest wheel for the chariot of progress. We sigh, and cry, and groan, to grow out of ourselves, and to grow more like our Lord, and so to become more fit for the glory which shall be revealed in us.

[Romans 8:27](#). *And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.*

That is the whole process of prayer. The Spirit of God knows the will of the Father, and he comes and writes it on our hearts. A true prayer is the revelation of the Spirit of God to our heart, making us desire what God has appointed to give to us. Hence the success of prayer is no difficulty to the predestinarian. Some foolishly say, “If God has ordained everything, what is the use of praying?” If God had not ordained everything, there would be no use in praying; but prayer is the shadow of the coming mercy which falls across the spirit, and we become in prayer in some degree gifted like the seers of old. The spirit of prophecy is upon the man who knows how to pray; the Spirit of God has moved him to ask for what God is about to give.

[Romans 8:28](#). *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God,*

“All things.” That is a very comprehensive expression, is it not? It includes your present trouble, your aching head, your heavy heart: “all things.” “All things work.” There is nothing idle in God’s domain. “All things work together.” There is no discord in the providence of God. The strangest ingredients go to make up the one matchless medicine for all our maladies. “All things work together for good” — for lasting and eternal good, — “to them that love God,” that is their outward character, —

[Romans 8:28](#). *To them who are the called according to his purpose.*

That is their secret character, and the reason why they love God at all.

[Romans 8:29](#). *For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.*

Oh, what a glorious privilege is yours and mine, if we are indeed children of God! We are, in some respects, children of God in the same sense as Christ himself is; he is the firstborn, and we are among his “many brethren.”

[Romans 8:30](#). *Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he*

also glorified.

Notice that personal pronoun “he” — how it comes at the beginning, and goes on to the end. “Salvation is of the Lord.” This is so often forgotten that, trite as it may appear, we cannot repeat it too often: “Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate whom he did predestinate, them he also called, and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.” You might suppose, from the talk of some men, that, salvation is all of the man himself; — that is free agency pushed into a falsehood, a plain truth puffed into a lie. There is such a thing as free agency, and we should make a great mistake if we forgot it; but there is also such a thing as free grace, and we shall make a still greater mistake if we limit that to the agency of man; it is God who works our salvation from the beginning to the end.

[Romans 8:31](#). *What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?*

If God is that great working One who does all this, who can be against us? “Why, a great many,” says one. But they are nothing, nor are all put together anything at all, as compared with him who is on our side.

[Romans 8:32-33](#). *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth?*

No, that is impossible; and if he does not lay anything to their charge, what cause have they to fear?

[Romans 8:34](#). *Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died.*

What, die for them, and then condemn them? Nobody can condemn them but the Judge; and if he is unable to condemn them, in consequence of what he has already done for them, then none can. But this is not all.

[Romans 8:34](#). *Yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.*

Will he blow hot and mild, and first intercede for them, and then condemn them? It cannot be.

[Romans 8:35](#). *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?*

“Quis separabit?” That shall be our motto in every time of trial: “who shall separate us from the love of Christ?”

[Romans 8:35-36](#). *Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword, As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.*

They have all had their turn; but did any of them, or all of them put together, ever divide the saints from Christ?

[Romans 8:37-39](#). *Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Blessed, forever blessed, be his holy name! Amen.

Verses 23-39

[Romans 8:23](#). *And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.*

That is what we are waiting for: “the redemption of our body;” and we shall not wait in vain for it, for Christ is the Saviour of our body as well as of our soul, and the day shall come when even our bodies shall be free from pain, and weakness, and weariness, and sin, and death. Happy day! we may well look forward to it with the loftiest anticipations.

[Romans 8:24-25](#). *For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it?*

This is our present position, patiently waiting for “the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ,” patiently waiting for “the manifestation of the sons of God,” for “it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”

[Romans 8:26](#). *Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.*

There is much in this chapter about groaning, and that is but natural, for it so largely concerns our present imperfect state; but, by-and-by, there will be “No groans to mingle with the songs which warble from immortal tongues.”

[Romans 8:27](#). *And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.*

This explains what to many is the mystery of prayer. The Holy Spirit, being himself God, knows the secret purposes of the divine will, and

therefore moves the saints to pray in accordance with that will, and makes their supplications effectual through his own prevailing intercession.

[Romans 8:28](#). *And we know—*

Paul, like John, was no agnostic; he did not even say, “We think, we imagine, we suppose.” No; “we know”—

[Romans 8:28](#). *That all things work together for good—*

We must not stop there, otherwise the statement will not be true, for all things do not work together for good to all men, but only—

[Romans 8:28](#). *To them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*

How are we to know who they are who are the called according to God’s eternal purpose? The previous clause informs us, for both relate to the same individuals; “them that love God” are “them who are the saved according to his purpose.” We cannot peer into the pages of the Lamb’s book of life, yet we can tell by this simple test whether our names are recorded there, do we truly love the Lord? If so, all things are working for our present and eternal good, all things visible and invisible, all things friendly and unfriendly, all things in providence and grace.

[Romans 8:29](#). *For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.”*

What an eternal honour for all believers, that they might be among the “many brethren” of Christ, God’s firstborn and well-beloved Son! Here too, we see the purpose of God’s foreknowledge and predestination, that we should be “conformed to the image of his Son.”

[Romans 8:30](#). *Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.*

You see that these great declarations relate to the same persons right through the whole series: “Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate;... whom he did predestinate, them he also called,... them he also justified,... them he also glorified.” There is not a single link missing from the eternal purpose and foreknowledge of God to the everlasting glory in which the saints’ bliss shall be consummated. The practical question’s for each one of us to answer are just these, have I been “called” by grace out of nature’s darkness into God’s marvelous light? Have I been “justified” by faith, and have I peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ? Then,

being called and justified, I may rest assured that I have been predestinated, and that in due time I shall be glorified.

“There, where my blessed Jesus reigns,
In heaven’s unmeasured space,
I’ll spend a long eternity In pleasure and in praise.”

[Romans 8:31-32](#). *What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also give us all things.*

After having given us his own Son, what is there that he can withhold from us if it is for our real good? Nay, he has already virtually given us all things in giving him to us.

[Romans 8:33-34](#). *Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.*

Well might the apostle ring out these confident challenges to heaven, and earth, and hell. As it is God that justifieth, who can bring any charge against his elect? Who can condemn those for whom Christ died, for whom he has risen, and for whom he is now making intercession at the right hand of God?

[Romans 8:35-37](#). *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, for thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.*

“All these things” have only made the saints cling the more closely to their Lord, instead of separating them from him. Their persecutors thought they were triumphing over them, but it was the martyrs who were the victors all the while.

[Romans 8:38-39](#). *For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Paul had good reason for being persuaded that there was no separation for those for whom there was no condemnation, may we be among them by God’s grace! Amen.

Verses 26-30

[Romans 8:26](#). *Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.*

Groanings, then, are prayers, and prayers which the Spirit of God most certainly hears. And those desires which altogether exhaust language, or which cannot be put into language by reason of the exhaustion of our sorrow, these are nevertheless heard of God, for the Spirit of God is in them.

[Romans 8:27](#). *And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.*

That is, when the mind lies still, and God the Holy Spirit writes his will upon it, and also writes God's will. Hence such prayers are sure to be effectual, for they are but the shadow of God's secret purpose falling upon the soul as a kind of prelude to the coming fulfillment of that purpose. Saints' prayers are prophets of God's mercies. We are sure of it; we have no doubt whatever; we know it by experience, as well as by revelation.

[Romans 8:28](#). *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God,*

Not yet "all mankind," but these who "love God."

[Romans 8:28](#). *To them who are the called according to his purpose.*

For they would never have loved God if he had not called them to it, and had not purposed to call them.

[Romans 8:29-30](#). *For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.*

One is tempted to linger over that golden chain, and examine every link. It will suffice, however, to observe that every link is well fastened to the next. Where there is the "foreknowledge," which is alias the "forelove," there is also "elect" — there must be "called" — there shall certainly be "justification," and where that is, there must be "glory."

This exposition consisted of readings from [Romans 8:26-30](#); [Revelation 21:10-27](#); Revelation 22 :1-5.

Verses 26-39

[Romans 8:26](#). *Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities:*

Oh, how many these are! Want of memory, want of faith, want of earnestness, ignorance, pride, deadness, coldness of heart, — these are some of our infirmities; but, thank God, we have the omnipotent Spirit of God to help us.

[Romans 8:26](#). *For we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.*

These groanings are too deep, too full of meaning to be expressed in words. There are some things the Christian wants for which he cannot ask; perhaps he does not even know what it is that he wants. There is a vacuum in his heart, but he does not know what would fill it. There is a hunger in his spirit, but he knows not what the bread is, nor where the bread is, that can satisfy his wants. But the Holy Ghost can articulate these unuttered groans, and the deepest needs of our soul can thus be brought before God by his own Spirit. You, then, who find it difficult to pray, do not give up praying. The devil tells you that such poor prayers as yours are can never reach the ear of God. Do not believe him. The Spirit helps your infirmities: and when he helps you, you shall, you must prevail.

[Romans 8:27](#). *And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.*

It cannot be supposed that the Father does not know what is the mind of the Spirit, since they are one God, and, moreover, inasmuch as the Spirit of God never intercedes for anything which is not according to God's will, we are sure that our heavenly Father will grant every Spirit-indited prayer.

[Romans 8:28](#). *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."*

Almost everything in this world looks to us to be in confusion, but to God's eye all is in order. One wave dashes this way, and another that, but they are all working together, and they are all working with one great purpose too. Say not, Christian, "All these things are against me." Ah, poor soul! this is the verdict of your unbelief, but you will know better than that one of these days. All things are working for you, and not one of them is working against you; therefore, be not dismayed. They are all working together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to his purpose.

[Romans 8:29](#). *For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.*

That was the very end and object of their predestination that they might become like Christ, their great perfect elder Brother.

“‘Christ, be my first elect,’ he said,
Then chose our souls in Christ our Head
Before he gave the mountains birth
Or laid foundations for the earth.”

[Romans 8:30](#). *Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: My soul, hast thou been called of God? Has the Spirit of God ever called thee? If so, rejoice in thy predestinator. Have no doubts and fears concerning that matter, for he would never have called thee if he had not intended to save thee from before the foundation of the world.*

[Romans 8:30](#). *And whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.*

My son, dost thou believe in Jesus? Hast thou trusted in his precious blood? Then thou art justified. Never give way, then, to any fears concerning thine eternal salvation, for, as surely as there is a heaven, thou shalt be a partaker of its glories, for never was there a soul justified who was not afterwards glorified.

[Romans 8:31](#). *What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?*

Hast thou the world against the Christian? What is the opposition of the world when God is on thy side? Is thine own heart against thee? What then? God is greater than thy heart. Is the devil against thee? Ah! he is mighty, but God is almighty, and he shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. Paul was no fanatic; he was a man of great experience and of sound sense; yet he makes nothing of all our foes when God is on our side.

[Romans 8:32](#). *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?*

When God gave us Christ, he gave us everything, for all the blessings of this life and of the life that is to come lie hidden in Christ as the kernel is within the shell of the nut. What encouragement we have here for believing prayer! Christian, Christ is the golden key of God’s treasuries; you have but to use him aright, and whatever you need shall be yours.

[Romans 8:33](#). *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect?*

Here is true boldness; Paul, who called himself the very chief of sinners dares to challenge anyone to lay anything to the charge of God's elect? Surely God can do so. No," says Paul, —

[Romans 8:33](#). *It is God that justifieth.*

He is both just and the Justifier of all who believe in Jesus, and they are "God's elect."

[Romans 8:34](#). *Who is he that condemneth?*

"Why," saith one, "Christ, the great Judge, will condemn." No, that he will not, for —

[Romans 8:34](#). *It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.*

Christian, as Christ makes intercession for you, he will never condemn you. Did he shed his blood for you, and yet will he cast you into hell? Did he rise from the dead for you, and yet will he leave you among the dead and the lost? Think not so strangely of the Christ of God, who is the same yesterday, and today, and forever, and who will never condemn those who trust in him.

[Romans 8:35](#). *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?*

They have been tried again and again.

[Romans 8:36](#). *It is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.*

What was the effect of this persecution? Were the saints turned away from Christ by it?

[Romans 8:37-39](#). *Nay, in all these things, we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Verses 28-39

[Romans 8:28-30](#). *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.*

Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

No breaks between the links of this chain. Foreknowledge is welded to the predestination: the predestination is infallibly linked with the calling, the calling with the justification, and the justification with the glorification. There is no hint given that there may be a flaw or break in the series. Get a hold of any one, and you possess the whole. The called man is the predestinated man. Let him be sure of that. And the justified man shall be a glorified man. Let him have no doubt whatever about that.

[Romans 8:31](#). *What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?*

A great many, but they are all nothing. If God be for us, all they that be against us are not worth mentioning: they are ciphers. If he were on their side, then the one would swell the ciphers to the full, but if he be not there, we may put them all into the scale and reckon them as less than nothing.

[Romans 8:32-33](#). *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?*

Who, indeed.

[Romans 8:33-34](#). *It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?*

No one can, for: —

[Romans 8:34](#). *It is Christ that died,*

And so put our sins to death.

[Romans 8:34](#). *Yea rather, that is risen again,*

And so hath justified us.

[Romans 8:34](#). *Who is even at the right hand of God,*

And so has carried us into heaven by his representing us there.

[Romans 8:34](#). *Who also maketh intercession for us.*

Whose everlasting plea, therefore, silences all the accusations of the devil.

[Romans 8:35](#). *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress or persecution, or famine, or nakedness or peril, or sword?*

They have all been tried. In different ages of the world, the saints have undergone all these, and yet has never one of them been taken away from the love of Christ. They have not left off loving him, nor has he left off loving them. They have been tried, I say.

[Romans 8:36](#). *As it is written. For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.*

What is the result of it?

[Romans 8:37-39](#). *Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Halleluiah! Blessed be his name.

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 138.; [Isaiah 55:1-11](#); [Romans 8:28-39](#).

[ROMANS CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 9

Verses 1-5

[Romans 9:1-3](#). *I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh:*

The apostle is evidently about to make an extraordinary statement — a statement which would probably not be believed, and therefore, he gives as a preface the most solemn asseverations that are permitted to Christian men declaring that he is speaking the truth, and also that the Holy Ghost is bearing witness with his conscience that it is so — that he so loves the souls of his fellow-countrymen that, though the thing could never be, yet in a sort of ecstasy of love he could devote himself to anything so long as his countrymen might but be saved. “My kinsmen according to the flesh.”

[Romans 9:4-5](#). *Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises: Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.*

The apostle never omits an opportunity of magnifying his Master. Though it did not seem to be called for by the immediate subject in hand yet he must put in a doxology to the name of Jesus. “Who is over all; God blessed for ever. Amen.” How any believers in Scripture ever get to be

disbelievers in the Deity of Christ is altogether astounding. If there is anything taught in the Word of God, it is assuredly that Paul comforts himself in a measure by the doctrine of election, which is fully spoken to in this chapter. My subject leads me to read again at the 10th chapter.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Romans 9:1-5](#); and Romans 10.

Verses 1-25

The Jews thought that God must certainly save them. They thought they had a birth claim. Were they not the children of Abraham? Surely they had some right to it. This chapter battles the question of right. No man has any right to the grace of God. The terms are inconsistent. There can be no right to that which is free favor. We are all condemned criminals, and if pardoned, it must be as the result of pure mercy, absolute mercy, for desert there is none in any one of us.

[Romans 9:1-2](#). *I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart.*

He never thought about his unbelieving brethren, without the deepest imaginable regret. How far is this from the spirit of those who look upon the ungodly without tears — settle it down as a matter that cannot be altered, and take it as a question of hard fate, but are never troubled about it. Not so the Apostle. He had great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart.

[Romans 9:3](#). *For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh:*

He had just that self-sacrificing spirit of Moses, that he would lose anything and everything if they might but be saved. And this is the spirit which ought to actuate every Church of Christ. The Church that is always caring for her own maintenance is no church. The Church that would be willing to be destroyed if it could save the sons of men — which feels as if, whatever her shame or sorrow, it would be nothing if she could but save sinners — that Church is like the Lord, of whom we read, “He saved others: himself he could not save.” Oh! blessed heart-break over sinful men, which makes men willing to lose everything if they might, but bless and win men to Christ! “My kinsmen,” says he, “according to the flesh.”

[Romans 9:4-5](#). *Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of*

God, and the promises; Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.

What dignity has God put upon ancient Israel! How favored far beyond any of us in these particulars! They had the light, when the rest of the world was in darkness. Theirs was the law, and theirs the covenant promises. Above all, of them it was, that Christ came. Our Saviour was a Jew. Forever must that race be had in respectful honour, and we must pray for their salvation.

[Romans 9:6-7](#). *Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, in Isaac shall thy seed be called.*

Now, the Apostle is getting to his point. You Jews claim to have the mercy of God because you are of the seed of Abraham; but there is nothing in that, says he, for God made a distinct choice of Isaac to the rejection of Ishmael, as he did afterwards of Jacob, and then Esau was left out.

[Romans 9:8](#). *That is, thy flesh which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.*

Now, Isaac was not the child of Abraham's flesh. He was born according to promise, when his mother was past age, and his father well stricken in years. His was the birth according to the promise, and that is the way the line of grace runs — not according to the flesh, but according to the promise. If, then, all my hope of heaven lies upon my being a child of godly parents, it is an Israelitish hope, and good for nothing. If my hope of heaven lies upon my having been born according to the promise of God — born of his grace and of his power — in that line the covenant stands. God is determined that it shall be so.

[Romans 9:9-13](#). *For this is the word of promise. At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son. And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; (for the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.*

So, then, there is no claim of birth, for he that had the claim of birth, even Esau, is passed by. There is, indeed, no claim at all, for God gives

freely, according to his own will, blessing the sons of men.

[Romans 9:14](#). *What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid.*

There is no unrighteousness, in anything that he does: and in the winding up of all affairs, it shall be seen that God was righteous as well as gracious.

[Romans 9:15-16](#). *For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.*

That is where it must begin. When men are condemned, what can they appeal to, but the mercy of God? Where is the hope of men, but in the sovereignty of the Most High?

[Romans 9:17-24](#). *For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory. Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?*

There was the sting of it. They could not endure that God should in his divine sovereignty save Gentiles as well as Jews. But he has done so, and 'he has sent the Gospel to us; while they, having refused it, are left in the darkness which they chose.

[Romans 9:25](#). *As he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved.*

Oh! what a splendid verse is this! Let some here who have been far from God until now, and never had a gracious thought, nevertheless, hear what he has done and will do again. "I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved which was not beloved."

This exposition consisted of readings from [Exodus 3:1-14](#); [Romans 9:1-25](#).

Verses 1-33

Paul begins by expressing his great sorrow because the Jews had rejected Christ.

[Romans 9:1-3](#). *I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh:*

They hated Paul intensely; nothing could surpass the malice of the Jews against the man whom they reckoned to be an apostate from the true faith, because he had become a follower of Christ, the Nazarene. Yet note what is Paul's feeling towards his cruel countrymen; he is willing, as it were, to put his own salvation in pawn if by doing so the Jews might but be saved. You must not measure these words by any hard grammatical rule, you must understand them as spoken out of the depths of great loving heart; and when such a heart as Paul had begins to talk, it speaks not according to the laws of logic, but according to its own immeasurable feelings. There were times when he almost thought that he would himself consent to be accursed, "anathema," cast away, separated from Christ, if thereby he could save the house of Israel, so great was his love towards them. Of course, this could not be; and no one understood better than Paul did that there is only one Substitute and one Sacrifice for sinners. He only mentioned this wish to show how dearly he loved the Jews, so that on their account he had great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart for his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh. Do you, dear friends, feel that same concern about your brethren, your kinsmen according to the flesh? If they are not saved, do you greatly wonder that they are not, if you have no such concern about them? But when once your heart is brought to this pitch of agony about their souls, you will soon see them saved.

[Romans 9:4-5](#). *Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.*

This was what troubled the apostle so much concerning the Jews, that they should have such extraordinary privileges, and yet should be cast away; most of all, that Jesus Christ, the Saviour of men, should be of their

race, bone of their bone, flesh of their flesh, and yet they would not receive him, or be saved by him. Oh, the terrible hardness of the human heart; and what poor things the richest privileges are unless the grace of God goes with them to give us the inner secret of true faith in Christ!

[Romans 9:6](#). *Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect.*

Paul is always jealous lest anyone should suppose that the Word of God has failed, or that the purpose of God has come to naught.

[Romans 9:6-7](#). *For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children:*

Now he goes on to show that the blessings of God's grace do not go according to carnal descent. It is true that God promised to bless the seed of Abraham, yet he meant that word "seed" in a very special sense.

[Romans 9:7](#). *But, In Isaac shall thy seed be called.*

By passing over Ishmael, God showed that there was nothing of saving in blood or birth. Ishmael was the firstborn son of Abraham; but he was passed by, for the promise was, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called."

[Romans 9:8-10](#). *That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son. And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; —*

When there were twins to be born of her; —

[Romans 9:11-13](#). *(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.*

Here were two children born at the same time; yet Esau was not of the true "seed." It matters not how closely you may be connected with the people of God, unless you have a new heart and a right spirit yourself, you still do not belong to the covenant seed, for it is not of the flesh that this privilege comes, but God has chosen a spiritual seed according to his own good pleasure.

[Romans 9:14](#). *What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid.*

Paul knew very well that there would always be some who would cry out against this doctrine, that men would say that God was partial and

unjust. If he had not foreseen that the declaration of this doctrine would provoke such remarks, he would not have put it so: “What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid.”

[Romans 9:15-16](#). *For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.*

You know that the modern way of meeting objections to Scripture is to give up everything to the infidel, and then say that you have won him; but the true Christian way is to give up nothing at all, and if the truth is objectionable, to make it, if possible, still more objectionable, to turn the very hardest side it has right in front of the face of man, and to say, “This is God’s truth; refuse it at your peril.” I believe that half the attempts to win over unbelievers by toning down truth have simply been to the dishonouring of the truth and the destruction of the doubter, and that it would be always better to do as the apostle here does, — not to disavow the truth, but to proclaim it as fully, and faithfully, and plainly as possible. Let us again read what he here says: “Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.”

[Romans 9:17](#). *For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh,*

Paul is now going to show the other side of the same truth: “The scripture saith unto Pharaoh,” —

[Romans 9:17-19](#). *Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?*

Paul knew that the doctrine would be objected to on this ground; evidently he intended to assert something which was open to this objection, which would naturally suggest itself to men: “Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?”

[Romans 9:20-25](#). *Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make*

one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles? As he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved.

See the grand style in which God talks to men. He speaks after a royal fashion: "I will." He asks no man's leave for what he will do: "I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved."

[Romans 9:26](#). *And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people; —*

Though he himself had said it,-

[Romans 9:26](#). *There shall they be called the children of the living God.*

See the splendor of this divine sovereignty, which shows itself in wondrous, unexpected acts of grace, selecting and taking to itself those who seem to be self-condemned, and even condemned by himself, of whom he had said, "Ye are not my people."

[Romans 9:27-31](#). *Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved: For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth. And as Esaias said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrha. What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness.*

Does it not seem strange that men who were outwardly sinful, who were utterly ignorant of any way of righteousness, and even indifferent to it, have been by the grace of God led to seek righteousness in the right way, namely, by faith in Christ, and they have found it, and God's electing love is seen in them; while others, who seem very sincere and devout as to outward ritual, by following it and it alone, have missed their way, and never found the true righteousness? The sovereignty of God appears in the choosing of those

who follow the way of faith, and the casting away of those who follow the way of mere outward righteousness. But why did Israel miss the way?

[Romans 9:32-33](#). *Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone; As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence:*

I say again that there have been great attempts made, with logical dynamite, to blow up this great rock of offence, and to clear away every difficulty from the path of the man who wants to be saved by his own method, and to make everything pleasant all round for him; but against this course of action we bear our continual protest, for it is not according to the mind of God, or the teaching of his Word: “As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence.”

[Romans 9:33](#). *And whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.*

But if they believe not on him, they shall one day be ashamed; and, meanwhile, the eternal purpose of God shall still stand, he shall still be glorious whatever men shall do, or shall not do.

Verses 26-32

The Jews thought that God must certainly save them. They thought they had a birth claim. Were they not the children of Abraham? Surely they had some right to it. This chapter battles the question of right. No man has any right to the grace of God. The terms are inconsistent. But that same grace delights to save and bless even the perverse and rebellious who will yield to its blessed power.

[Romans 9:26](#). *And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, ye are not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God.*

That In the very same place where their sins made it patent and palpable they were not God’s people — in that very same place shall men confess that they are the children of the living God. Oh! what has not grace done?

[Romans 9:27-29](#). *Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved: For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth. And as Esaias said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrha.*

God has a people, then, even in Israel with all its rejection; and he Always will have, for he will never make the seed of Abraham to be as

Sodom and Gomorrha. He will love his own, and glorify himself in the midst of his people.

[Romans 9:30](#). *What shall we say then?*

Why, say this: —

[Romans 9:30](#). *That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith.*

For thousands of years they worshipped brutish idols and blocks and stones. Their philosophy was mixed with filthiness. Their lives were abhorrent to God. Even these at last have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith, for the Gospel being preached among the Gentiles, they have believed in Jesus, and they are saved.

[Romans 9:31](#). *But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness.*

Israel followed after the law of righteousness with many ceremonies and external washings, and wearings of phylacteries and bordered garments.

Alas poor Israel

[Romans 9:32](#). *Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling-stone;*

And God is determined that they that are of the law shall not inherit it. He has made it a sovereign decree that the believer shall be justified and saved, and none else. They sought it not by faith, But as it were by the works of the law.

[ROMANS CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 10

Verses 1-15

[Romans 10:1](#). *Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.*

Let this be our “heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel.” Sorrows upon sorrows have come to the Lord’s ancient people even down to this day; and they have been scattered and peeled, and rent and torn in almost every land. Who does not pity their griefs and woes? Let it be our heart’s desire and daily prayer for Israel that they may be saved through faith in the Messiah whom they have so long rejected.

[Romans 10:2](#). *For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.*

In Paul's day, they were most diligent in the observance of every form of outward devotion, and many of them sincerely desired to be right with God; but they did not know how to attain the desired end.

[Romans 10:3](#). *For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.*

Perhaps I am addressing some who are very anxious to be right with God; they are by no means hypocrites, but are really awakened to a sense of their danger, yet they cannot get peace of mind; and the reason is that, like the Israelites, they are "going about to establish their own righteousness." "Going about" — that is to say, struggling, striving, searching, worrying themselves to get a righteousness of their own which they never will obtain, and being ignorant of "the righteousness of God" which is completed in Christ, and which is freely bestowed upon all who believe in him. Alas! they "have not submitted themselves" unto this righteousness of God, and there is a kind of hidden meaning in the apostle's expression. They are so proud that they will not submit to be saved by the righteousness of another, even though that other is the Lord Jesus Christ himself. Yet this is the main point, — the submission of our proud will to the righteousness of God.

[Romans 10:4](#). *For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth.*

Christ is the ultimatum of the law; and when we go to the law, accepted and protected by him, we present to the law all that it can possibly demand of us. Christ has fulfilled the law on behalf of all who believe in him, so that its curse is abolished for all of us who approach it through Christ.

[Romans 10:5-9](#). *For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, that the man which doeth those things shall live by them. But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.*

“The righteousness which is of faith” is quite another thing from the righteousness which is of the law. It is not a thing of doing, and living by doing, but of trusting, and living for ever by trusting. What are you at, — you who would fain clamber up to the stars, or you who would plunge into the abyss? There is nothing for you to do, there is nothing for you to feel, there is nothing for you to be, in order that God may accept you; but, just as you are, if you will receive Christ into your heart, and confess him with your mouth, you shall be saved. Oh, this glorious way of the salvation of sinners, — so simple, yet so safe, — so plain, yet so sublime, — for me to lay aside my own righteousness, and just to take the righteousness of Christ, and be covered with it from head to foot! I may well be willing to lay aside my own righteousness, for it is a mass of filthy rags, fit only to be burned.

[Romans 10:10-14](#). *For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?*

How can there be true prayer where there is no faith? How shall I truly pray to God if I do not really believe in him? “For he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”

[Romans 10:14](#). *And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?*

We must know what it is that we are to believe; and knowing it, we shall be helped by the Holy Spirit to believe it,

[Romans 10:14](#). *And how shall they hear without a preacher?*

If the Word of the Lord does not get to a man either by the living voice, or by the printing-press, which often takes the preacher’s place, how is he to believe it? You see here what I have often called “the whole machinery of salvation.” First comes the preacher proclaiming the gospel, then comes the sinner listening to it, then comes the hearer believing it, and in consequence calling upon the name of the Lord as one who is saved with his everlasting salvation.

[Romans 10:15](#). *And how shall they preach, except they be sent?*

Here is the great engine at the back of all the machinery, — God sending the preacher, — God blessing the Word, — God working faith in the heart of them that hear it.

[Romans 10:15](#). *As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things?*

Verses 1-19

[Romans 10:1-3](#). *Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.*

A fault — a pitiable and grievous fault — that men should be in earnest and very zealous, and yet nothing should come of it, because they spend that zeal in a wrong direction. Men would make themselves righteous. They would come before God in the apparel of their own works, whereas God has made a righteousness already, which he freely gives, and for us to try and produce another is to enter into rivalry with God — to insult his Son, and do dishonour to his name. May God grant that any here who are very zealous in a wrong direction may receive light and knowledge, and henceforth turn their thoughts in the right way.

[Romans 10:4-5](#). *For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them.*

That is the righteousness of the law. We are not under that covenant now. We shall never attain to righteousness that way.

[Romans 10:6-9](#). *But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.*

How very simple! No climbing, no diving, no imagining, no long reckoning of the understanding, no strangling of the mental faculties. It is just believe God's testimony concerning his Son, and thou shalt be saved.

[Romans 10:10-11](#). *For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek:*

[Gentile] in this matter.

[Romans 10:12-13](#). *For the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*

This was the old prophecy of Joel. The Jews knew it. It is the new teaching of the gospel. The Gentiles know it. Oh! who would not wish to be in that broad “whosoever,” that he might find salvation?

[Romans 10:14-15](#). *How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher! And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!*

So that, rightly looked upon, the humblest preacher of the gospel stands in the most solemn relationship towards mankind. His Master sends him. He tells his message. Men hear it, believe it, and by it are saved. Happy is the messenger. Well may his heart rejoice, even when his soul is heavy, because he has such work to do in his Master’s name.

[Romans 10:16](#). *But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?*

And what Isaiah says, many and many a preacher since has had to say. “Woe, woe to us for this.”

[Romans 10:17-19](#). *So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, Have they not heard? Yes, verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world. But I say, Did not Israel know?*

Did not the Jewish people have a time of hearing and instruction? Certainly they knew, and they knew also that the gospel was not to be confined to them. They had a warning that it should even be taken from them and sent to other nations.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Isaiah 42:1-17](#); [Isaiah 43:18-25](#); [Romans 10:1-19](#).

Verses 1-20

[Romans 10:1](#). *Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.*

Now these people had persecuted the Apostle. Wherever he went they had followed him up; they had hindered his work: they had sought his life: and yet this was the only return that he made to them — to desire and pray that they might be saved. Let us never be turned aside from this loving desire for those among whom we dwell. We wish them nothing worse — we cannot wish them anything better than that they may be saved. Let us not only desire it, but let us pray for it. Let us turn our desires into the more practical and holy form of intercession.

[Romans 10:2](#). *For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.*

Always make allowance for anything that is good in those who, as yet, are not converted. We must not be unjust with them because we desire to be faithful to them.

[Romans 10:3](#). *For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.*

And that is the great mischief with persons who are not saved. They are very sincere, very earnest, but they will not submit to the righteousness of God; they will not agree to be made righteous by the grace of God through Jesus Christ; but they “go about” — that is the Apostle's word. It is very expressive of the energy men will put into it, and the shifts to which they will have recourse, in order to work out a righteousness of their own. They will go about, aye, even to the very gates of hell; they will try to climb up by prayers, even to the gates of heaven. They will go about to establish their own righteousness, but they do not know the righteousness of God, and they refuse to submit themselves to it.

[Romans 10:4](#). *For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.*

He that believes in Christ is as righteous as the law could have made him, if he had kept it perfectly. The end of the law is righteousness; that is, the fulfilling of it; and he that hath Christ will see the law fulfilled in Christ, and the righteousness of Christ applied to himself.

[Romans 10:5-6](#). *For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them. But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise,*

Ah! that is a very different sort of thing. It does not speak about doing and living, “but the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise.”

[Romans 10:6-9](#). *Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.*

There is the gospel in a nutshell. What a very simple way it is — to believe these great facts about the Lord Jesus Christ — really to believe them so that they become practical factors in your life. This is all the way of salvation. Christ has not to be fetched down. He has come. He has not to be fetched up. He has risen from the dead. The work is finished. What thou hast to do is to believe in that finished work and accept it as thine own, and thou shalt be saved.

[Romans 10:10](#). *For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*

How different all this from that going about to establish our own righteousness, this setting up of prayers, and tears, and church-goings, and chapel-goings, and good works, and I know not what beside! Instead of that, here is Christ set forth, and “ye are complete in him.” If you take him to be yours, you are “accepted in the Beloved,” and “being justified by faith, you have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Oh! what a blessing is this!

[Romans 10:11](#). *For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.*

Though he did much that he need be ashamed of, yet when the law so brought him to believe in Jesus Christ for righteousness, he is righteous, and he is so righteous that he shall never be ashamed of his righteousness, nor ashamed of his faith in Christ. Would God that some who are going about after a righteousness of their own would be led to try this method, and believe in Jesus Christ.

[Romans 10:12](#). *For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek:*

What a blessed word that is — “There is no difference between the Jew and the Gentile”! There are some that want to keep up that difference. They

say that we are Israel, or something of the kind. I do not care what we are. There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek.

[Romans 10:12](#). *For the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.*

Someone said to me, “I think that the Romish Church cannot be the Church of Christ. I do not think that the Church of England is the Church of Christ. Do you think the Baptists are the Church of Christ?” And my answer was, “The Church of Christ is to be found mixed up in all churches, and no churches at all.” It is a people that God has chosen from among men, and they are to be found here and there and everywhere, a spiritual seed that God has marked out to be his own; and they are known by this — that they call upon the Lord, and “the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.”

[Romans 10:13](#). *For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*

We call upon that name by having confidence in it; by speaking to God in prayer, using that name; by adoring and reverently proclaiming the majesty and the name of God. Whosoever shall call upon or invoke that great name shall be saved.

[Romans 10:14](#). *How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?*

For at the bottom of the saving invocation or call there must be real faith. There cannot be any true worship of God unless it be grounded and bottomed upon faith in God.

[Romans 10:14](#). *And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?*

There cannot be such a thing as believing what has never been spoken in our hearing, and has never been made known to us. Of course, reading often answers the same end as hearing. It is a kind of hearing of the Word; but a man must know, or he cannot believe.

[Romans 10:14](#). *And how shall they hear without a preacher?*

How is that possible? Do you see the machinery of the gospel? There is the calling upon the name. That comes of faith. There is the faith that comes of hearing; but there is the hearing that comes of preaching. Now a little farther.

[Romans 10:15](#). *And how shall they preach, except they be sent?*

Poor preaching. It will not be the kind of preaching that produces believing hearing, except they be sent. If God does not send the man, he had better have stopped at home. It is only as God sends him that God will bless him. He is bound to back up his own messenger when he delivers God's own message. "How shall they preach, except they be sent?"

[Romans 10:15](#). *As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!*

And they are so beautiful because, you see, God has put them at the root of everything. God makes the preacher whom he sends to be the source of so much good, or the channel of so much good, for by his preaching comes the hearing, and by the hearing comes the believing, and out of the believing come the calling upon the name and the salvation.

[Romans 10:16](#). *But they have not all obeyed the gospel.*

"But." A sorrowful "but" is this. Oh! this is the mischief of it. The gospel, then, has an authority about it; or else the Apostle would not speak of obeying the gospel. Men are bound to believe what God declares to them, and their not believing is a disobedience. "They have not all obeyed the gospel."

[Romans 10:16](#). *For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?*

As if there were so few that did believe it, that he had to ask who they were.

[Romans 10:17](#). *So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

You are wise, therefore, dear friend, if you are seeking salvation to be a hearer of the Word; but mind that it is the Word of God that you hear, because the word of man cannot save you. It may delude you. It may give you a false peace; but the hearing that saves is hearing which comes by the Word of God. Oh! take care, then, that you do not run hither and thither just because of the cleverness of certain speakers; but keep you to the Word of God whoever preaches it, for "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."

[Romans 10:18](#). *But I say, Have they not heard?*

These very people for whom the Apostle prayed — have they not heard?

[Romans 10:18](#). *Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.*

The preaching of the gospel went forth amongst those Israelites, who rejected it. Wherever they went, the gospel seemed to follow them like their

shadows. They could not escape from it, but they did not believe it.

[Romans 10:19](#). *But I say, Did not Israel know?*

Assuredly, Israel did know, but did not believe.

[Romans 10:19](#). *First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you.*

Moses told them that it would be so if they rejected Christ. Christ would be preached to the Gentiles, and those whom they thought to be foolish would come in and accept what they had rejected.

[Romans 10:20](#). *But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me.*

He told them, therefore, that God would save a people who hitherto had never sought after God — that he would send the gospel to a people that were dead in sin, and had never asked to receive the light and life of God.

Verses 1-21

[Romans 10:1](#). *Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.*

Desire is the mother and the soul of prayer “my heart's desire and prayer.” These Israelites had hunted Paul about, and sought to kill him. They were his deadly enemies; but the only return he made them was to pray that they might be saved. I hope you will never have a worse wish for your worst foe.

[Romans 10:2](#). *For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.*

Always see all the good that is to be seen; and, when you have to reprove and rebuke begin by admitting what is good: “They have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.”

[Romans 10:3](#). *For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.*

They were very zealous; but it was blind zeal. They were very energetic; but they used their energy in going the wrong way. God has a righteousness, and our wisest course is to submit to it. Our righteousness, if we set it up in opposition to God's way of salvation, will only increase our sin. You can be ruined by your righteousness, as surely as by your unrighteousness, if you set it in the place of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. “They being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their

own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.”

[Romans 10:4](#). *For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.*

If we get Christ by believing, we have the righteousness of the law. All that ever could come to us by the highest and most perfect obedience to the law, we get by faith in Christ Jesus.

[Romans 10:5](#). *For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law,*

And being the one through whom the law was given, he knew how to describe it; and we may be sure that he made no mistake. This is his description of legal righteousness: —

[Romans 10:5](#). *That the man which doeth those things shall live by them.*

That is it: “Do and live.” That is the law, and a very just law, too. Leave anything undone, or break the command in any respect and you die; that is the law.

[Romans 10:6](#). *But the righteousness which is of faith —*

This is quite another thing; it —

[Romans 10:6](#). *Speaketh, on this wise,*

And it is Moses who speaks here, as in the previous verse. This is what the righteousness of faith says: —

[Romans 10:6-9](#). *Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.*

God’s way of salvation, then, is “Believe and live.” Believe in Christ; Christ dying, Christ raised from the dead. If thou so believest, thou art saved. Thou needest not mount to heaven in rapture, nor dive to hell in remorse. As thou art, believe and live. This is the way of the righteousness of God.

[Romans 10:10](#). *For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*

True faith must be accompanied by an open confession. Come forward, and outwardly own what you inwardly believe. Remember those words of

the Lord Jesus, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” Here, as there, the confession is put after the faith, as indeed it must be. First, the reality, the thing signified, faith; afterwards, the outward and visible sign in the confession of that faith.

[Romans 10:11](#). *For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.*

He need never be ashamed of his faith. It will bear him up; it will bear him through; it will bear him up to heaven.

[Romans 10:12-13](#). *For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*

That is it wonderful sentence; catch at it. Doubting, troubled spirits, catch at it, believe it, practice it; and you shall find it true.

[Romans 10:14-15](#). *How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!*

See here the whole machinery of salvation. God provides salvation in Christ Jesus, he sends the preacher to tell of it, men hear, they believe, and salvation is theirs. You have not to make it righteousness, you have to accept the one that is made for you. It is not what you shall do that shall save you; it is what Christ has done. You are to get out of self-confidence into confidence in him; and as soon as you do so, you are saved.

[Romans 10:16](#). *But they have not all obeyed the gospel.*

Oh, no; all who have heard it, have not obeyed it! There are many here who have heard it from their childhood, and yet they have not obeyed it. Notice the word “obeyed”, for the gospel comes to you with the force of a command. If you reject it, you sin against it, for it is your duty to accept it: “but they have not all obeyed the gospel.”

[Romans 10:16](#). *For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?*

So few were the obedient, that he asked where they were.

[Romans 10:17-18](#). *So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, Have they not heard?*

Oh, may they hear, indeed!

[Romans 10:18-19](#). *Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world. But I say, Did not Israel know? First*

Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you.

Has he not done it? Israel is rejected, and remains without Christ, while many out of “a foolish nation” of Anglo-Saxons, who were idolaters, have accepted Christ. People who were regarded as dogs by God’s chosen nation Israel have come into the house of the Lord, and still Israel refuses to come.

[Romans 10:20](#). *But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not;*

Hear, then, you who have never had any religion; you who seldom go to the house of God. Even you may be saved, for it is written, “I was found of them that sought me not.”

[Romans 10:20](#). *I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me.*

Here is the manifestation of sovereign grace, God choosing and saving whom he wills, irrespective of their condition; exercising the sovereignty of his mercy in saving the most undeserving.

[Romans 10:21](#). *But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands —*

In the attitude of invitation and entreaty, and readiness to receive, —

[Romans 10:21](#). *Unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.*

And that is what he has done to thee, O then careless child of pious parents, then unregenerate hearer of the Word! All day long has he stood and stretched forth his hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people. The Lord forgive all such, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

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Romans Chapter 11

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER 12

Verses 1-16

[Romans 12:1](#). *I beseech you therefore, brethren,*

Paul is a calm reasoner. He is a bold starrer of truth, but here he comes to pleading with us. I think that I see him lift the pen from the paper and look

round upon us, as. with the accent of entreaty, he says, “I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, by God’s great mercy to you, his many mercies, his continued mercies.” What stronger plea could the Apostle have? “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God.”

[Romans 12:1](#). *By the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*

Though he beseeches you to do it, he claims a right to it. It is but your reasonable service. Do we need to be entreated to be reasonable? I am afraid that we do sometimes. And what are we to do? To present our bodies to God, not our souls alone, to make real, practical work of it. Let this flesh and blood in which your body dwells be presented unto God, not to be killed and to be a dead sacrifice, but to live and still to be a sacrifice, a living sacrifice unto God, holy and acceptable to him. This is reasonable. God help us to carry it out.

[Romans 12:2](#). *And be not conformed to this world:*

Do not live as men of the world do. Do not follow the customs, the fashions, the principles of the world. “Be not conformed to this world.”

[Romans 12:2](#). *But be ye transformed*

It is not enough to be nonconformists. Be transformed ones, altogether changed into another form.

[Romans 12:2](#). *By the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

It is by holy living, by consecrated bodies, that we are to prove the will of God. We cannot know it, we cannot practically work it out, except by a complete consecration unto God.

[Romans 12:3](#). *For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.*

Humility is sober thinking. Pride is drunken thinking. He that thinks more of himself than he should is so far intoxicated with conceit; but he that judges aright and is, therefore, humble, thinks soberly. God give us to be very sober in our thoughts of ourselves.

[Romans 12:4-5](#). *For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.*

Hence the diversity. If the hand were made exactly like the foot, it would not be a tenth part as useful; and if the eye only had the same faculty as the ear, it would not be able to see, and the whole body would be a loser thereby. Do we begin to compare eyes, and ears, and feet, and hands, and say, "This is the better faculty"? No. They are each one needful. So do not compare yourselves among yourselves, for if you are in the body of Christ, you are each one needful, and the peculiarity which you possess, and the peculiarity which your brother possesses, have their place in the body corporate, and must be precious before God.

[Romans 12:6-8](#). *Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; Or he that exhorteth on exhortation:*

Keep to your own work; stand in your own niche. If you are only an exhorter, do not pretend to teach. If your work is ministry, and you cannot prophesy, do not attempt to do it. Every man in his own order.

[Romans 12:8-9](#). *He that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness. Let love be without dissimulation.*

Do not pretend to a love that you have not got. Do not lard your speech with "dear" this and "dear" that, when there is no love in your heart; and even if your heart be full of love, show it without spreading molasses over your talk, as some do. "Let love be without dissimulation."

[Romans 12:9](#). *Abhor that which is evil;*

Be a good hater. Abhor that which is evil

[Romans 12:9](#). *Cleave to that which is good.*

Stick to it. Hold it fast. Do not go an inch beyond it.

[Romans 12:10](#). *Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love;*

Hear this, ye members of the church. Endeavor to carry it out by a kindly courtesy and a real sympathy one with another. "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love."

[Romans 12:10](#). *In honour preferring one another;*

Putting another before yourself, aspiring after the second place, rather than the first.

[Romans 12:11](#). *Not slothful in business;*

A lazy man is no beauty anywhere.

[Romans 12:11](#). *Fervent in spirit;*

Burn. Let your very soul get hot.

[Romans 12:11-12](#). *Serving the Lord; Rejoicing in hope;*

When you have not anything else to rejoice in, rejoice in hope.

[Romans 12:12](#). *Patient in tribulation;*

The word “tribulation” signifies threshing as with a flail. Be patient when the flail falls heavily.

[Romans 12:12-13](#). *Continuing instant in prayer; Distributing to the necessity of saints;*

When you have told your own necessity to God, then help the necessities of those who come to you.

[Romans 12:13-14](#). *Given to hospitality. Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.*

A Christian man cursing is a very awkward spectacle. Even the Pope, when he takes to cursing, as at least the former one used to do very liberally, seems as if he could hardly be the vicar of God on earth. Our work is to bless the sons of men. “Bless and curse not.”

[Romans 12:15](#). *Rejoice with them that do rejoice,*

Do not be a wet blanket on their joys. If they have good cause for rejoicing, join in it. Help them to sing their hymn of gratitude.

[Romans 12:15](#). *And weep with them that weep.*

Sympathize with mourners. Take a share of their burden. I really believe that it is easier to weep with them that weep than it is to rejoice with them that do rejoice; for this old flesh of ours begins to envy those who rejoice, whereas it does not so much object to sympathize with those that sorrow. Carry out both commands. “Rejoice with them that do rejoice. Weep with them that weep.”

[Romans 12:16](#). *Be of the same mind one toward another.*

Agree together, you Christian people. Do not be always arguing and discussing. Be of the same mind one towards another. In church life very much must depend upon our unity in mind as well as in heart. “One Lord, one faith, one baptism” — these help to make a good foundation for Christian fellowship.

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Romans Chapter 13

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

Romans Chapter 14

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CHAPTER 15

Verses 1-16

[Romans 15:1](#). *We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.*

When we are free from scruples upon any point, and feel that there are things that we may do because we are strong, yet let us not do them if thereby we should grieve others who are weak. Let us think of their infirmities; and whatever liberty we may feel entitled to claim for ourselves, let us look at the matter from the standpoint of other people as well as from our Own, that we may bear the infirmities of the weak, and not seek to please ourselves.

[Romans 15:2-3](#). *Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification. For even Christ—*

Our Master, and Lord, and great Exemplar: “For even Christ”—

[Romans 15:3](#). *Pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on, me.*

He took the most trying place in the whole field of battle; he stood where the fray’ was hottest. He did not seek to be among his disciples as a king is in the midst of his troops, guarded and protected in the time of strife; but he exposed himself to the fiercest part of all the conflict. What Jesus did, that should we who are his followers do, no one of us considering himself, and his own interests, but all of us considering our brethren and the cause of Christ in general.

[Romans 15:4](#). *For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning,—*

This is as if somebody had said, “Why, Paul, it was David who said what you just quoted” “Yes,” he replies, “I know that I quoted David, but he

spoke in his own person concerning his Lord, ‘for whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning.’”

[Romans 15:4-5](#). *That we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope. Now the God of patience and consolation—*

“Comfort” is really the word he used, turning into prayer the thought which had been suggested by his use of the words “patience and comfort.” “Now the God of patience and comfort”—

[Romans 15:5](#). *Grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus:*

“Make you to be unanimous, not concerning that which is evil, but that you may be of one mind in your likeness to Christ Jesus.” What a blessed harmony it would be if, not only all in any one church, but all in the whole of the churches were likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus! It will be so when he gathers those who are now scattered; but may we never hope to have it so here on earth? I cannot tell; but, at any rate, let us all strive after it. Let us all endeavor to pitch our tune according to Christ’s keynote; and the nearer we get to that, the less discord there will be in the psalmody of the church. We shall be likeminded with one another when we become likeminded with Christ; but not till then.

[Romans 15:6-7](#). *That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.*

Christ did not receive us because we were perfect, because he could see no fault in us, or because he hoped to gain somewhat at our hands. Ah, no! but, in loving condescension covering our faults, and seeking our good, he welcomed us to his heart; so, in the same way, and with the same purpose, let us receive one another.

[Romans 15:8](#). *Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers:*

It was to Abraham and his descendants that the promise was made that, in him, and in his seed, all the nations of the earth should be blessed. So our Lord came, as a Jew, to be “a minister of the circumcision.” Let us never forget that he came to those whom we are apt to forget; and, peradventure, even to despise, “to confirm the promises made unto the fathers.”

[Romans 15:9-12](#). *And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and*

sing unto thy name. And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people. And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud him, all ye people. And again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust.

There were plain indications, in the Old Testament, that the blessing was meant for the Gentiles as well as for the Jews; but, still, it was made known to the Jews first, and we must never forget that.

[Romans 15:13](#). *Now the God of hope—*

Turn back to the fourth verse, and note the expression, “that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope;” then read in the fifth verse, “The God of patience and comfort;” and see how Paul here goes back to that last word in the fourth verse, “Now the God of hope”—

[Romans 15:13-16](#). *Fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost. And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another. Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God. That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.*

Now would have been the time for Paul to say that he had been made a minister “to offer the unbloody sacrifice of the mass,” if such a thing had been right;—to offer up the daily sacrifice, as the so-called “priests” aver that, they now do; but he says nothing of the sort; and even when he represents the Gentiles as being offered up, he does not speak of any sacrifice going therewith, but says that it “might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.”

Verses 13-33

[Romans 15:13-27](#). *Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost. And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another. Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God. That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be*

acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost. I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God. For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed. Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation: but as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand. For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you. But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you; whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company. But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem. It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are.

For these Achaians and Macedonians had received the gospel from the saints in Jerusalem. The Gentiles had been made partakers of their spiritual things, so it was their duty to minister to the poor Christian Jews in carnal things.

[Romans 15:27-28](#). *For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things. When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit,-*

That is, “when I have delivered the money, and obtained a receipt in full for it; when I have discharged my duty in this matter,”-

[Romans 15:28-29](#). *I will come by you into Spain. And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.*

He was sure of that, but he did not know how he would go in other respects. He did not know that he would go to Rome as a prisoner; he could not foresee that he would be sent there as an ambassador in bonds; and little, I wean, did he care in what manner he would go, so long as he had the absolute certainty that he should go “in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.”

[Romans 15:30-31](#). *Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; that I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judaea; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints;-*

For there were some saints in Jerusalem who were very narrow-minded, and who hardly thought it right to accept anything from Gentiles. They had not got clear of their Jewish bonds, and Paul was a little afraid lest what he was taking to them might not be acceptable, so he asked the Romans to pray about that matter. Is there anything about which believers may not pray? If there be, then we have no right to have anything to do with it. Bring everything before God in prayer, for all right thing way lawfully be prayed about. So Paul asked the Christians in Rome to pray about that matter of his journey to Jerusalem, and also to pray for his return,-

[Romans 15:32-33](#). *That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed. Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.*

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Romans Chapter 16

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

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Contents

CHAPTER 1

Verses 1-9

1. *Paul, called to be an, apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother,*

Paul could never have sustained the great weight of responsibility and tribulation which fell upon him if he had not felt that he was “called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God.” No man will ever be fit for the ministry of the Word unless he is called to it by God. This also will be your strength in every other station of life; if God has called you to your peculiar work and warfare, he will not send you at your own charges, but he will be at the back of you, and support you even to the end. I think it is for this reason that Paul so constantly dwells upon his own calling when he is about to write to the churches, that he may remind other believers that they have similar privileges in their spheres of labour.

1 Corinthians 1:2-3. *Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.*

A church should be made up of sanctified persons, those who have been set apart in Christ from before the foundation of the world, those who have been called by the Spirit of God to holiness of life. We sometimes sing, — “With them number’d may we be Now, and through eternity;”-- but if we are not holy, if we are not truly sanctified, how can we expect to be numbered with the Church of Christ? Where there is no true holiness, there is no work of the Spirit of God. For all the holy ones Paul desires grace and peace, for they still need these blessings. The holiest of men still have spots about them, and they need that grace and peace should be given to them from day to day through Jesus Christ our Lord.

1 Corinthians 1:4. *I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ;*

It is something to be thankful for God’s goodness to yourself, but it is a higher virtue to be thankful for God’s goodness to others. How grateful we might be all day long if we had a quick eye to see the grace of God in our

fellow-Christians, and if we blessed God for it whenever we saw it! There are some whose eye is much more quick to see imperfections than to see graces; it is a pity to have such a jaundiced eye as that; may we have a good, sound, clear, gracious eye, which will see all the good there is in our fellow-believers; and may we then ascribe it all to God, and bless and praise him for it!

[1 Corinthians 1:5-8](#). *That in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: so that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

It was very wise of Paul thus to praise these Corinthians where they could be praised, for he was about to upbraid them and reprove them for many things which were not pleasing to God. If you have the unpleasant duty of rebuking those who deserve it, always take care that you begin by saying all that you can, and all that you ought, in their favor; it will prepare the way for what you have to say to them afterwards. The Corinthians were a highly-gifted church; they probably had more knowledge and more of the gifts of utterance than any other church of their day; but, alas! they fell into greater sin than did their sister churches. Great gifts are not great graces; but great gifts require great graces to go with them, or else they become a temptation and a snare. Yet Paul felt quite sure that God would keep even these Corinthians with all their imperfections, and confirm them unto the end; and that which was true of them, is also true of all the Lord's people, God will preserve them to the very end.

[1 Corinthians 1:9](#). *God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Verses 1-24

1. *Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother,*

This brother had been put to great shame. He was beaten before the judgment-seat, if you remember, and now he has the great and lasting honour of being mentioned by the apostle with himself. God will honour those who bear dishonour for his name's sake. Be not ashamed even to be beaten for Christ; the stripes are stripes of glory.

[1 Corinthians 1:2](#). *Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:*

The epistles were written to distinct churches, but they have a bearing upon all Christians; hence the apostle says, "With all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord." Let us thank God no Scripture is of private interpretation; every promise belongs to all the seed. If you are a believer, you may freely appropriate to yourselves whatever was said of old to any individual believer, or to any congregation of believers.

[1 Corinthians 1:3-4](#). *Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ;*

Paul is a great preacher of grace, and therefore he is a great giver of thanks. Grace should be followed with thankfulness. "I thank my God." What a beautiful expression! Not only "I thank God," but "I thank my God." He has God in possession, he has taken him to be his own for ever and ever. Beloved, have we all done the same? Can we say, "I thank my God"? You notice how often Paul in the first ten verses mentions the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. I think it is eleven times. He was full of Christ.

Not only did he love Christ in his heart, but he had Christ's name continually on his tongue, for he was not ashamed of the sweet name of Jesus Christ. Honey in the mouth, music in the ear, heaven in the heart, is that sweet name of Jesus.

[1 Corinthians 1:5](#). *That in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge;*

The church of Corinth was a church of all the talents: it was not, however, a church so much of all the graces, and so it was a very poor example for us. I sometimes think that its mode of worship is recorded rather as a warning beacon than as an example to us. It caused, incidentally through the abundance of their gifts and everybody wanting to exercise his gift, great divisions, and there was an absence of humility and love in the church. However, Paul is thankful for what they have.

[1 Corinthians 1:6-7](#). *Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ:*

This is a fine trait in their character, they did look to the second Advent; it operated upon them, it helped them in many ways. We cannot now

mention all the holy uses which is in the waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but it ought to be a good description of all Christian men.

[1 Corinthians 1:8-9](#). *Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful,*

Blessed be his name that he is. We are often very unfaithful. Man is always so, but “God is faithful.”

[1 Corinthians 1:9-10](#). *By whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.*

Where it is not so, the life of piety seems to ooze away. The blessing of God cannot rest upon a church unless we dwell together in unity, and for unity it is necessary that we be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

[1 Corinthians 1:11-15](#). *For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius. Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name.*

It may have been an accidental circumstance that he did not happen to have baptized then, but he is glad of it, for he says that in the temper they were in, some of them would have made a boast of it.

[1 Corinthians 1:16-17](#). *And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other. For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel:*

There were other people who could baptize for him: it was enough for that he should concentrate all his energies upon that one matter of preaching the gospel, not that he neglected the divine command, but that it was not necessary that he, any more than his Master, should baptize personally, for we read that “Jesus Christ baptized not, but his disciples.” Not to put a dishonour upon the ordinance, but to let us see that the ordinance does not depend upon the man, but upon that sacred name into which we are baptized, and upon the true faith of the person baptized.

[1 Corinthians 1:17](#). *Not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.*

A very remarkable passage! Paul could have used the wisdom of words. In some of his epistles he gives us a specimen of his mighty rhetoric. He was a born master of speech. There was a touch of poetry in him, and always a high logical power, but he would not use it in his preaching, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. You may do what you like with human wisdom, put a bit into its mouth and try to lead it into obedience to Christ, but somehow or other its tendency is to rebel against him.

[1 Corinthians 1:18-21](#). *For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God,*

You have only to study the history of the world at the time when Paul was writing, and you will see that the “world, by wisdom knew not God.” It had made itself exceedingly philosophical and sage, but if you weigh its wisest conclusions you will find that they were only polished folly. There is nothing left us of all the wisdom of that period. Time itself has proved it: nay, has disproved it.

[1 Corinthians 1:21-22](#). *It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign,*

Some miracle, something that shall attest it in a supernatural way.

[1 Corinthians 1:22-24](#). *And the Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.*

Beloved, you know how true this is. It has been a wonderful power in you, and this day it is the only wisdom which you desire to possess.

Verses 1-31

1, 2. *Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth,*

-Note the humility of Paul in associating with himself an almost unknown brother, Sosthenes. Although the letter is written by Paul alone, yet, as if he did not care to stand in isolation even for a moment, he associates Sosthenes with himself in the salutation: “Unto the church of God which is at Corinth,” —

2. *To them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints,*

Called to sacred uses, set apart unto God. That is the call of all believers; they are like those vessels of the sanctuary which were not to be used by any but the priests of God, and by them only for God’s service.

2. *With all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:*

That is a very happy phrase, “both theirs and ours”. There are multitudes of saints whose faces we never saw yet Christ is theirs, there are some with whom we might not agree in all particulars, yet Christ is theirs just as much as he is ours. All Christ is theirs, and all Christ is ours, and here is the grand bond of union between believers of different nationalities and different tongues.

3. *Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Grace first, for that is the fountain; then peace comes, for that is the fitting stream to flow from the fountain of grace. Seek not peace first, for there is no peace for unregenerate man; grace first, then peace, and both must come “from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.”

4. *I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ;*

That is wisely written, for Paul was about to upbraid these Corinthians for many serious faults, yet he begins by acknowledging that they had certain excellences. It gives you a ground to stand upon if you are willing to see all that is good in those whom you have to rebuke. But Paul did not merely use this as a polite way of commencing his epistle, but he did really every day thank God for the grace which these Corinthians had; yet how seldom do we thank God for the grace that he has given to other people, especially if they outshine us, if they do more for the cause of God than we do; then, we half regret that they have so much grace, but it was not so with Paul.

5, 6. *That in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you:*

The church at Corinth was an important church, with more than the usual number of speaking men among the members. This led to mischief, but had they known how to use this talent aright, the church at Corinth might have been of great service; instead of which, it split itself up into little parties, and became one of the worst churches that then existed, as certain communities which imitate them in this present day, have also done.

7, 8. *So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Paul continues to recognize the abundance of their endowments, and to express for them the utmost of affection, and then he adds his full conviction that God would prove the power of his grace by keeping them unto the end, and then presenting them “blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

9. *God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.*

As Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, “Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.” To be called by the faithful God is the guarantee of everlasting salvation.

10. *Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.*

They could not speak the same thing if they had not the same mind and the same judgment. Paul dreaded the introduction of anything that would divide the hearts of believers one from another; and, beloved, let every one of us, wherever we go, be on the side of Christian truth, Christian unity, and Christian love. There is no true unity outside of truth; and the nearest way to Christian union is union in the truth. When error shall be destroyed, that which divides will be taken away; when truth is dominant, union will be universal, but it will not be so before that is the case.

11. *For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you.*

He does not go beating about the bush, but he speaks straight out, and gives the name of his informants, for persons who bring reports about others should always be ready to have their names mentioned. It may be unpleasant for them, but it is sometimes necessary to do unpleasant things

and those who will not allow their names to be mentioned in connection with a statement adverse to character deserve no notice whatever.

12. *Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.*

The last were as bad as the others, it makes no difference what the party name is, for it may only thinly conceal the most sectarian spirit to say, "I am of Christ."

13. *Is Christ divided?*

Paul begins with that, for it is the worst of all divisions to make Christ the head of a party in his own church.

13-16. *Was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name. And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other.*

Paul considered that it was a providential circumstance that he had baptized no more of them, else they would have cried themselves up as superior to those who had been baptized by others.

17. *For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.*

It is true that baptism is in the original commission of all Christ's servants, but it occupies a very secondary place compared with the preaching of the gospel; and was an evil day when the Christian Church began to put rites before doctrines, and ceremonies in the place that should be occupied by the gospel itself. Paul therefore says that his main commission was not to baptize, "but to preach the gospel."

18-20 *For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?*

Indeed he has; he has let it run the full length of its tether so that we may see the folly that can be taught by wise men.

21. *For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.*

Not by foolish preaching, but by that preaching which men call foolishness.

22. *For the Jews require a sign,*

They were always looking for supernatural manifestations.

22. *And the Greeks seek after wisdom:*

They would believe nothing but what could be proved to them by logic.

23-20. *But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.*

Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. They call it foolishness, but it is wiser than men's wisdom. God at his lowest (if we can imagine such a thing,) is wiser than man at his highest "and the weakness of God (if such a thing could be,) is stronger than men."

26-28. *For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: —*

Those that do not even seem to have an existence, those that are so despicable that men do not deign to take any account of them, these are the very things with which God shall break in pieces the many mighty errors of all the ages.

29-31 *That no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.*

Verses 25-31

In this chapter the apostle magnifies the cross of his Lord, as God's greatest gift to the world; and as the highest glory of God's self-revelation to men. He praises God that the Corinthian Christians have experienced the saving grace that comes by faith in the sinner's sacrifice on Calvary. He rejoices, too, that that same grace has taught them to look forward to the Saviour's return in glory. But he is compelled to reprove them for some

divisions and rivalries that sprang from their glorying in gifts rather than graces. This leads him to remind them how God had disparaged mere worldly wisdom by saving mankind by the death of Jesus. And he brings all to a very practical application in the verses that we now ponder.

[1 Corinthians 1:25](#). *Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.*

And yet you will perceive that the church is always looking after wise men after the flesh. If it can find these, it straightway cringes before them, and asks these learned doctors to teach it something more than the simplicities of Christ. This is the old disease of the church. May God cure her yet.

[1 Corinthians 1:26](#). *For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called:*

There are a few such. Remember how the Countess of Huntingdon used to say that she was very thankful for that letter “m,” for it does not say “not any noble,” but “not many noble are called.”

[1 Corinthians 1:27-28](#). *But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not,*

Seem scarcely to have an existence, not worth notice, not put down in the list of existences.

[1 Corinthians 1:28-29](#). *To bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence.*

This is what flesh always likes to do. Proud flesh we speak of, and all flesh is such. Flesh has a great tendency to swell, to corrupt; it is easily puffed up; but God will not have it so. What is flesh to God? Did not he make all things? Shall the thing formed boast itself against the Former?

[1 Corinthians 1:30](#). *But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:*

In fact, we have everything in Christ; we have in his prophetic office wisdom, in his priestly office righteousness and sanctification, and in his royal office, in which he paid the price of our salvation, we have redemption.

[1 Corinthians 1:31](#). *That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.*

Here is room for glorifying, and it is our duty to glory in God. Let us do so more and more!

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 103. [1 Corinthians 1:25-31](#).

[1 CORINTHIANS CONTENTS](#)

1 Corinthians Chapter 2

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER 3

Verses 1-16

1. *And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.*

The church at Corinth consisted of persons of large education and great abilities. It was one of those churches that had given up the one-man system, where everybody talked as he liked — a very knowing church, and a church of Christians, too; but for all that. Christian babies. And though they thought themselves to be so great, yet the apostle says that he never spoke to them as to spiritual: he kept to the simple elements regarding the carnal part as being too much in them as yet, to be able to drink down spiritual things.

[1 Corinthians 3:2](#). *I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.*

How grateful we ought to be that there is milk, and that this milk does feed the soul — that the simplest truths of Christianity contain in them all that the soul wants, just as milk is a diet upon which the body could be sustained, without anything else. Yet how we ought to desire to grow that we may not always be upon milk diet but that we may be able to digest the strong meat — the high doctrine of the deep things of God. These are for men, not for babes. Let the babes be thankful for the milk, but let us aspire to be strong men that we may feed on meat.

[1 Corinthians 3:3](#). *For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?*

A united church, you may conclude, is a growing church — perhaps a grown church; but a disunited church, split up into factions where every man is seeking position and trying to be noted such a church is a church of babes. They are carnal, and walk as men.

[1 Corinthians 3:4](#). *For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollo; are ye not carnal?*

Instead of that, they should all have striven together for the defense of the common faith of Jesus Christ. There is no greater symptom of mere infancy in true religion than the setting up of the names of leaders or the preference for this or that peculiar form of doctrine, instead of endeavoring to grasp the whole of truth wherever one can find it.

[1 Corinthians 3:5-6](#). *Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.*

Let God, then, have all the glory. Be grateful for the planter, and grateful for the waterer, ay, and grateful to them as well; but, still, let the stress of your gratitude be given to him without whom watering and planting would be in vain.

[1 Corinthians 3:7-8](#). *So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one:*

They are pursuing the same design; and Apollos and Paul were one in heart. They were true servants of one master.

[1 Corinthians 3:8-9](#). *And every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.*

The church is built up. God is he who builds it up — the master of the work, but he employs his ministers under him to be builders.

[1 Corinthians 3:10-13](#). *According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest: For*

the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

Very easy to build up a church quickly. Very easy to make a great excitement in religion, and become very famous as a soul-winner. Very easy. But time tries everything. If there were no other fire than the mere fire of time, it would suffice to test a man's work. And when a church crumbles away almost as soon as it is got together when a church declines from the doctrines which it professed to hold, when the teaching of the eminent teacher is proved, after all, to have been fallacious and to have been erroneous in practical results, then what he has built comes to nothing! Oh! dear friends, what little we do we ought to aspire to do for eternity. If you shall never lay the brush to the canvas but once, make an indelible stroke with it. If only one work of sort, shall come from the statuary's workshop, let it be something that will live all down the ages.

But we are in such a mighty hurry: we make a lot of things that die with us ephemeral — results. We are not careful enough as to what we build with. May God grant that this truth may sink into our minds. Let us remember that, if it is hard building with gold and silver, and harder still building with precious stones, yet what is built will stand the fire. It is easy building with wood, and easier still with hay and stubble, but then there will be only a handful of ashes left of a whole lifework, if we build with these.

[1 Corinthians 3:14-15](#). *If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.*

If he meant right — if he did endeavor to serve God as a worker, though he may have uttered many errors and have been mistaken — (and which of us has not been?) — he shall be saved, though his work must be burnt.

[1 Corinthians 3:16](#). *Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?*

Do you know it? He says, "Know ye not?" but I might leave out the "not" and say, "Know ye that ye are the temple of God?" What a wonderful fact it is! Within the body of the saint, God dwells, as in a temple. How do some men injure their bodies or utterly despise them, though they would not so do if they understood that they are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in them.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Matthew 6:1-24](#). [1 Corinthians 3:1-16](#).

Verses 1-23

1. *And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.*

Their spiritual part had not grown strong, their old carnal nature still had the preponderance, as Paul was obliged to address that which was the bigger half of them.

[1 Corinthians 3:2](#). *I have fed you with milk,*
That is a blessing.

[1 Corinthians 3:2](#). *And not with meat:*

That is not a blessing. It is a great privilege to be fed even with the simple doctrines of grace, with the milk of the gospel; but it is a higher boon to have such a spiritual constitution as to be able to eat the strong meat of the Word.

[1 Corinthians 3:2-3](#). *For hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?*

As ordinary, unregenerate men.

[1 Corinthians 3:4](#). *For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?*

Is not this just how common, ordinary men would do? Where is your spiritual-mindedness if you so act?

[1 Corinthians 3:5](#). *Who then is Paul,*

Mark, it is Paul himself who asks this question. He puts his own name here in order to show that he does not despise Apollos any more than he despises himself.

[1 Corinthians 3:5-9](#). *Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that waterereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry.*

Ye are God's tilled ground. Then the apostle works out the same thought under another image turning from agriculture to architecture.

[1 Corinthians 3:9-10](#). *Ye are God's building. According to the grace of God which is given unto me as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon.*

Paul began the churches; he was the first preacher of the gospel in Corinth, and also in other places; and other preachers followed in his footsteps. When a man lays a good foundation, he always feels anxious that those who come after him should build in the same substantial manner as he has begun. It is a great grief to a man if he sees that, after he has laid a foundation of truth, somebody else follows, and builds up an error on the top of it. Alas, men do that still sometimes.

[1 Corinthians 3:10-15](#). *But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.*

If he be a good man, he builds for God; though he may build mistakenly, and say much that he ought not to have said. He shall escape, as a man flies out of a burning house, but all his work is gone. What a dreadful thing that would be, at the end of life, to get into heaven, but to have seen that all your life's work had been a failure; to have been building a great deal, but to see it all burned; or to know, as you die, that because it was not God's truth, it would all be burned!

[1 Corinthians 3:16-17](#). *Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man destroy the temple of God, —*

For so it should run, —

[1 Corinthians 3:17](#). *Him shall God destroy;*

If any man should pull down that which Paul built for God, if any man shall pull down that which any faithful minister of Christ has built before him,

“him shall God destroy;”

[1 Corinthians 3:17-18](#). *For the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are. Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.*

For that kind of folly is the doorstep of true wisdom.

[1 Corinthians 3:19](#). *For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.*

All that which calls itself philosophy, and talks about its culture, and so on, is foolishness with God, just as much today as it was among the Greeks.

[1 Corinthians 3:19](#). *For it is written, he taketh the wise in their own craftiness.*

They call themselves wise, but they shall all be taken in their own craftiness.

[1 Corinthians 3:20-21](#). *And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain. Therefore let no man glory in men.*

Men are poor things to glory in.

[1 Corinthians 3:21](#); [1 Corinthians 3:23](#). *For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.*

Glory be to his holy name!

Verses 17-23

17-18. *If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are. Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.*

Do not let him seek to be reckoned wise by the philosophers of the period, who are always against the truth of God. Let him consent to be thought to be a fool; yea, let him know in his own heart that he is not wise; and then let him yield himself up to the wisdom of God. Consciousness of ignorance is the vestibule of knowledge, and he that knows right well that he is a fool is on the way to becoming a wise man. He that would pass into the temple of wisdom must first of all confess his unwisdom.

[1 Corinthians 3:19-20](#). *For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.*

What a wonderfully small difference there is, after all, between the very cultured man, who thinks himself so, and the man who makes no pretense to it whatever! The knowledge which the wisest man has is about equal, in the presence of God, to the knowledge which one child of three years old has over a child of two years old. To God we must all seem masses of ignorance; and if you could put the whole British Association and all the

doctors of divinity, and all the LLD's, and all the men of high degrees together, the things they did not know would make a great many volumes, and the things they did know would not go very far. "The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise that they are vain."

[1 Corinthians 3:21](#). *Therefore let no man glory in men.*

There really is not anything to glory in, in men. "The best of men are men at the best." Never need we exalt ourselves or extol others. "Lord, what is man that thou art mindful of him?" "Let no man glory in men."

[1 Corinthians 3:21](#) *For all things are yours;*

Children of God, all men are yours, to serve your highest benefit. All ministers and leaders in Christ are yours to seek your souls' good. Treat them as bees do flowers, and gather honey from them all. "All things are yours."

[1 Corinthians 3:22-23](#), *Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.*

This exposition consisted of readings from [Matthew 13:1-23](#); [Matthew 15:13-28](#). [1 Corinthians 3:17-23](#).

[1 CORINTHIANS CONTENTS](#)

1 Corinthians Chapter 4

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

1 Corinthians Chapter 5

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER 6

Verses 1-14

1. *Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?*

In those days, the courts of law were utterly unjust. It was all a matter of who could bribe the most, for he would gain the suit. I think that we cannot say that it is quite like this at the present time in our law courts, neither can this verse be strictly a rule for the guidance of men in these days, except that, in the spirit of Paul's words, all lawsuits among Christians should be avoided if possible.

[1 Corinthians 6:2-3](#). *Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels?*

Sitting with Christ, at the last great day of judgment, we shall give our "Amen" to the condemnation of the fallen spirits.

[1 Corinthians 6:3-4](#). *How much more things that pertain to this life? If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church.*

For they will be better judges than the best of worldly men. Do you set such people to judge your difficult matters? And if you do not, then why do you go to those who are even worse fitted to give a right decision?

[1 Corinthians 6:5-11](#). *I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren. Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortionist, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you:*

They were Corinthians, and some of them had fallen into the same sad and shameful condition as the rest of the inhabitants of Corinth. Many of them had been fetched, by almighty grace, out of the very depths of the grossest sin, so that Paul, after giving a list of the blackest sinners, could add, "and such were some of you."

[1 Corinthians 6:11-12](#). *But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient:*

There are some things that I may do; that is, I have the liberty to do them if I please; but I must also consider whether they are expedient, or whether they will damage others, and do mischief to them; for, if so, it will be better for me not to do them, because they are not expedient, even though they are lawful.

[1 Corinthians 6:12-13](#). *All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them.*

So, on the one hand, do not make too much of abstaining from this or that, for these things, after all, are but small matters to glory in; but, on the other hand, let no man ever call himself a Christian while he is a slave to any evil habit. What says Paul? “God shall destroy both it and them.” In the previous verse, he says, “I will not be brought under the power of any.” The immortal spirit under the power of materialism? ay, that must never be.

[1 Corinthians 6:13-14](#). *Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body. And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power.*

Our bodies belong to him; therefore, let us think highly of them, and never do anything to injure them; and, especially, let us take care never to let them become instruments of iniquity to the grieving of the blessed Spirit of God.

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1 Corinthians Chapter 7

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

1 Corinthians Chapter 8

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER 9

Verses 22-27

The apostle Paul is here giving a description of the way in which he made everything help toward the fulfillment of his desire to be a faithful minister of Jesus Christ. He longed to be the means of winning souls; he desired that, at the last, his Master might be able to say to him, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant;” And therefore, everything with which he had to do was made to bend in that direction.

[1 Corinthians 9:22-24](#). *I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel’s sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you. Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize?*

No matter if twenty or a hundred had entered for the race, “but one receiveth the prize.” Alas! out of these who appear to be running in the Christian ministry, how many will be prizetakers at the last? And out of those who seem to be running the race of the Christian life, how many will win the prize? Ah, Lord, thou knowest!

[1 Corinthians 9:24](#). *So run, that ye may obtain.*

Do not speculate about what others will do, or not do, but see to your own running: “So run that ye may obtain.” Salvation is all of grace; but when a man is saved, he still has to run the Christian race and to be a runner as long as he lives.”

[1 Corinthians 9:25](#). *And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things.*

Here Paul is alluding to the athletic games and pugilistic encounters of the time. It was a matter of common notoriety that every man, who was going to fight, or wrestle, or run, had to get himself into proper condition, — to “go into training,” as we say in similar cases nowadays.

[1 Corinthians 9:25](#). *Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.*

The athletes who completed in the Grecian games, passed through great self-denials and mortifications of the flesh, in order that every part of their bodily frame might be tough and strong when they came forward to wrestle, or to run, or to fight. “Now,” says Paul, “if they do all that to gain a crown of parsley,” — which was generally the crown given, — truly,” a corruptible crown,” — “how much more ought we to do in order to win a crown that fadeth not away, — ‘an incorruptible crown’!”

[1 Corinthians 9:26](#). *I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air:*

He would not leave a stone unturned, as it were, that he might gain the prize; he put out all his strength in the name of the Lord.

[1 Corinthians 9:27](#). *But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection:*

The Greek word, according to some, implies getting his body into the same position as a man does, when, in a pugilistic encounter, he gets his adversary's head under his arm, and smites him with all his might, So Paul says concerning his body, "I bring it into subjection and take care that it feels the full force of my will." According to other interpreters, the verse may be read, "I drag my body off as a slave;" just as in some of those ancient fights, the victors dragged away their antagonists as slaves, Paul accounted his body to be as a slave to his soul, and dragged it behind him in chains.

[1 Corinthians 9:27](#). *Lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be castaway.*

The Greek word, which is translated "a castaway" is "adokimos." It might better have been rendered "disapproved." It certainly has no such meaning as that which has been generally given to it. Paul was not afraid of being cast away by God at the last. What he aimed at was this, — as he had entered the lists, as a Christian minister, to fight for Christ, to wrestle against principalities and powers, to seek to win souls for Christ, he must keep his bodily powers and passions so in subjection that, at the last, when the prizes were distributed, he would be found to have won his. This is quite another matter from being "a castaway" from salvation and eternal life. Paul was saved and he knew it; and some of us know, to a certainty, that we are saved; but we also know that there is another crown to be won, which the Lord will give to his servants who win in the great fight with sin. To win this crown is our high ambition and we long to hear the Master say to each one of us, in that day, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

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CHAPTER 10

Verses 1-13

[1 Corinthians 10:1-4](#). *Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.*

You see, then, dear brethren, that the possession of privileges is not everything. Paul would not have us to be ignorant that all those, who were with Moses in the wilderness, had privileges of a very high order. Did they not all pass through the Red Sea, and so escape from their powerful and cruel foes? Did they not all drink of water which gushed forth from the flinty rock? Were they not all fed with manna from heaven? Yet their privileges did not save them, for while they had the five privileges mentioned in these four verses, they fell into the five great sins of which we are about to read; and so, their privileges, instead of being a blessing to them, only increased their condemnation.

[1 Corinthians 10:5-6](#). *But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples, —*

Or, warnings, for just as they were overthrown in the wilderness, so may we be, notwithstanding all the gospel privileges which we enjoy, if we are not true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. If the life of Christ is not in our souls, all the privileges of the Church of God cannot save us. “These things were our examples,” —

[1 Corinthians 10:6-11](#). *To the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples; —*

The apostle has told us that before, but he tells it to us again, to warn us, by these beacons, lest we come to a similar destruction to that which befell those ancient unbelievers.

[1 Corinthians 10:11-12](#). *And they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he*

standeth take heed lest he fall.

We also are to take heed lest we fall, especially those of us who think we are standing securely. You have seen how terrible was the fate of those unbelievers in the wilderness, who never entered into Canaan, but left their carcasses in the desert; now Paul urges us, with such beacons to warn us, to take heed lest we also fall as they did.

[1 Corinthians 10:13](#). *There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.*

O Lord, fulfill thy gracious purpose unto thy servants! Hold thou us up, lest we fall. We are very weak; keep us, for thy dear Son's sake! Amen.

Verses 1-14

[1 Corinthians 10:1-4](#). *Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.*

The history of Israel in coming out of Egypt was a very instructive type of the history of the visible Church of Christ. They were in slavery in Egypt as all men are in bondage to sin and Satan. They were brought out of Egypt as all the redeemed are delivered by the almighty grace of God. With a high hand and an outstretched arm, the Lord brought Israel out of the house of bondage; and, by a very wonderful baptism, "in the cloud and in the sea," they commenced their career as God's separated people. Then they all shared in the same spiritual ordinances: "They did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink." Yet, for all that, they were not all God's people. They were so nominally, and visibly; but they were not all really so. And, as there was a mixed multitude that came up out of Egypt, together with the true seed of promise, so is there an alien element in every church at this present day. Among those who have been baptized into Christ, there are still some who, while they eat the spiritual meat and drink the spiritual drink, yet for all that have not been brought into true communion with Christ, and do not in reality know the Lord.

[1 Corinthians 10:5](#). *But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.*

There was no evidence of faith in many of them, and “without faith it is impossible to please God.” Is it not a sad thing that, in a people so highly favored as they were, there should have been so large a proportion of those who had not the faith which renders men pleasing unto God? So they did literally come out into the wilderness to die there, and they never entered into the rest of God.

[1 Corinthians 10:6](#). *Now these things were our examples, to the intent we —*

We professed Christians,— we, church-members,—

[1 Corinthians 10:6](#). *Should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.*

They gave way to their carnal appetites; they craved for meat when God had already given them angels’ food. Now, if we act like this, we cannot be pleasing unto God.

[1 Corinthians 10:7](#). *Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.*

That is, to go through those unclean rites and ceremonies before their idols which are here called, “play.” Ah, dear friends, may God keep us from the worship of anything which we can see with our eyes, or hear with our ears! Stay we never become idolaters! You know, we can very easily make idols of our children; we can make idols of our own persons, we can make idols of our talents, of our respectability, and so forth. But, oh! it matters not what the idol is; it is no more pleasing to God if it be of silver and gold than if it were of the mud of the river. No: “Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them.”

[1 Corinthians 10:8](#). *Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.*

Fornication in God’s people is peculiarly black and filthy. In the ordinary man of the world, it is evil enough; but when a man professes to be a Christian, he must flee from even the very thought of it, and keep himself chaste, for his body is a temple of the Holy Ghost. Oh, may none of us ever come anywhere near to this great evil, but in purity of heart may we walk before our God!

[1 Corinthians 10:9](#). *Neither let me tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.*

I cannot stay to mention the many ways in which we can tempt Christ; but we can readily do so still. What a dreadful doom it was to be destroyed by serpents! Yet is it not very wonderful that, in connection with this great

sin, and its awful punishment, the brazen serpent was lifted high, that whosoever looked to it might live? And now, if any have tempted Christ by presumptuous sin, by their delay, or by their infidelity, let them bless God that they are not yet destroyed of serpents, because Christ has been lifted up even as the serpent of brass was exalted above the camp of Israel.

Remember our Lords' words to Nicodemus: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life."

[1 Corinthians 10:10](#). *Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.*

It is a dreadful habit to get into,— that of complaining against God. Occasional murmuring is doubtless sinful, but habitual murmuring becomes a very great evil. I am afraid that there are some who cavil at God's providence, and cavil at his Word, till they come to be cavillers and nothing else; and what good is a man who can do nothing else but carp, and cavil, and criticize? O beloved, "neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer."

[1 Corinthians 10:11](#). *Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples:*

They were like a 'book in which we might read our own history in large characters. We see ourselves foreshadowed in them, and we read our happiness or our misery in their behaviour.

[1 Corinthians 10:11-12](#). *And they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.*

For if he begins to think that he stands, it may be that it is nothing but his own imagination; there may be no real standing about it. And there is no surer sign of the falsity of a man's estimate of himself than the fact that it is a high one. He that thinks himself good has not begun to be good, for the door of the palace of wisdom is humility, and the gate of the temple of virtue is lowliness of mind.

[1 Corinthians 10:13-14](#). *There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.*

I should like to see this verse put over the top of every “sacramental” table in every “church” in England: “Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.” If this text were properly understood, every crucifix would be broken to pieces, and the altars themselves would be cleared away to make room for what should be there,— the table of the Lord; and we should have no more worship of visible things, which is idolatry. O ye who are the dearly-beloved of God, flee from it! Keep as far from it as ever you can. I remember reading of a man of God who was the rector of a certain parish, and who had in the church a very ancient sad famous painted window of which he was somewhat proud. In the design there was a representation of the Godhead,— the Father was there, and oh, how blasphemous! — he was represented as an aged man; and, one day, this clergyman, who had seen no evil in the window, heard a rustic explaining to a companion that that was the God whom they worshipped. The rector did not deliberate for a moment, but he threw a stone right through that part of the painted window. I suppose that was an offence against the law of man, but certainly it was not against the law of God. He would never have that figure replaced on any account whatever, and I think that he did well: “Dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.” Put it out of your sight; do not tamper with it, but hate it with a perfect hatred. In God’s eyes, it is one of the most fearful of sins. He has said, “I the Lord thy God am a jealous God,” and he will have nothing to come between us and the pure and simple worship of his invisible self.

Verse 15

[1 Corinthians 10:15-19](#). *I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread. Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar? What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing?*

After they had offered the beasts as sacrifices to their idols, it was the custom to sell the carcasses in the shambles. Christian men, going into the market to buy meat, and asking no questions, bought and ate portions of these sacrifices, and they did no wrong whatever. But there were some in the church who were very tender of conscience, and who said, “If we eat meat which has been offered to idols, we thereby become partakers with the idolaters.” Paul therefore writes:—

[1 Corinthians 10:20-21](#). *But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils:*

It cannot be; there must be a separation between these two things. We cannot have any delight in idol-worship, and yet worship the Christ of God.

[1 Corinthians 10:21-28](#). *Ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devil. Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he? All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not. Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth. Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, that eat, asking no question for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof. If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever, is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake. But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof:*

So, you see, you may eat the meat if you like, for the idol is nothing at all; but, still, if you are told that it is meat that has been offered to idols, and that you by eating of it seem to join in the worship of idols, abstain from doing it, not for your own sake, but for the sake of the man who might be caused to stumble through you. This is a safe rule with regard to Christian behaviour in many other things. There may be things lawful in drink as well as in meat, which a man may take without sinning; but if he knows that his example leads others astray, then let him take heed that he does not set such an example. An example which is an excuse for drunkenness is not a good one; therefore, let none of us set it before the eyes of men. If any man say to you, "This meat has been offered in sacrifice to idols," "eat not for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof."

[1 Corinthians 10:29](#). *Conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other: for why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience?*

That man may not be able to do it without injury to himself, but I may, and I have liberty so to do; but yet, as a Christian man, I am to consider his want of power, and I am not to use my liberty lest I do harm to my brother.

[1 Corinthians 10:30-31](#). *For if I by grace be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks? Whether therefore ye eat, or*

drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

And if anything you might do would not glorify God, do not do it.

[1 Corinthians 10:32-33](#). *Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God: even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.*

[1 Corinthians 11:1](#). *Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.*

This exposition consisted of readings from John 9, and [1 Corinthians 10:15-33](#), and [1 Corinthians 11:1](#).

[1 CORINTHIANS CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 11

Verses 17-34

The members of the church at Corinth abounded in gifts, and therefore they thought it meet for each one to speak to edification. They had no pastoral oversight whatever; acting, in this respect, like certain brethren whom we know nowadays. The result, however, was very deplorable. They do not appear to have been able even to conduct the Lord's supper without the most disorderly proceedings. Church discipline was utterly forgotten or neglected; and it seems as if the two Epistles to the Corinthians are given to us as beacons to warn us against that form of worship, seeing that it produces such mischievous and sad results.

[1 Corinthians 11:17](#). *Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse.*

It is a very bad state of things when we meet for worship, and separate without any improvement, or, like these Corinthians, "come together, not for the better, but for the worse."

[1 Corinthians 11:18](#). *For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it.*

It was very gracious and kind on the apostle's part to put it so mildly, and he sets us the example of not believing anything against our brethren too quickly: "I partly believe it."

[1 Corinthians 11:19-21](#). *For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you. When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper. For in*

eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken.

They seem to have regarded it as a common feast, to which they brought their own provisions; and, without waiting for each other, they disgraced the table of the Lord by their scandalous proceedings.

[1 Corinthians 11:22](#). *What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in these? I praise you not.*

No doubt they hoped to be praised, and expected that they had done everything in the right way; perhaps, they even believed that they were acting under the inspiration of the Spirit, and therefore could not do anything wrong; but the apostle deals very faithfully with them, and tells them how the supper is to be celebrated. How much we have gained by the mistakes of others! As the inspired apostle is guided to inform us as to the right mode of observing this ordinance, we may almost be thankful that the Corinthians fell into error concerning it, much as we may regret their faults on their own account.

[1 Corinthians 11:23-24](#). *For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.*

These are the words of the Lord Jesus himself, and therefore they come to us with all the weight of his infallible authority. Then Paul continues:

[1 Corinthians 11:25-26](#). *After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.*

“Show” or “proclaim.” The latter is the better word: “Ye do proclaim the Lord's death till he come.” That last phrase ought finally to settle the question of the perpetuity of the Lord's supper, which is to be observed “till he come.”

[1 Corinthians 11:27](#). *Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.*

“Unworthily,” that is, in a thoughtless, careless way; or with a view to worldly gain, as some used to take it in order to obtain office under

government; and as some, doubtless, do take it, to obtain the alms of the church. Such an unworthy participation is a sin against the very body and blood of the Lord.

[1 Corinthians 11:28](#). *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.*

Paul does not say, “Let a man examine himself, and then not eat or drink at the communion.” The examination should lead him to repentance, and to faith, and should then bring him to the table of fellowship in the right state of mind and heart. The examination is not a door to shut him out from the ordinance, but a door at which he may pause awhile, to see whether he is in a right condition to enter; and if he is not, he should seek to be made so, and then enter.

[1 Corinthians 11:29](#). *For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, earth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body.*

“Eateth and drinketh judgment to himself,” for “judgment” is the word here used by the apostle.

[1 Corinthians 11:30](#). *For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.*

It appears that God visited this church at Corinth with sickness, and took away many of the members by death, because they had profaned the Lord’s table, and had walked in a disorderly manner before him. Paul did not mean to say that these persons were lost; but he intended to remind their fellow-members, and all who might read his Epistle, that God visits churches after this fashion with discipline and chastening because of the unseemly conduct which is always so offensive to him.

[1 Corinthians 11:31-32](#). *For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.*

So, you see, that chastening process, which is going on in the church, is all in love: “that we should not be condemned with the world;” just as a father exercises discipline in his household, and uses chastisement that his children may never disobey the laws of the realm. They will never come before the police court, for they are kept under proper control at home, and are tutored and trained by their father’s wise government. So we come not under the judgment of the law, as the world itself comes; we come under the disciplinary treatment of the great Head of the Church, even the Lord Jesus Christ.

[1 Corinthians 11:33-34](#). *Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another. And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come.*

Now let us read Luke's account of the institution of this supper; as we do so, it will be well for us to remember that Luke was a friend and intimate companion of Paul.

This exposition consisted of readings from [1 Corinthians 11:17-34](#); and [Luke 22:14-24](#).

Verses 18-34

[1 Corinthians 11:18-22](#). *For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you. When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper. For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken. What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not.*

These Corinthians fell into a great many errors. Everybody was a speaker, and said whatever he pleased; and they had no proper order or rule. Among other evils, when they met together to observe the Lord's Supper, they brought their own food with them, thinking that eating thus together was keeping the sacred feast. So the richer ones feasted to the full, and the poor went almost without anything. "One is hungry, and another is drunken," says the apostle, and he tells them that this was not the right way of observing the Lord's Supper. Yet it is evident that the idea which was in their mind was that of feasting together. They had exaggerated it, and carried it to a grievous excess; but that was the idea they had concerning it. Certainly, there was no altar, or priest, or anything of the sort. Now the apostle tells them how the ordinance should be observed.

[1 Corinthians 11:23-25](#). *For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.*

After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. How wonderfully simple it all is! There is nothing here of the paraphernalia of a “sacrament.” It is a simple memorial festival, that is all.

[1 Corinthians 11:26-27](#). *For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.*

He shall be guilty with respect to that body, — not with respect to that bread, against which he cannot sin, — but with respect to that body which is represented by the bread, and with respect to that blood which is represented by the cup. See with what holy solemnity this humble feast is fenced and invested. There is a divinity which doth hedge the simple ordinance of Christ lest men should trifle with it to their eternal ruin.

[1 Corinthians 11:28-29](#). *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body.*

“Judgment” or “condemnation” is the word in the original, not “damnation.” That is not a fair translation, neither does it express the truth. He that eateth and drinketh unworthily condemns himself in so doing, he comes under judgment for that act. This is the kind of judgment that falls upon Christians if they come unworthily to the Lord’s table: —

[1 Corinthians 11:30-32](#). *For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.*

Believers, who are rendered sick, or who even die, because of their offence against the Lord’s ordinance, are not therefore condemned to hell. Far from it; it is that they may not be so condemned that God visits them. “When we” the people of God — “are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.”

[1 Corinthians 11:33-34](#). *Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another. And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come.*

By due attention to the apostle's injunctions, they would be able rightly to observe the ordinance; and we also may learn, from what Paul wrote, how we may worthily come to the table of our Lord.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Matthew 26:17-30](#); and [1 Corinthians 11:18-34](#).

Verses 20-26

[1 Corinthians 11:20](#). *When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper.*

Merely meeting together, each person bringing his or her own portion of bread and wine, and each one eating the provided portion, was not celebrating the Lord's supper.

[1 Corinthians 11:21](#). *For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken.*

Bad as some professing Christians are even now, they are not so bad as these Corinthians were. One was hungry, and another was drunken, because they had turned the holy feast into a kind of banquet of a most disorderly sort. There was nothing in their conduct to indicate true Christian fellowship. The very meaning of the ordinance was lost in the fact that each one was feasting himself without fear.

[1 Corinthians 11:22](#). *What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not.*

The Lord's supper is not to be made an opportunity for eating and drinking in disorderly self-enjoyment. It is a hallowed and holy institution, setting forth the fellowship of true believers with one another, and with the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul was an apostle, yet he had not been present at the institution of the Lord's supper, so he had a special revelation given to him concerning the way in which this ordinance is to be observed.

[1 Corinthians 11:23](#). *For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you,—*

That is the right kind of teaching which a man first receives from God, and then delivers to the people. Nothing is of authority in the Christian ministry unless we can say of it, "I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you," —

[1 Corinthians 11:23](#). *That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: —*

What a pathetic interest is given to the Lord's supper by the fact that it was instituted "the same night in which he was betrayed." Never forget that God grant that none of us may betray our Lord this night, or any other night! It would be the darkest night in our life should it ever be so: "The Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread:" —

[1 Corinthians 11:24-25](#). *And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament —*

"The New Covenant" —

[1 Corinthians 11:25-26](#). *In my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.*

This exposition consisted of readings from [Matthew 26:20-30](#); And [1 Corinthians 11:20-26](#).

Verses 20-34

[1 Corinthians 11:20-21](#). *When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper. For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken.*

These Corinthians had fallen into a very queer state. I do not think that any Baptist Church that I have ever known of has acted in this fashion; but when churches have no ministers, when there is an open ministry where everybody talketh and nobody listeneth, they fall into a queer condition, especially into divisions and heart-breaking strifes. It was so in the case of this church at Corinth. Here everybody brought his own provision, and some ate to the full, and others had not enough; and they thought that they were observing "the Lord's supper."

[1 Corinthians 11:22](#). *What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in?*

There is your proper place if you want a meal. Go home, and eat and drink; do not come to the sanctuary for such a purpose: "Have ye not houses to eat and to drink in?"

[1 Corinthians 11:22](#). *Or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not. For I have received of the Lord that which I delivered unto you,*

He had received it by a special revelation, Poor Paul was brought in late, and he was like one born out of due time. He had not been present in the upper room with Christ at the first famous breaking of bread; so the Lord

came and gave him a special revelation concerning this sacred feast, so that, whenever he spoke or wrote to any of the churches about the Lord's supper, he could say, "I have received of the Lord that which I delivered unto you."

[1 Corinthians 11:23](#). *That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.*

The Lord's supper is a simple service of remembrance. Nothing is said about an altar, or a priest, or a sacrifice. Our Lord took bread, gave thanks for it, brake it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take, eat: this is my body which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me." Mark that "this do"; it will not be right to do something else instead of this; and we must not do this for any other purpose than the one he mentions, "This do in remembrance of me." This command raises a previous question, "Do we know him?" we cannot remember Christ if we do not know him.

[1 Corinthians 11:25](#). *After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.*

"By Christ redeemed, in Christ restored,
We keep the memory adored,
And show the death of our dear Lord,
Until he come!
"And thus that dark betrayal-night,
With the last advent we unite;
By one blest chain of loving rite,
Until he come!"

[1 Corinthians 11:27](#). *Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord.*

If such a man has treated "this bread" and "this cup" with contempt, he has treated "the body and blood of the Lord" with contempt; it shall be so reckoned to him. Many have been troubled by this verse. They have said, "We are unworthy." You are, this is quite true; but the text does not say anything about your being unworthy. Paul uses an adverb, not an adjective. His words are, "Whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily," that is, in an unfit way, to gain something by it, as men

used to take what they called “the sacrament” to get into certain offices, or as some come to the communion-table for the sake of the charitable gifts that are for the poor of the church; this is to eat and drink “unworthily.” To come carelessly, to come contemptuously, to say, “I do not care whether I am a Christian, or not; but I shall come to the communion,” this is to eat and drink “unworthily.” Notice the ly; we are all unworthy of this sacred feast, and if unworthiness could shut us out, who would dare to be here?

[1 Corinthians 11:28](#). *But let a man examine himself,*

Let a man look himself up and down, as a lawyer cross-questions a witness, as a man examines money to see whether it has the true ring of gold about it; or not: “Let a man examine himself.”

[1 Corinthians 11:28](#). *And so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.*

Let him come as a true believer, as sincere; if not perfect, yet true; if not all he ought to be, yet in Christ; if not all he wants to be, yet still on the way to it, by being in Christ, who is “the way, the truth and the life.”

[1 Corinthians 11:29](#). *For he that eateth, and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body.*

He does not see the meaning of the emblem of Christ’s death.. He degrades the symbol by making it take the place of the thing signified. He sees the bread, but not the body; and he damnifies himself, condemns himself, by such eating. He is a loser rather than a gainer by eating and drinking unworthily.

[1 Corinthians 11:30](#). *For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.*

Persons coming to the Lord’s table in an improper spirit are very apt to come under God’s discipline; some will be taken ill; and some will die. This discipline is being carried on in every true church of God. God’s providence will work in this way if many treat the table of the Lord as the Corinthians did, acting as if it were a common place for eating and drinking. Many of them were weak and sickly, and many died.

[1 Corinthians 11:31](#). *For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.*

If we are God’s people, we shall be judged by him here for our wrongdoing. We shall not be like the world that is left to the day of judgment; but we shall be judged now. God will visit with temporal judgments those of his children who sin against him.

[1 Corinthians 11:32](#). *But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.*

You know that a man will see a great deal that is wrong in children in the street, and say nothing about it; but if it is his own who is up to mischief, he will give him a sweet taste of the rod. So, if you belong to God, you cannot sin deeply without having a present judgment, a present discipline; and you ought to be thankful for it, painful though it may seem to be for the time, for “when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.”

[1 Corinthians 11:33](#). *Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another.*

How gently Paul talks to these Corinthians! They deserve to be scolded; but he is very tender with them. He says, “If you must come together in this way, at least have the good manners to stop for one another; and if you do come to the communion of the Lord, treat it with that respect and reverence which it deserves.

[1 Corinthians 11:34](#). *And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come.*

May we tonight keep this feast in due order under the power of the Holy Spirit, and may we find a blessing in it to God’s praise! Amen.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Matthew 26:26-30](#); [1 Corinthians 11:20-34](#)

[1 CORINTHIANS CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 12

Verses 1-3

[1 Corinthians 12:1-2](#). *Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led.*

Although the members of the church at Corinth were highly favored with spiritual gifts, they do not seem to have known how to use them. Paul points out to them, in this chapter, how ignorant they were concerning the very gifts which they possessed. They did not know how to put them to proper use in the service of God. The apostle therefore reminds these gift-

exalted Corinthians that, only a little while before, they were heathens, carried away by falsehood and superstition, and worshipping dumb idols. They had nothing, therefore, to boast of; and it is probable that, if we also look back to the hole of the pit whence we were dug, we shall find no more occasion for boasting than they had.

[1 Corinthians 12:3](#). *Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed:*

I suppose that, in their assemblies, where everybody talked who liked, there were some people who even spoke blasphemy. They professed to be under the guidance of the Spirit of God, and yet they stood up, and called Jesus accursed. Where there is no rule nor order, there is pretty sure to be something very mischievous before long. Paul gives them to understand that this kind of talk could not go unrebuked.

[1 Corinthians 12:3](#). *And that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.*

If a man really knows Jesus as his Lord, and he declares that truth, then you may fully accept it as being in harmony with the teaching of the Spirit of God

[1 Corinthians 12:4-7](#). *Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.*

It is given in order that he may himself profit, and also that he may be the means of profiting those who hear him.

[1 Corinthians 12:8](#). *For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom;*

He is prudent,—an experienced man—fit to lead the young, and the feeble, and those who are less instructed than he himself is.

[1 Corinthians 12:8](#). *To another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;*

He has a wide range of practical acquaintance with God's Word; and though he may not be so judicious as the brother who was just mentioned, yet he is a man of knowledge.

[1 Corinthians 12:9](#). *To another faith by the same Spirit;*

Paul probably means here some special kind of faith; perhaps, the faith that enabled its possessor to work miracles.

[1 Corinthians 12:9-10](#). *To another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits;*

So that he is able to detect the impostors who come even into the nominal Church of Christ. They did come then, and they will continue to come even to the end.

[1 Corinthians 12:10-11](#). *To another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: but all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.*

Whatever Our gifts as a church, or as individuals, may be, they all come from the selfsame Spirit. This should tend to promote unity amongst us. Let us all trace whatever gift we have to the hand that gave it, and to the Spirit that wrought it; let us feel that we are so many pipes connected with one fountain; and, therefore, as all the good that we convey comes from the one source, let us give all the, honour and glory of it to the Spirit of God from Whom it comes.

[1 Corinthians 12:12](#). *For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.*

That, is to say, Christ visible—the Church of Christ. We are members of his mystical body. He is the Head; but all who are quickened by the Spirit of God are one with him.

[1 Corinthians 12:13-14](#). *For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many.*

By the way in which some people act, you might almost imagine that the body was one member, and that the one member was a tongue; but it is not so. God never intended that, in the assembly, all should speak. Let those speak to whom he has given the power to speak. He does not lay all burdens upon one back; let each man bear the personal burden which God has placed upon his back.

[1 Corinthians 12:15](#). *If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?*

Where are you, dear child of God, who are in the position of the foot? Have you been comparing yourself with some eminent Christian, who did much in his Master's service; and have you sorrowfully asked, "Why can

not I do what he did? I am only a poor foot, always touching the ground, often limping, and frequently needing to be washed.” Well, suppose you could be made into a hand, it might be a gain to you in some respects, but it might be a loss to the rest of the body. It would certainly be a loss to any of you if your feet were to be turned into hands, for you have need of feet; and the Church, which is here called by the name of Christ, needs its feet as much as it needs its hands. The mercy is that even if you have, in your anxiety,—perhaps I ought to say, in your unbelief,—been saying, “Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body,” it does not matter what you have said, for that does not alter the fact. “Is it therefore not of the body?” Of course, it is of the body still, whatever it may say.

[1 Corinthians 12:16](#). *And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?*

Oh, by no means! The ear has its proper purpose to fulfill; it is designed for a special service in the body, which no other member can render. We must never compare ourselves among ourselves, and wish to be somebody else. You are bad enough as you are, dear friend, but you would probably be much worse if you were somebody else. You may think that you are a very poor ear, but you would decidedly make a much worse eye. Even if your ear is dull of hearing, it can, at any rate, hear better than it can see. It can do its own work better than it could do the work of any other member of the body; and so can you as a member of Christ’s mystical body.

[1 Corinthians 12:17-18](#). *If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.*

That is the best rule for each part of our body: “as it hath pleased him.” Could any of you suggest a better place for your eyes than where they are? We have read the old heathen fable of a giant who had one eye in the middle of his forehead; and whenever I have seen his portrait sketched by fancy, I have felt at once, that it was no improvement upon the human face. No, the eye is best where it is; so is the ear, and so is the mouth. They are all best just where they are. So are you, my brother or my sister, best where you are, if you are in the place where God evidently meant you to be.

[1 Corinthians 12:19](#). *And if they were all one member, where were the body?*

There would be no body at all

[1 Corinthians 12:20-21](#). *But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee:*

You know how very quick the hand always is to go up to the eye when it is in danger. You do not have to wait to tell it what to do; but, in an instant, the hand is up, for there is a fellow feeling between the members of the same body. "The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee." And the hand never feels that it may leave the eye to take care of itself; it is ready at once to protect it.

[1 Corinthians 12:21-23](#). *Nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: and those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness.*

They are covered and concealed; and so we take more trouble with them than we do with other parts of our body.

[1 Corinthians 12:24](#). *For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked:*

Here is a lesson for us with regard to church-fellowship,—always to take most notice of those who are the least noticeable, and to be most gentle with those who require the most tenderness. You know that there are some of our fellow-members who are not all we should like them to be. We believe that they are children of God; but they are, somehow or other, "cut on the cross." They are crotchety, and weak in many ways. Now, we should try, as far as ever we can, to adapt ourselves to them. If you have ever had the gout very badly, you know that, if a person walks across the room too heavily, you feel it. Do you, therefore, say to your father, when he is thus laid aside, "You cannot expect me to take notice of such a thing as that? Nor would you be so cruel as to say to anybody else, "If he has a gouty foot, I cannot help it, and I shall tread on it every now and then." No; you are not so brutal as that. So, if there be a member of the body that is more tender than the rest, and especially if that tenderness is the result of disease, let us try to minister to it as far as ever we possibly can. Let us give "more abundant honour to that part which lacked."

[1 Corinthians 12:25](#). *That there should be no schism in the body;*
That is, no division, no rent in the body.

[1 Corinthians 12:25-26](#). *But that the members should have the same care one for another.*

And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. I am afraid that this second half of the verse refers to a duty which is more neglected than is the other. It is an easier thing to suffer with those that suffer than it is to rejoice with those that rejoice; and I will tell you why it is so; because, in giving compassion to those that suffer, you have some sense of dignity. Condescension is often a sort of pride; but when a brother is better off than you are,—when he has more talent than you have,—when he is more successful than you are,—for you to go and rejoice with him, and be as glad as if it were all your own gladness,—ay, to enter into his joy, and say, “God be thanked, my brother, for thy prosperity! I would increase it if I could, for I feel that I am a partner with you;”—ah! this needs great grace. So, may God give us more grace continually, and deliver us from everything like envy, which is of Satan, and yet is all too common even among professing Christians.

[1 Corinthians 12:27-31](#). *Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.*

[1 Corinthians 13:1-3](#). *Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.*

God grant us grace, then, that we may abound in this most excellent grace of a true Christian life, which is infinitely more essential than the highest gifts or the most remarkable talents that God himself can bestow upon us?

Verses 12-31

[1 Corinthians 12:12-13](#). *For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.*

Oh, what a sacred oneness that is which subsists between all the Lord's people! We are not simply brethren, but we are one; we are not allied by affinity, but by actual identity; we are parts of the same body; we are brought into spiritual membership with each other, as real and as effectual as that membership which subsists between the various parts of the body. Yet we are not all alike, although we are all of one body; some are Jews, some are Gentiles, some are bond, some are free; and yet, in some things, we are all alike, for we have all been baptized by one Spirit. And, moreover, we have all been made to drink into one Spirit; we have had one spiritual baptism, and we have had one spiritual drinking. Would to God that we felt more one, that our hearts beat more in tune with each other; that we had a sympathy with each other in woes and sufferings; that we had a fellow feeling with all who love the Lord; and could at all times weep with those that weep, as well as rejoice with those that rejoice

[1 Corinthians 12:14-15](#). *For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?*

Do not get comparing yourself with others, and saying, "Ah! if I were such-and-such a person, I might then think myself to be part of Christ's body." No, you might not; if you were just like him. As there are only certain members of a sort in a man's body, so, by a parity of reasoning, there would not be more than a certain number of members alike in the mystical body. We do not imagine that there will be many members of this body, the Church, of one class, or of one character; so that, if you are different from others, you are filling a different office in the body. You may, from that fact, rather draw an inference of comfort than one of sorrow and despondency. Even should you say, "Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body, are you therefore not of the body?" Oh, no! you are of the body still, though you do not think that you are.

[1 Corinthians 12:16-17](#). *And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing?*

If we were all preachers, if we could all see into God's truth, and set it forth in a public manner, where should we get our congregations?

[1 Corinthians 12:17](#). *If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?*

There must be different members to fill different offices. If we were all so one that there was no distinction whatever, if we were all of one rank, all of one age, all of one standing, the body would be incomplete.

[1 Corinthians 12:18-21](#). *But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.*

Brethren, you sometimes think there are some belonging to the Church whom we could well spare; but there is not one superfluous member in the whole body. If they be truly united to Christ, they have all their offices, all their places. There is not a poor old woman, who has not been able to get up to the house of prayer for several years, who is not of some use to the Church; for she lies upon her bed, and there she intercedes with God. There is not: a member of the Church so humble, so illiterate, so uninstructed, that he or she may not be of essential service to the whole body. There is some little part, my brother, which you are to take in the great Church of Christ; you may not be able always to tell what it may be, but still there is a place for you to fill. There is a linchpin in a chariot; who thinks much about or thanks that pin? Indeed, it is so very small and insignificant, who would imagine it is necessary to the locomotion or speed? The wheels carry it round, but who would suppose that, if it were taken away, the wheel would fly off? Perhaps you are like one of these little linchpins which keep the wheel right; you may not know what use you are; but, possibly, you prevent someone else from turning aside. Let us each keep in our station, endeavoring, God helping us, to exert the influence which he has given us.

[1 Corinthians 12:22-24](#). *Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: and those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need but God both tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked:*

A moment's thought will tell you that those parts of our frame which are tenderest are the most necessary parts; and those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these, by clothing them more than other parts, we bestow more abundant honour, and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness; for our comely parts have no need of being covered, and therefore we leave them exposed.

[1 Corinthians 12:25](#). *That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.*

We have heard this text urged by some who are in the Church of England as a proof that we are wrong in departing from it. They tell us that there should be no schism in the body; we beg to tell them that there is no schism in the body that we know of. We do not belong to their body, and therefore we make no schism in that body, we are quite clear of them. We have neither stick, nor stone, nor part, nor lot in their State Establishment; therefore we do not create a schism in the body. When they divide themselves into Puseyites and Evangelicals, they make a schism in their own body; but, as long as we are all united, as long as the members of a church walk together in unity, there is no schism in the body. We are different bodies altogether. They say that a schismatic is one who departs from a Church, and makes a rent from it; by no means, a schismatic is one who makes a rent in it, not from it. We, I say, are not schismatics. Those who are in the Church, and yet do not agree with its fundamental principles and its Articles of Faith, they are schismatics; but we are not.

[1 Corinthians 12:26](#). *And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it;*

Is that true of our churches? I am afraid not. The members of the one Church of Christ have not been brought to that unity of feeling and sympathy which they ought to have.

[1 Corinthians 12:26-30](#). *Or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?*

God intended that there should be different offices in his Church; let us look on each other as being different, and yet united in the common faith of

Christ.

[1 Corinthians 12:31](#). *But covet earnestly the best gifts:*

I would not wish you, brother, to repress your aspirations after these blessings; I am most anxious that you should earnestly desire and seek to possess a large share of all these spiritual endowments.

[1 Corinthians 12:31](#). *And yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.*

Which is, holding the truth in love, and walking in charity one toward another.

[1 CORINTHIANS CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 13

Verses 1-13

[1 Corinthians 13:1](#). *Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.*

If there be no love to God, and no love to man, the vital element is wanting. Whatever sound we make if the Word of God is not in us, it is a sound that has no meaning, conveys no heavenly meaning. “I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.” What if any of us who bear witness for Christ with our tongues should be found to be no better than this?

[1 Corinthians 13:2](#). *And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.*

Judas had, no doubt, faith in God’s miracles, but yet he was not saved. Selfishness was his ruling motive; he had no love to God or man. How this clips the wings of those lofty ones who hover on high, boasting of their knowledge and of their gifts! There are many who have few gifts — obscure and unknown — who love God much, and these are the accepted ones. Before God the balances of the sanctuary are rather turned by the shekel of love, than by any weight of talent or position.

[1 Corinthians 13:3](#). *And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.*

Love is a matter of the heart, and if the heart be not right with God, external acts, though they are very similar to the highest acts that flow from

love, are of no service. God requires the heart to be right, and if that be not right, whatever cometh out of us is not acceptable in his sight.

[1 Corinthians 13:4-5](#). *Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;*

Always try to put the best construction on other people's actions and work. Let gentleness triumph.

[1 Corinthians 13:6-11](#). *Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.*

Much of what we call knowledge, much of what we call eloquence, will all be put away. As our spiritual growth shall increase, we shall not want these childish things.

[1 Corinthians 13:12-13](#). *For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three;*

Three abiding graces. Some have said that faith and hope will not be found in heaven. Why not? Why not? It seems to me there will be plenty of room for them — plenty of space for them. Am I to be an unbeliever when I get to heaven then? Am I not to believe when my disembodied spirit goes to heaven? Am I not to believe in the resurrection of the dead? Am I not hopefully to expect it? Am I not in heaven to believe in the second advent of Christ? Am I not to be hoping for it? Am I not to believe in the complete conquest of Christ, and that he shall reign from the river, even to the ends of the earth? And am I not to hope for it? To miss faith and hope in heaven were to miss two things which the Apostle expressly tells us are the abiding things.

[1 Corinthians 13:13](#). *But the greatest of these is charity.*

It is the highest, the pinnacle. It is not the foundation — that is faith. Just as a rose in full bloom is greater than the stem that bears it, so, whilst

faith is most needful, and hope most cheering, love is the most beautiful and brightest of the three.

This exposition consisted of readings from 1 Corinthians 13; Ephesians 1.

[1 CORINTHIANS CONTENTS](#)

1 Corinthians Chapter 14

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER 15

Verses 1-9

[1 Corinthians 15:1](#). *Moreover, brethren I declare unto you the gospel —*
Mark that Paul writes concerning “the gospel.” We shall see now what “the gospel” is.

[1 Corinthians 15:1-3](#). *Which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if you keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;*

That is the central truth of the gospel.

[1 Corinthians 15:4](#). *And that he was buried,*

That is an essential part of the gospel.

[1 Corinthians 15:4](#). *And that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:*

This is the bright light of the gospel, the resurrection of our Lord from the dead —

[1 Corinthians 15:5-9](#). *And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: after that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.*

Yet he was made one amongst the many testifiers to the fact that Jesus really died, and was buried, and rose from the dead, of which we will speak more particularly by-and-by.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Mark 15:34-47](#); [John 19:38-42](#); John , [1 CORINTHIAN 15:1-9](#)

Verses 1-20

[1 Corinthians 15:1-2](#). *Moreover, Brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.*

Paul preached the gospel, his hearers received it, and also stood in it: “wherein ye stand.” It is essential to salvation to hear the gospel, to receive it, and then to stand in it. Now, what was this gospel? Paul is going to tell us; and instead of making a list of doctrines, he mentions a set of facts.

[1 Corinthians 15:3](#). *For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received,*

Notice that the preacher does not make the gospel. If he makes it, it is not worth your having. Originality in preaching, if it be originality in the statement of doctrine, is falsehood. We are not makers and inventors; we are repeaters, we tell the message we have received.

[1 Corinthians 15:3](#). *How that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;*

This then, is the gospel, that Jesus “died for our sins”, taking our sins upon himself. He bore the death penalty for us, “according to the scriptures.” There are plenty of scriptures, Old Testament scriptures, which teach this great truth by way of prophecy.

[1 Corinthians 15:4](#). *And that he was buried,*

This was necessary as a proof of his death, and as the ground work of his rising again.

[1 Corinthians 15:4](#). *And that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:*

This is the gospel, Christ dead, buried, risen again, ever living. We must dwell upon these points, for they are the essentials of the gospel.

[1 Corinthians 15:5-6](#). *And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: after that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present,*

When Paul wrote,-

[1 Corinthians 15:6-7](#). *But some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.*

In different places, and at different hours; sometimes by one, sometimes by eleven, once by five hundred brethren at once, Jesus was seen after he had risen from the dead. As I have often said, there is no historical fact that is so well authenticated as that Jesus Christ rose from the dead.

[1 Corinthians 15:8](#). *And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.*

Paul calls himself an abortion, and speaks of himself as one hardly worth mentioning; yet he had seen the Lord after his resurrection from the dead. He was not a man to be deceived, for he had persecuted the Church of Christ. He was exceedingly mad against the Messiah; so that if he said that he had seen Jesus of Nazareth, and that he was converted by the sight, we may be quite sure that it was so. Paul was not a man to undergo all the sacrifices he had to endure, for the sake of a mere dream.

[1 Corinthians 15:9-10](#). *For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.*

No man could be more thoroughly with Christ, heart and soul, than that Paul who, aforesaid, had been the blood thirsty Saul of Tarsus. His witness may well be believed; and, in connection with all that went before it, it proves beyond all doubt that he who was crucified and was laid in the tomb, did certainly rise again, and was seen in life after death.

[1 Corinthians 15:11](#). *Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed.*

There was not a doubt about that. All the apostles, all the early Christians preached the resurrection of Christ; and the Corinthians, when they became Christians, believed it.

[1 Corinthians 15:12](#). *Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?*

What! had they got so far as that, to call themselves Christians, and yet they doubted the truth of the resurrection of the dead? Yes, they spirited it away, they made it into a kind of myth or fable; and yet they called themselves Christians. That the heathen should not believe it, was not wonderful; but that those who professed to believe that Christ had risen

from the dead, yet doubted the resurrection of his people, was indeed a strange thing. Paul argues with them about this matter.

[1 Corinthians 15:13-14](#). *But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.*

If Jesus Christ did not rise from the dead, we are preaching a falsehood. If he did not rise from the dead, you are believing a falsehood, and our preaching and your believing are nothing but vanity.

[1 Corinthians 15:15-17](#). *Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.*

If Jesus Christ is not risen, he has done nothing for you; you are not saved, you are not pardoned, you are not renewed. It is all a myth, all a piece of deceit. If that fact be given up, that Christ rose from the dead, everything connected with salvation is also given up.

[1 Corinthians 15:18](#). *Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.*

All the godly saints died resting in the risen Christ; and if he is not risen, they died under a delusion, and they have perished.

[1 Corinthians 15:19](#). *If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.*

Those who are believers in Christ, says Paul, are miserable dupes if he has not risen from the dead. They are believing and resting all their hopes upon a lie. It makes them happy, truly; but if you can take away from them that hope, by persuading them that what it is grounded upon is not true, you have made them miserable indeed.

[1 Corinthians 15:20](#). *But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.*

Paul has been arguing on every supposition, and now he comes back with his own positive witness a Christ is risen. You remember that Jesus died at the time of the Passover, as the one great Paschal Lamb; but he rose again on the first day of the week, and that was the feast of firstfruits with the Jews. They brought handfuls of wheat from the fields to show their gratitude to God, and in order that a blessing might rest on all the crop; and Paul uses Christ's rising on that particular day as a figure: "Now is Christ

risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept.” He lives. He is the firstfruits, and the full harvest will follow. All who are in him will rise from the dead; for he is one with them, and none can separate them from him, nor sever him from them. They died in him, and they live because he liveth, blessed be his name

Verses 1-32

[1 Corinthians 15:1-2](#). *Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand. By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.*

By which the apostle means, unless they had a false faith, a merely notional faith; or he may also mean “Unless what I have preached unto you should have been a fable, and therefore you will have exercised your faith upon nothing real, and so it would have been in vain.”

[1 Corinthians 15:3](#). *For I delivered unto you first of all that which, I also received,-*

The preacher of Christ must not make new doctrines. He is not to be his own teacher, he is to receive the truth first, and then to deliver it. The Christian minister takes the lamp out of the hand of God, and then passes it on to the hands of his people. Think not that any originality is needed in the pulpit. All that is required is that the herald should faithfully deliver his Master’s message just as his Master gives it to him. “I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received,-“

[1 Corinthians 15:3-4](#). *How that Christ died for our sins according to the scripture; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:*

There are many passages in the Old Testament which describe the Messiah as dying for sinners, especially the old chapter of Isaiah’s prophecy. There are others that speak of him as being buried, yet not corrupting in the tomb. These were facts which the apostle had received upon the testimony of others; now comes the great fact of the resurrection:-

[1 Corinthians 15:5-8](#). *And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: after that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostle. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.*

The apostle does not attempt to defend the doctrine of the resurrection by an argument fetched from reason, but he proves it by undoubted evidence. If I had to prove that there existed such a tree as the cedar, I should not use logical arguments further than this,-I produce a certain number of men who have seen a cedar, and the thing is proved by their testimony. If the evidence of honest men be not accepted, then there is an end, not only to Christianity, but to all the sciences, and you and I must wander forever in a maze of doubts. Now, of all the facts recorded in history, there is not one which is better attested than the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The men who testified that they had seen the risen Christ evidently had no selfish reason for doing so. What is the result of their testimony ? They were cast into prison, they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, simply for believing the evidence of their own senses, and testifying what they knew to be true. It is clear that they would have had no interest in publishing this fact if it had not been true; their interest would have lain quite the other way. Besides, it was not as if only a few had seen him but over five hundred brethren at once beheld him. For forty days he was gazed upon by different persons, and the fact is proved beyond all doubt.

[1 Corinthians 15:9](#). *For I am the least of the apostles that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.*

“God has forgiven me,” said a good man once, “but I shall never forgive myself.” So was it with the apostle Paul; he knew that God had forgiven him, and honoured him by making him an apostle, but he could not forgive himself; and no doubt the tears gushed from his eyes when he wrote these words, “I am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.”

[1 Corinthians 15:10](#). *But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain, out I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me*

In what humble tones Paul speaks! He will not deny what grace has done in him and by him, but he will ascribe it all to grace. Brethren, you are not to shut your eyes to the gracious change which God’s Holy Spirit has wrought in you. You may speak of it, and speak of it often, but always guard against taking any of the honour to yourselves, and be especially careful to put the crown upon the right head.

[1 Corinthians 15:11-12](#). *Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed. Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?*

For Christ was the pattern man to all his people. He is their Representative. Whatever he did, he did for them; and whatever was wrought in him shall be surely wrought in them, and if Christ rose from the dead, then all who are members of his mystical body must rise too; for when the Head comes out of the grave, you cannot retain the members in it. Prove that Christ rose, and you prove that his people rise, for they are one with him.

[1 Corinthians 15:13](#). *But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen:*

Yet it is proved by hundreds of credible witnesses that Christ is risen, therefore there is a resurrection.

[1 Corinthians 15:14](#). *And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.*

This truth is the key-stone of the arch, put this away, and the whole tumbles down. It is upon this that the whole Christian system rests. If the resurrection of Christ be a mere myth, and not a positive matter of fact, preaching and faith are equally vain.

[1 Corinthians 15:15](#). *Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not.*

The apostle puts the matter strongly, yet not too strongly. He seems to say, "You know me to be an honest and truthful man, having no selfish motive in what I declare unto you; but if Christ did not rise from the dead, I have testified to you a gross falsehood, and led you to put your trust in an imposture." So he stakes his own personal character upon the fact of Christ resurrection.

[1 Corinthians 15:16-17](#). *For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.*

Yet they knew that they were not in their sins, for they had the witness within them that their sins had been pardoned. They knew that sin had no more dominion over them, for they had been made to walk in holiness before the Lord. "Therefore," says Paul, "Christ must have risen, for if he had not risen, you would have remained sinners as you once were."

[1 Corinthians 15:18](#). *Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.*

A supposition against which both nature and grace revolt.

[1 Corinthians 15:19-20](#). *If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.*

As they always brought into the Jewish tabernacle and temple a portion of the harvest, which indicated that the harvest was begun, so Christ's going up to heaven was the taking of the first sheaf into God's great garner, and all the rest must follow.

[1 Corinthians 15:21-22](#). *For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even in Christ shall all be made alive.*

Not that all shall be saved, but all will be raised from the dead. Or else the passage means that, as all who were in the first Adam died as the result of Adam's sin, so all who are in the second Adam, that is, Christ, shall live as the result of his righteousness. The question is, Are we in the second Adam? Faith is that which unites us to Christ. If we are trusting in him by a living faith, then his rising from the dead ensures our rising from the dead; and if not, it be true that we shall rise, but it will be to shame and everlasting contempt.

[1 Corinthians 15:23-28](#). *But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is accepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.*

This is a very difficult passage, but I suppose the meaning is just this. Jesus Christ, in order to remedy the great mischief of sin, was appointed to a mediatorial kingdom over all worlds, and that kingdom will continue until all his enemies shall be destroyed, and sin shall be trodden under his feet. Then Christ-as mediator, mark you, not as Lord, shall deliver up his mediatorial kingdom to his Father, and there shall be heard that great shout,

“Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! The Lord God omnipotent reigneth!” Christ as God, as one of the persons of the ever-blessed Trinity, will still be as glorious as ever, but his mediatorial reign will then be over, seeing that he hath accomplished all its purposes.

[1 Corinthians 15:29](#). *Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?*

This is another most difficult passage, and many meanings have been given to it, but I think the most likely to be correct is this: As soon as a member of the early Christian Church was given up to the lion or to be burned, another convert would step forward, and say, Let me take his name and place.” Though it was almost certain that they also would soon be put to death, there were always found persons bold enough to come forward to be baptized, to take the place of the dead. “Now,” says the apostle, “what advantage is there in this horizon if the dead rise not ?”

[1 Corinthians 15:30](#). *And why stand we in jeopardy every hour?*

Why were the apostles always subjecting themselves to cruel persecution?

[1 Corinthians 15:31](#). *I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.*

He was so hunted about everywhere that there was not a day in whole he felt secure of his life, so he asks, “Why should I endure this if there be no world to come?”

[1 Corinthians 15:32](#). *If after the manner of men I has fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not?*

It is quite possible that Paul was thrown to the lions in the theatre at Ephesus, and that he fought with them, and came off a conqueror. “But why,” says he, “did I try to save my life for future labour and for future suffering if the dead rise not ?”

[1 Corinthians 15:32](#). *Let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die.*

This is the best philosophy in the world if there is no life to come. So Paul has proved his point right well by every argument that he has used.

Verses 1-58

[1 Corinthians 15:1-2](#). *Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.*

What then was this gospel which Paul had preached, and which the Christians in Corinth had received,—the gospel which Paul declared would save them if they truly believed it? Was it a gospel made up merely of doctrines? No; it was a gospel formed of facts.

[1 Corinthians 15:3](#). *For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;*

That is the first fundamental fact in the gospel system. Blessed is the man who believes it, and rests his soul upon it.

[1 Corinthians 15:4](#). *And that he was buried: and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:*

That grand fact of the resurrection of Christ from the dead is rightly put next to his substitutionary sacrifice, for it is the very cornerstone of our holy faith. It is one of the essential doctrines which must be received by us, for we cannot truly believe the gospel unless we accept the great truth of Christ's resurrection.

[1 Corinthians 15:5-8](#). *And that he was seen of Cephas,— that is, Peter, — then of the twelve: after that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James, then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.*

I suppose, brethren, that we may have persons arise, who will doubt whether there was ever such a man as Julius Caesar, or Napoleon Bonaparte; and when they do,—when all reliable history is flung to the winds,—then, but not till then, may they begin to question whether Jesus Christ rose from the dead, for this historical fact is attested by more witnesses than almost any other fact that stands on record in history, whether sacred or profane. The risen Christ was seen by many persons who knew him intimately before he died, by those who saw him put to death, and who saw him when he was dead. He was seen, on various occasions, privately, by one, by two, by twelve, of those who had been his companions for years; at other times, he was seen, in public, by large numbers who could not all have been deceived. These men were so certain that this was indeed the same Christ who had lived, and died, that, although it was at first difficult to make them believe that he had risen from the dead, it was impossible to make them doubt it afterwards, and the major part of them died to bear witness to the fact, they were martyred because they confessed that Jesus had indeed risen from the dead. There is no fact in history, from

the days of Adam until now, that is better attested than this great central truth of the resurrection of Christ; so we accept it, and receive it gladly. Paul finishes up his list of witnesses by putting himself down as one of them, although his conversion was, to himself, such a marvellous display of divine grace that he was like “one born out of due time.”

[1 Corinthians 15:9-14](#). *For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I but the grace of God which was with me. Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed. Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, the your faith is also vain.*

It is all emptiness together. Our preaching evaporates—there is nothing left in it—unless Christ did really rise from the dead; and your faith has nothing in it either, you are believing in that which is only vanity, and nothingness unless his resurrection was a fact.

[1 Corinthians 15:15-17](#). *Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom, he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.*

So that you cannot be a Christian if you deny the resurrection of Christ.

You must give up Christianity altogether, and confess that your faith in it was a delusion, unless you believe that Jesus Christ rose from the dead, and that therefore there is a resurrection from the dead for the sons of men. Let it ever be most clearly understood that what Christ is, that his people are. There is an unbroken union between the Head and the members, so that, if he lives, they live; and if he lives not, then they live not; and if they live not, then he lives not. Jesus and those for whom he died are so intimately joined together that they are really and truly one, and nothing can ever separate them.

[1 Corinthians 15:18-19](#). *Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.*

That is to say, if our hope for the future be all a lie, we have been dreadfully deceived; and, moreover, if we could lose a hope so brilliant as that has been to us, there would fall upon us a sense of loss so great that no one in the world could be so wretched as we should be. Besides, the apostles being always in jeopardy of their lives, if they were suffering poverty, and persecution, and the fear of death by martyrdom, all for a lie, they were indeed of all men the most deluded, and the most miserable. But the Corinthians would not admit that, neither will we.

[1 Corinthians 15:20](#). *But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits—*

He must always come first, that in all things he may have the preeminence.

[1 Corinthians 15:20-28](#). *Of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule the all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.*

The mediatorial person of Christ, as God-man, shall bow before the eternal majesty of the Godhead: “that God may be all in all.” Now we will finish our reading with just a few verses at the close of the chapter.

[1 Corinthians 15:50-51](#). *Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,*

We shall not all die, some will be alive when Christ comes to this earth again; “but we shall all be changed,” if not by the process of death and resurrection, yet by some other means.

[1 Corinthians 15:52](#). *In, a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall he raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.*

Somehow or other, such a change as this must take place before we can enter heaven, for “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.”

[1 Corinthians 15:53-58](#). *For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on in corruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.*

That should be the practical outcome of receiving the great truths of which we have been reading God grant that it may be! Amen.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Revelation 7:9-17](#); [1 Corinthians 15:1-28](#); [1 Corinthians 15:50-58](#).

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CHAPTER 1

Verse 1

[2 Corinthians 1:1](#). *Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia:*

Paul is very jealous of his apostleship. There were some in Corinth who denied it, and therefore he takes care, at the very commencement of this Epistle,—as he does in beginning most of his letters,—to write concerning himself, “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God.” But with what humility of mind does he associate Timothy with himself! Frequently he puts Timothy, his own convert, one so young, and so much beneath him in position and attainments, on a level with himself; and if we also can help our younger brethren, how willingly should we put our—selves side by side with them!

[2 Corinthians 1:2](#). *Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.*

What a wonderful source of grace and peace! “God our Father.” How can he give other than grace and peace to his own children? “And from the Lord Jesus Christ,” our redeeming Saviour, who has given himself for us, and who has graven our names on the palms of his hands;—is there not an abundant supply of grace and peace to be found in the very music of his name?

[2 Corinthians 1:3](#). *Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort;*

Let me read those titles again: “The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort.” Do not the second and third titles derive much of their significance from the first one? It is because God is “the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” that he becomes “the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort.”

[2 Corinthians 1:4](#). *Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.*

Experience teaches the first rank of God’s servants, and their experience of sorrow and consolation is often the means of enabling them to be the means of blessing to others. Almost everything that the minister of the gospel enjoys or endures will be found to be sent to him for the elect’s sake, that he may know how to teach them the lessons he has himself learned.

[2 Corinthians 1:5](#). *For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.*

Are we not willing to endure the greater suffering that we may enjoy the greater consolation?

[2 Corinthians 1:6](#). *And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.*

We receive both suffering and consolation for the sake of others, and we are bound to give out again all that we receive. It is the essence of the true Christian life first to be dependent upon God for everything, and then to give forth to all around us that which God has poured into our spirit. The heart would soon die if it pumped in the blood, and never pumped it out again; but it is by that perpetual process of giving out what it has received that it continues in life; and the highest form of Christian life is the reception of all that comes to us out of the fullness of Christ, and then the free giving out of what he has bestowed.

[2 Corinthians 1:7-10](#). *And our hope of you is stedfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation. For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: but we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us;*

No doubt Paul did preach all the better and with the greater confidence in God because he preached, like Richard Baxter, "as a dying man to dying men." His life was frequently in danger, and on this occasion it was so in a very remarkable degree; so, when he was again able to testify for his master, he realized that he had no time to waste, and therefore he wrote and spoke with the utmost earnestness. He felt himself in jeopardy every hour, and therefore he fell back upon his God, and trusted alone in him. Anything that works to this end for us also is an undisguised blessing.

[2 Corinthians 1:11](#). *Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf.*

Much prayer leads to much thanksgiving. It should be a great cause for joy when numbers of Christians unite in praying for any Christian minister, for they will unite also in praising God on his behalf, when that which they asked for him is granted.

[2 Corinthians 1:12](#). *For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshy wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward.*

There had been whispers, among these Corinthians, that Paul had concealed a double meaning in some of his writings, and also that he had made a promise which he never intended to keep; so now he calls upon them to bear witness that he never was a man to act according to policy, but he was a straightforward, honest, plain-dealing man, full of godly sincerity and unselfishness. He had abundantly proved all this to the Corinthians, for, lest they should have any occasion for speaking against him, he would not take at their hands the support to which he was entitled, but he laboured at his trade of tent-making that they might not have anything to say concerning him except that he was disinterested in all his endeavors to serve them. Paul evidently felt their unkindness very much, but his conscience assured him that their accusations were unjust.

[2 Corinthians 1:13-14](#). *For we write none other things unto you, than what ye read or acknowledge; and I trust ye shall acknowledge even to the end; as also ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus.*

See how Paul restrains himself in wilting to these people, he had good cause to be offended, for they had touched him in a point about which he was very jealous, namely, his integrity; but here he speaks with great moderation of spirit, and herein lay his strength. Every Christian man, when he has to defend himself against false accusations, should use soft words and hard arguments.

[2 Corinthians 1:15-16](#). *And in this confidence I was minded to come unto you before, that ye might have a second benefit; and to pass by you into Macedonia, and to come again out of Macedonia unto you, and of you to be brought on my way toward Judaea.*

He had planned to see them in his going, and also in his returning; but he could not carry out the idea which was in his mind. The wisest of men often find their plans impracticable, and even an inspired man is not always

inspired. God guides him when guidance is absolutely necessary; but, at other times, he leaves him to arrange according to his own judgment:, and to find out that his judgment is not infallible. “I had a mind,” says he, “to come and see you twice.”

[2 Corinthians 1:17](#). *When I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness?*

“Did I make up my mind hastily, and then did I change it all of a sudden without good reason? Had I never thought before I decided, and therefore did I find it necessary to revoke my promise?”

[2 Corinthians 1:17-18](#). *Or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yea yea, and nay nay? But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay.*

He binds up his own ministry with himself, and he says, “You charge me with being fickle, but you know better; you are well aware that I am not one who says one thing today and another thing tomorrow. You know that I have been open and aboveboard in all my dealings with you, and that I have never stooped to policy and craftiness, but have spoken that which I believed, whatever might come of it.”

[2 Corinthians 1:19](#). *For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in him was yea.*

He declares that he preached the truth straightforwardly and consistently, and that he did not say one thing one day and another thing a few days later.

[2 Corinthians 1:20](#). *For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.*

Christ is no quicksand, slipping and sliding away, and so ruining those who cling to him. He is the Rock of ages, and he stands fast for ever. His gospel is one and the same at all times. You see that, as Paul grows warm, he advances in his argument. If the Corinthians suspected his honesty in making a promise, the next thing they would do would be to suspect the gospel, and after that they would suspect Christ himself, who is the truth.

[2 Corinthians 1:21-23](#). *Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God, who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts. Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth.*

“If I had come, I should have been obliged to rebuke you and reprove you. I should have had to be like an armed man going to battle, or an officer of the law carrying out the sentence pronounced upon a criminal, and I could not bear to do that; so I felt it would be better and wiser to stay away, and therefore I did not visit you as I had proposed.”

[2 Corinthians 1:24](#). *Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand.*

(See Chapter 2.)

[2 Corinthians 2:1](#). *But I determined this with myself, that I would not come again to you in heaviness.*

And they ought to have had enough confidence in him to know that he had a very good and sufficient reason for not fulfilling his conditional promise. Let us, dear friends, who, are one in Christ, trust each other; for, if suspicion be, once bred among the people of God, it will mean farewell to all fellowship.

Verses 1-20

[2 Corinthians 1:1](#). *Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God,—*
Paul is very careful to remind the Corinthians of that fact, since some of them had gone the length of denying his apostleship altogether.

[2 Corinthians 1:1](#). *And Timothy our brother,—*

Whom, in all humility, he associates with himself, although he was a younger man, of far less consequence; but Paul loved him very much, and therefore he put his name at the beginning of this Epistle side by side with his own: “and Timothy our brother,”

[2 Corinthians 1:1-2](#). *Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia: grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Christianity is a religion of benedictions. Whereas worldly people often use the language of courtesy towards one another without meaning what they say, the saints of God put a fullness of meaning into their expressions, and really wish every good thing to those to whom they write. “Grace be to you.” That comes first, and then peace follows. Peace without grace is a very dangerous possession; but a peace that grows out of the possession of grace is a gracious peace, and will lead to the peace of glory ere long. This grace and peace are to come “from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.” There is no grace for us apart from the Lord Jesus Christ; and though the Father is full of love, and will give grace and peace to his

people, yet the Lord Jesus Christ must always be the channel through which these incomparable favors must flow to them.

[2 Corinthians 1:3-4](#). *Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.*

Nothing less, then, shall be given to the tried people of God than that same comfort which was enjoyed by the apostle Paul; it shall be shared by all who are resting where Paul rested.

[2 Corinthians 1:5](#). *For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.*

The apostles were the most tried, but they were the most comforted. They had to stand the brunt of the battle, but the Lord was their strength in a very special sense. Observe the balance in this verse: “as the sufferings,” “so our consolation;” and “as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.” With little trial, we may expect little comfort. It is better to leave the whole matter entirely with God, or else we might almost desire to be digged about by the spade of affliction, that we might receive more of the living waters of consolation.

[2 Corinthians 1:6](#). *And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.*

That, is the grand object of Christians, to live for others. When God has helped us to receive both our comforts and our sorrows as matters of trust that we are to take care of for the benefit of our fellow-Christians, then have we learned the lesson which Christ would teach us by them.

[2 Corinthians 1:7](#). *And our hope of you is steadfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation.*

How these things are put together! God does not call his people to the one without the other,— no consolation without affliction; and, blessed be his name, no affliction without consolation!

[2 Corinthians 1:8](#). *For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life:*

Why would Paul have them know this but that they might understand that he had to suffer as they did, and even more. Sometimes, God’s people

are apt to think that their ministers are not cast down as they themselves are. They look upon them as a sort of superior order of beings who have no doubts and fears, no want of strength, no despair; but that is an idle fiction, and the sooner it is gone from our minds, the better; for those who lead the people of God will rather have more afflictions than less. Seeing that they need more instruction than others need, and that instruction usually comes with the rod, in all probability they will have more of the rod than others will. Paul, therefore, is anxious that the Corinthians should know in what seas of trouble he had to swim.

[2 Corinthians 1:9-10](#). *But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we: should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us;*

It is supposed by some that the apostle was in danger of being put to death in some extraordinary way,— perhaps by wild beasts in the amphitheatre. We know that he speaks of having fought with beasts at Ephesus; we cannot tell whether there is here any allusion to that trial, or what it was; but it was evidently some death which, to the apostle, seemed to be exceedingly terrible; and when he was delivered from it, it was like a resurrection. He speaks of it as having been wrought by God that raiseth the dead; and he puts down this deliverance, together with some other of which he was at that very time the subject,— “and doth deliver,” — and upon these experiences he builds his expectation that God “will yet deliver.”

[2 Corinthians 1:11](#). *Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf.*

When many pray, after the blessings is received, many will give thanks. Paul rejoices to have been the object of interest to a large number of Christians everywhere in the time of his great peril; and when he escaped, he believed he would still be the object of their interest, and that there would be more prayer in the world, and more praise, too, because of the dangers from which God had delivered him. It is worth while for any of us to be in sore sickness, or in great straits, if thereby the quantity of prayer and praise in the world shall be increased to God’s glory.

[2 Corinthians 1:12](#). *For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom,*

but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward.

For to them he had been specially particular, that in no point they should speak of him as having used the wisdom of words. Among them, he determined not to know anything save Jesus Christ and him crucified; to them, he was like the nurse who administers milk to babes.

[2 Corinthians 1:13-14](#). *For we write none other things unto you, than what ye read or acknowledge; and I trust ye shall acknowledge even to the end; as also ye have acknowledged us in part,—*

Some of them disputed his apostleship; but most of them did not,—

[2 Corinthians 1:14](#). *That, we are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus.*

What a happy condition of things it is when the teacher and the taught mutually rejoice in each other; when the teacher is the joy of the flock, and when he can rejoice in his people! This is profitable to all; but when there are discards, and fault-findings, and the like, this is neither glorifying to God nor profitable to the people.

[2 Corinthians 1:15-17](#). *And in this confidence I was minded to come unto you before, that ye might have a second benefit; and to pass by you into Macedonia, and to come again out of Macedonia unto you, and of you to be brought on my way toward Judaea. When I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness? or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yea yea, and nay nay?*

There were some in the church at Corinth who said, “He promised to come and see us, but he did not keep his word.” They declared that his promise could not be depended upon, and that he very easily changed his mind. Now, the apostle had done nothing of the kind; he had solid reasons for his change of purpose, and reasons full of love to them; but they misrepresented him. Do not, my dear friends, count the fiery trial of misrepresentation to be any strange thing. Even some of those whom you have loved, and for who’ you have been willing to lay down your lives, will turn against you; it is no new thing that they should do so. They may catch up anything which you have done in the simplicity of your heart, and turn it against you. Whenever they do so, I say again, do not think that any strange thing has happened unto you; it happened to Paul, then why should not you have a similar experience?

[2 Corinthians 1:18-20](#). *But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in him was yea. For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.*

Paul loved to turn from some lower subject to his Lord. When he wrote the words, “yea and nay,” they suggested to him the perfect constancy of the love of Christ, and thankfulness for his faithful promises; so, as the thought came into his mind, he could do no other than put it into the Epistle he was writing, for he never missed an opportunity of praising the Lord Jesus Christ. I wish we could all imitate him, in this respect, far more than we have ever done; for, our Saviour is worthy of all the praise we can ever give him, and more, too.

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SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

1 Corinthians Chapter 3

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CHAPTER 4

Verses 1-18

[2 Corinthians 4:1](#). *Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not;*

Stern was the labour of the apostles, but they felt that their work was so all-important, so divine, that they must not grow weary of it, though they were, doubtless, often weary in it.

[2 Corinthians 4:2](#). *But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by*

manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

It is no part of the business of Christ's ministers to modify the truth which he has entrusted to them, or to put new meanings into it which God never meant, draining away the very life-blood of the gospel, and leaving it dead and useless; but it is both our duty and our privilege to state it just as we find it, and to proclaim it in as plain language as possible so that everybody may understand what the teaching of God really is.

[2 Corinthians 4:3](#). *But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost;*

It was not hidden under fine language and oratorical flourishes on the part of the apostles; there was a far more terrible barrier in the way of its entrance into the hearts of some who heard it.

[2 Corinthians 4:4-7](#). *In whom the god of the world hath blinded the mind of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who in the image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels,*

There is nothing remarkable in us, we are in ourselves poor, frail fragile creatures, like earthen vessels of no particular value, yet this we do not regret, for there is a good reason for it: —

[2 Corinthians 4:7-10](#). *That the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken, cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.*

He who wishes for an easy time of it must not become a minister of the gospel. If he is determined to preach it faithfully, fully, simply, straight from his heart, he will often find himself in such circumstances as the apostle describes in these verses.

[2 Corinthians 4:11](#). *For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.*

The apostles were always to the front where the shots were flying the fastest, and with the deadliest aim; there they stood, the officers of the army

of Christ and Paul rejoiced that, for one, he was able thus to make himself to be nothing that Christ might be the great All-in-all.

[2 Corinthians 4:12](#). *So then death worketh in us but life in you.*

So long as Paul could be the means of the salvation of the souls of men, he did not mind what became of himself, though it should be death to him, he would count it as nothing so long as it should bring life to them.

[2 Corinthians 4:13-14](#). *We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak; knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you.*

Note the assurance of apostolic preaching and writing. There is no “if” here, no hesitation, no doubt. The apostles knew what they believed, and knew why they believed it, and they spoke with the accent of conviction; nobody was led into doubt by their hesitancy.

[2 Corinthians 4:15-16](#). *For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God. For which cause we faint not;*

Paul had said before that they did not faint, and now he reiterates it that, though his ministry was enough to bear him down, and lay him prostrate in the dust, yet he did not faint.

[2 Corinthians 4:16](#); [2 Corinthians 4:18](#). *But though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.*

This exposition consisted of readings from [Romans 5:1-10](#); and 2 Corinthians 4; and 2 Corinthians 5.

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CHAPTER 5

Verses 1-9

[2 Corinthians 5:1-2](#). *For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, —*

In this poor body it is our lot often to groan, but the groan is a hopeful one, for it is a birth-pang, and it will bring joy in due time: “For in this we groan,” —

[2 Corinthians 5:2-6](#). *Earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: if it be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are always confident, —*

That is a blessed experience, “always confident.” There are some Christians who are never confident, and some who are afraid of being confident. I know some who, if they see this holy confidence in other Christians, begin to tremble for their eternal safety. Never mind about them, brother, if God gives you a holy confidence in him, hold fast to it, and do not let it go whatever anyone may say.

[2 Corinthians 5:6-9](#). *Knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: for we walk by faith, not by sight:) we are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.*

That is our main business; whether we live or whether we die is of no consequence at all, but to be accepted of Christ, so to live is to be well pleasing to God. Be this our heavenly ambition, and may the Holy Spirit graciously enable us to attain to it!

This exposition consisted of readings from 2 Corinthians 4 and [2 Corinthians 5:1-9](#).

Verses 1-21

1. *For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.*

Is not this grand courage on the part of the apostle? With all the world against him, and himself “alway delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake,” he looks at the new body, the new house that God is making for him, and he reckons that, to shuffle off this mortal coil will be no loss to him, since, when he loses the tent in which he lives here, he will go to “a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

2-4. *For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, —*

We are not impatient to enter the disembodied state, —

4-6. *But clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are always confident, —*

Note the ground of the apostle's confidence. He is quite sure that, inasmuch as Christ rose from the dead, so all his followers must; and though they die in the Lord's service, yet shall they not be losers thereby, but they shall the more speedily ascend to their reward. "We are always confident," —

6-9. *Knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (for we walk by faith, not by sight:) we are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.*

To be well-pleasing to God everywhere, in everything that we do, should be the one aim of a Christian, whether he is in the body or out of the body.

10-13. *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad, knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade them; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences. For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to answer them which glory in appearance, and not in heart. For whether we be beside ourselves, —*

And men said that these apostles had gone out of their minds. Festus said to Paul, "thou art beside thyself, much learning doth make thee mad;" so Paul says, "Whether we be beside ourselves," —

13. *It is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause.*

"In either case, we have but one object, and that is, to glorify God through your salvation."

14-15. *For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they*

which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

The life of the saved man must never be lived for himself; he is false to his profession if it is so. He must henceforth live as earnestly for God as, aforetime in his unregeneracy, he lived for himself, for he now has a new life which is not his own, to do with it as he pleases, but it belongs entirely to him who purchased it with his own most precious blood.

16. *Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh, yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.*

We do not see Christ with our natural eyes, we do not hear his voice with our natural ears, he is to us now a spiritual Personage, who communicates with our spirits through his own ever-blessed Spirit.

17. *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new.*

There could not be a greater change than that which is wrought by regeneration, it is a new creation, the passing away of the old, and the making of all things new.

18-21. *And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*

This exposition consisted of readings from [Romans 5:1-10](#); and 2 Corinthians 4; and 2 Corinthians 5.

Verses 9-21

[2 Corinthians 5:9-11](#). *Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.*

The outside world did not understand the preachers of the gospel; they thought them dreamy enthusiasts, earnest about nothing at all. But Paul says

that God understood him, and he hoped, too, that the consciences of those to whom he was writing had also understood him. The truly faithful minister of Jesus Christ may know that there are two approvals that he will be sure to get, — the approval of his Master, and the approval of men's consciences. Their prejudice may condemn him, his mode of oratory may not suit their fancy, but their conscience must give quite a different verdict; it must approve the faithful preaching of the gospel.

[2 Corinthians 5:12-13](#). *For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to answer them which glory in appearance, and not in heart. For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause.*

Happy Paul who, as a preacher of the gospel, could write, "If you say that we are beside ourselves, that we are really mad upon religious matters, — well, it is to God that we are so. It is not every madman who can say that. "Or if you tell us that we are too serious and sober, it is your case, your cause, that makes us so." Well may we be sober and solemn when we think of the danger in which men's souls continually are.

[2 Corinthians 5:14-15](#). *For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.*

The true-hearted Christian judges himself to have died when Christ died, and, henceforth, he feels that he must not live for any object but the glory of Christ.

[2 Corinthians 5:16](#). *Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.*

He is gone back to glory, so our object is not to win a kingdom for him anywhere upon earth. Our aim now is spiritual, the proclamation of his truth, the winning of a kingdom for him in the hearts of men.

[2 Corinthians 5:17-19](#). *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away: behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their*

trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

The work of reconciliation he committed to his Son; the word of reconciliation he has committed to us. It is our high privilege to tell the tidings of the wondrous work by which God is reconciled, so that, without any violation of his justice, he can have mercy upon those who have offended against him.

[2 Corinthians 5:20](#). *Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.*

As if Christ himself stood here, and pleaded with you, he bids his ministers plead on his behalf. In the name of God, he bids us beseech you to be reconciled to God. Ambassadors do not generally beseech men; they stand on their dignity, they make demands for the honour of their sovereign; but Christ's ambassadors know of no dignity which should keep them from pleading with men.

[2 Corinthians 5:21](#). *For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*

[2 CORINTHIANS CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 6

Verses 1-18

[2 Corinthians 6:1](#). *We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.*

God's servants are called to take many different positions. They are ambassadors under one aspect; they are workers under another. As ambassadors, they are ambassadors for Christ, as workers, they are workers together with God. Oh, how much it costs to win a soul! I mean, not only how much it cost the Saviour, so that he broke his very heart over it, and poured out his life's blood, — but also how much it must cost the messenger of peace! He must know how to beseech and implore; and when even this fails, he must still go on toiling, labouring, as a worker together with God.

[2 Corinthians 6:2](#). *(For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the*

accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)

I trust that, if I am addressing any who say that it is too late for them to be saved, and that their sin is too great to be forgiven, this text will drive away that unholy and unwarranted fear: “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” Then the apostle goes on to speak of himself, and the rest of the apostles and other preachers of the Word: —

[2 Corinthians 6:3-4](#). *Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed: but in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God,*

As those early servants of the Lord really did.

[2 Corinthians 6:4-10](#). *In much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings; by pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown and yet well known, as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.*

All these things Paul and his brethren were to be and to do in order to win souls for Christ; just as the hunters in the cold North seek after furs, and try all sorts of plans to catch the wild creatures on which they grow. They will trap them, or snare them, or shoot them; but, somehow or other, they will get them. They will be on the alert all day, and all night, too. They will learn the habits of every creature they have to deal with, but they will get the furs somehow. And so must the true minister of Christ be willing to be anything, to do anything, to suffer anything, to bear reproach and shame, to be nothing, or to be all things to all men, if by any means he may save some.

[2 Corinthians 6:11-12](#). *O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged. Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels.*

If they were not saved, it was not because Paul did not open his mouth to speak to them, and to warn and invite them, nor because he did not open his heart, and feel, in his very bowels, the movements of a sacred compassion for them. Now, having thus spent himself in his endeavor to bring them to Christ, he writes to those whom he did bring: —

[2 Corinthians 6:13](#). *Now for a recompence in the same,*

There must be some wages for this blessed work. The apostle wisely puts it on that footing, as if, surely, they were indebted to him, but the payment that he seeks is, of course, no personal gain to him; he only puts it in that form, but it is a gain to them.

[2 Corinthians 6:13](#). *(I speak as unto my children,) be ye also enlarged.*

“There has been so much earnest labour to secure your conversion, so be ye also in earnest to bring in others. Get large thoughts of God; be fully consecrated to him, spend and be spent for him. Follow a good example.” Paul could well urge them to that consecration when he had given himself so completely to the work of winning souls: “Be ye also enlarged.”

[2 Corinthians 6:14](#). *Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers:*

Not in any way, — neither in marriage which is the chief of all forms for yoking, nor yet in business or other partnerships.

[2 Corinthians 6:14](#). *For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?*

You must be in the same world with them, but keep yourself distinct from them. Go not into their society by your own choice, nor seek your pleasure with them.

[2 Corinthians 6:15-18](#). *And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.*

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1 Corinthians Chapter 7

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER 8

Verses 1-24

The apostle is writing concerning a certain collection which was being made for the poor saints of Jerusalem. It was from Jerusalem that the gospel had spread into Greece, and, therefore, those who had received spiritual things from the poor Jews at Jerusalem were bound by every tie of holy brotherhood to remember their benefactors in the time of famine. The apostle stirs up the Corinthian Church about this contribution.

[2 Corinthians 8:1](#). *Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit*

Or “we make you to know.”

[2 Corinthians 8:1-2](#). *Of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia. How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.*

It is good to stir one Christian up by the example of another, and Paul excites those at Corinth by the example of the churches in Macedonia — especially, no doubt, the church at Philippi. He says that they were in great affliction, and they were very poor, but yet they had been so filled with the grace of God that their very poverty had enabled them to “abound to the riches of their liberality,” for what they gave became more in proportion because they were so poor.

[2 Corinthians 8:3](#). *For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves:*

Without any pressure: without even a hint — spontaneously.

[2 Corinthians 8:4](#). *Praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.*

“Take upon us the communion,” for that blessed word “Koinonia,” communion, is applied not only to the Lord’s supper, and to such fellowship as that but to communion with poor saints — fellowship with them by helping their necessities. And Paul says that the Macedonian Churches pressed it upon him that he should take their money, and go with it to Jerusalem, and distribute it. He appears to have been very reluctant to do this, but they pressed it upon him.

[2 Corinthians 8:5](#). *And this they did, not as we hoped,*

That is, “according to our hopes.”

[2 Corinthians 8:6](#). *But first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.*

They first gave of themselves to God, and then asked Paul to take it that he might use it for God in the distribution of Christian charity among the

poor saints at Jerusalem.

[2 Corinthians 8:6-7](#). *Inasmuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also. Therefore, as ye abound in everything, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also.*

They were a famous church — this church at Corinth, having gifted men in abundance more than other churches, insomuch that they did not use to have one man for a pastor, because they so abounded in brethren able to edify; and he urges them, as they were forward in all things, not to be backward in their liberality.

[2 Corinthians 8:8](#). *I speak not by commandment,*

“I do not wish to put it upon you as a law. I want it to be spontaneous on your part.”

[2 Corinthians 8:8-9](#). *But by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love. For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.*

What a touching argument! How could he find a better? Help your brethren in Jerusalem that are in need, even though that help should pinch you, for you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and what he did, and what he gave that you might be rich.

[2 Corinthians 8:10](#). *And herein I give my advice: for this is expedient for you, who have begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago.*

They had begun last year — perhaps not a year ago, but some months ago in the previous year — to talk the matter over, and to make promises; and they had been among the first to undertake the work, but as yet they had not done it.

[2 Corinthians 8:11](#). *Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have.*

They had not a minister, you see, and what is everybody's business is nobody's business, and so the contribution was not carried out. And in general the church at Corinth is about the worst in the New Testament, and that for this very reason — that it had not any oversight. It was the pattern church of certain brethren whom we have among us this day — in the very example of them, and they quote this as an example, whereas it is put here

as a beacon, and a very excellent beacon, too, to warn us against any such thing. Everything was sixes and sevens, good people as they were. Seeing that they had no order and no discipline, nothing got done, and they wearied the apostle's life because of that. God would have things done decently and in order, and he gives to his churches pastors after his own heart, and when he does, then is the church able to carry out her desires and her activities with something like practical common-sense. But here a year ago, months ago, they had talked the matter over, and made a promise, and now he has to say to them, "Now therefore, perform the doing of it." They had no deacons to look them up, I will be bound to say.

[2 Corinthians 8:12-14](#). *For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not. For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened: but by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want: that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality:*

It is in the Christian Church alone that we shall ever find liberty equality, and fraternity thoroughly represented. There, by the life of Christ within his people spiritually, that shall be realized, and the apostle backs up this thought of his, which Bengel has beautifully put when he says "We ought to minister of our luxuries to the comfort of others, and of our comforts to the necessities of others." So we should, to keep up a balance that, when one suffers wants and another abounds, there may be an equality made.

[2 Corinthians 8:15](#). *As it is written, He that had gathered much
Much manna*

[2 Corinthians 8:15-17](#). *Had nothing over: and he that had gathered little had no lack. But thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you. For indeed he accepted the exhortation; but being more forward, of his own accord he went unto you.*

Or "he is going unto you," for he bore this letter unto them.

[2 Corinthians 8:18](#). *And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches:*

And what brother was that? Nobody knows. And a brother who has praise in all the churches may be well content to have his name forgotten. Oh! it would be a sweet thing to have praise in all the churches anonymously, so that it all might go up to God. It may have been Luke. Probably it was. It may not have been Luke. Probably it was not. We do not know who it was. But it does not signify. What matters it? As Mr. Whitfield

used to say, “Let my name perish, but let Christ’s name last for ever.” “And we have sent with him the brother whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches.”

[2 Corinthians 8:19](#). *And not that only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace,*

Or “with this gift.”

[2 Corinthians 8:19-20](#). *Which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord, and declaration of your ready mind: Avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us:*

He had other brethren associated with him, lest anybody should even hint that Paul was benefited thereby. And, oh! in the distribution of the Lord’s money, it becomes us to be exceedingly careful. Paul adds this.

[2 Corinthians 8:21](#). *Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.*

That the thing might be so clear and transparent that, while God knew that Paul was honest, everybody else might know it too, for others had been associated with him.

[2 Corinthians 8:22-23](#). *And we have sent with them our brother, whom we have oftentimes proved diligent in many things, but now much more diligent, upon the great confidence which I have in you. Whether any do inquire of Titus, he is my partner and fellow-helper concerning you: or our brethren be inquired of, they are the messenger of the churches, and the glory of Christ.*

How beautiful to see Paul so praising his brethren — very humble, commonplace persons as compared with himself, but he admires the grace of God in them. How very different from the general spirit of depreciation that you find even among Christian men — afraid to praise anybody, lest they should be exalted above measure. You might leave that to the devil. He will take care that they are not exalted above measure but you need not be as particular about that. Often the best thing that can be done for God’s servant is to encourage him, for, though you may not know it, he may have a multitude of depressions, heavy toil and earnest care, and much watching, which may bring him down. Paul speaks well of the brotherhood: let us try to do the same. But how does he call these simple-minded men, who are going with him to distribute this money? Does he call them the glory of Christ? Yes; Christ is the glory of God, and his people are the glory of

Christ. He glories whenever he is glorified by them. They are the result of the travail of his soul, and in that sense they are his glory.

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CHAPTER 1

Verses 1-24

[Galatians 1:1](#). *Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;)* —

Paul begins this Epistle by stating his commission as an apostle. In Galatia, he had been subjected to the great sorrow of having his apostle-ship called in question. Does he, therefore, give up his claim to the office, and

retire from the work? No, not for a moment; but he begins his letter to the Galatians by declaring himself to be “an apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ.” His enemies had said, “Paul was never one of the Saviour’s twelve apostles; he is not like those who were trained and educated by Christ himself. No doubt he has borrowed his doctrine from them, and he is only a retailer of other men’s goods”. No, no,” says Paul, “I am an apostle as truly as any other of the twelve; ‘not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;’” —

[Galatians 1:2](#). *And all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia:* —

Paul ever loved to associate others with him in his Christian service. He was not one who wanted to ride the high horse, and to keep himself aloof from his brethren in Christ. He frequently mentions the true-hearted men who were with him, even though they were far inferior to him in talent and also in grace. He often joins with himself such men as Timothy and Silvanus, and here he puts in, “all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia:” —

[Galatians 1:3](#). *Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ,* —

It is the genius of the gospel to wish well to others. Hence Paul begins the actual Epistle with a benediction: “Grace be to you and peace.” Dear friends, may you all have a fullness of these two good things! Grace rightly comes first, and peace afterwards. Peace before grace would be perilous; nay more, it would be ruinous. But may you always have enough of grace to lead you on to a deep and joyful peace! The two things go together very delightfully, — grace and peace, — and it is the best of grace, and the best of peace, since they come “from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ,” —

[Galatians 1:4](#). *Who gave himself for our sins,* —

There is the doctrine of the atonement, which Paul always brings into his preaching and writing as soon as he can: “Who gave himself for our sins.” Well does Luther say, “Christ never gave himself for our righteousness; but he gave himself for our sins, because there was no other way of saving us except by a sacrifice for sin.” The substitutionary character of Christ’s death is always to be noticed: “Who gave himself for our sins,” —

[Galatians 1:4-5](#). *That he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

Our Lord Jesus Christ himself puts away our sin in order that we may rise out of it, and may become a pure and holy people, delivered from this present evil world, and brought into obedience to the will of God. Now we come to quite another topic.

[Galatians 1:6](#). *I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:*

The Galatians were a very fickle people. Some have said that they were a colony from Gaul, — Galatians, — and that they partook somewhat of the fickleness which is attributed to the character of the Gaul. I know not how true that may be; but, certainly, they seem very soon to have left the gospel, to have adulterated it, and to have fallen into Ritualism, into Sacramentarianism, into salvation by works, and all the errors into which people usually fall when they go away from the gospel.

[Galatians 1:7](#). *Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.*

“Another gospel: which is not another;” for there are not two gospels, any more than there are two gods. There is one only message from God, of good news to men; and if you turn away from that, you turn away to a falsehood, to that which will bring you trouble, to that which will pervert you, and lead you astray.

[Galatians 1:8](#). *But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.*

Paul is no fanatic, no raving enthusiast; yet he cannot endure the notion of a false gospel. In his solemn anathema, he includes himself, and all the brethren with him, yea, and the very angels of God if they “preach any other gospel.” Let him be accursed, saith he, and so he is.

[Galatians 1:9](#). *As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.*

The modern style of speaking is, “Let us fraternize with him; he is a man of original thought. Surely, you would not bind all men down to one mode of speech. Perhaps, if he has made mistakes, you will bring him round to your way of thinking By receiving him kindly into your fellowship.” “No, no;” says Paul, “As we said before, so say I now again, If

any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.”

[Galatians 1:10](#). *For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.*

He would not be the servant of Christ if he pleased men. Those whom we try to please, are our masters. If a man tries to please the populace, or to please the refined few, these are his masters, and he will be their slave; but if he tries to please his God, then is he a free man indeed.

[Galatians 1:11-12](#). *But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

Paul foresaw what would be said about him in the after ages; and truly, to this day, the fiercest attack upon Christianity is always made upon the teaching of the apostle Paul. The men who creep in unawares among us talk glibly about having great reverence for Christ, but none for Paul. Yet Paul is Christ's apostle; Paul speaks only what was personally revealed to him by the Lord himself; and he is in everything to be accepted as speaking by divine revelation.

[Galatians 1:13-14](#). *For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: and profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.*

He was an out-and-out Jew. He never took up anything without going through with it thoroughly; so, while he believed in Judaism, he did believe it. He was no hypocrite, no pretender, so he fought for it tooth and nail. This was the man who afterwards preached the Christianity he had received from Christ, Evidently he did not borrow it from his parents, for they had taught him quite differently. His religion was not the product of his training; but it came to him from God, — to him who seemed to be the most unlikely person in the whole land ever to receive it.

[Galatians 1:15-16](#). *But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:*

He felt divinely called to preach the gospel Christ revealed himself to him on the way to Damascus. As soon as he was converted, he did not wait

for anybody to ordain him, or to teach him further, but he says, “I conferred not with flesh and blood”

[Galatians 1:17](#). *Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me, but went into Arabia, —*

What he did there, we do not know; but probably he had a time of quiet meditation and prayer, all alone: “I went into Arabia.” The best thing we can do, sometimes, is to get away from the voices of men, and listen only to the voice of God: “I went into Arabia,” —

[Galatians 1:17](#). *And returned again unto Damascus.*

To bear witness for Christ in the very city where he had gone to persecute the saints.

[Galatians 1:18](#). *Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days.*

That is, “after three years,” which showed that he did not go there to receive any commission from Peter. He had been for three years working for his Lord and Master before he ever saw the face of an apostle.

[Galatians 1:19](#). *But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord’s brother.*

He had an interview with the apostle James. He was probably the chief minister of the church at Jerusalem, so Paul went and had a conversation with him.

[Galatians 1:20](#). *Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not.*

“I did not derive my knowledge of Christ from any one of these holy men, therefore I am not an imitator of any other apostle. I was sent out by Christ himself, and instructed by him by revelation, so I am an apostle of Christ as much as any of them.”

[Galatians 1:21-22](#). *Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria, and Cilicia; and was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ:*

They did not know him; it is evident that he had not been there to be taught by them, or else they would have recognized their illustrious pupil.

[Galatians 1:23-24](#). *But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed. And they glorified God in me.*

Brothers and sisters, may you and I so live that Christian people may glorify God in us! May they often wonder at the mighty grace which has

wrought such a change in us; and as they see us zealous and fervent, may they marvel at the amazing grace of God which has brought us to be so consecrated to Christ!

Verses 11-24

[Galatians 1:11-17](#). *But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel that was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but the revelation of Jesus Christ. For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: and profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly jealous of the traditions of my fathers. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went up to Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.*

Paul was intensely desirous that the Galatian Christians should understand that he was no mere repeater of other men's doctrines, but that what he taught he had received directly from God by supernatural revelation. They knew that he had been a most determined opposer of the gospel. Indeed, he was a man of such great determination that, whatever he did he did with all his might; so, no sooner did God reveal Christ to him, so that he knew Jesus to be the Messiah, than he earnestly sought to learn yet more of the truth, not by going up to the apostles at Jerusalem, to borrow from them, but by getting alone in the waste places of Arabia? there, by thought and meditation upon the Word, and by communion with God, to learn yet more concerning the divine mysteries.

[Galatians 1:18-24](#). *Then after three years I went to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother. Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not. Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia; and was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ: but they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed. And they glorified God in me.*

This exposition consisted of readings from [Galatians 1:11-24](#); Galatians 2.

GALATIANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2

Verses 1-21

Galatians 2:1-2. *Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also. And I went up by revelation,-*

He was sent by the church at Antioch, but the church there was guided by revelation, so that Paul is correct in saying, "I went up by revelation," —

Galatians 2:2-4. *And communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain. But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised: and that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage:*

There were always some among the Jewish converts who insisted that the Gentiles should come under the seal of the old covenant if they were to be partakers of the blessings of the gospel, but to this Paul would never consent: —

Galatians 2:5. *To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.*

It is impossible for us to estimate how much we owe to the apostle Paul. Of all who have ever lived, we who are Gentiles owe more to him than to any other man. See how he fought our battles for us. When our Jewish brethren would have excluded us because we were not of the seed of Abraham according to the flesh, how bravely did he contend that, if we were partakers of the same faith, Abraham is the father of all the faithful that he was loved of God, and the covenant was made with him, not in circumcision, but before he was circumcised, and that we are partakers of that covenant.

Galatians 2:6-10. *But of these who seemed to be somewhat, (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man's person:) for they who seemed to be somewhat in conference added nothing to me: but contrawise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; (for*

he wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty to me toward the Gentiles:;) and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision. Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do.

One of the first things he did, when there was a famine in Judaea, was to make a collection for the saints in other places, that he might aid the poor Christians.

Galatians 2:11-14. But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?

It must have been very painful to Paul's feelings to come into conflict with Peter, whom he greatly esteemed; but yet, for the truth's sake, he knew no persons, and he had to withstand even a beloved brother when he saw that he was likely to pervert the simplicity of the gospel, and rob the Gentiles of their Christian liberty. For this, we ought to be very grateful to our gracious God who raised up this brave champion, this beloved apostle of the Gentiles.

Galatians 2:15-16. We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

No mere man can keep the law; no mere man has ever done so. We have all sinned, and come short of the glory of God; and as an absolutely perfect obedience is demanded by the law, which knows nothing of mercy we fly from the law to obtain salvation by the grace of God in Christ Jesus

Galatians 2:17. But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid.

That would not be caused by the gospel, but by our disregard of it.

Galatians 2:18-19. *For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.*

“Through my sight of the law, which I have seen to be so stern that all it call do is to condemn me for my shortcomings, I am driven away from it, and led to come and live in Christ Jesus, under the rule of grace, and not under the law of Moses.”

Galatians 2:20-21. *I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.*

This exposition consisted of readings from Galatians 1:11-24; Galatians 2.

Verses 15-21

Galatians 2:15-21. *We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid. For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.*

Paul is arguing against the idea of salvation by works, or salvation by ceremonies; and he shows, beyond all question, that salvation is by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ. Mark the strength of the apostle's argument in the 21st verse: “ If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in sin.” That is to say, there was no need for Christ to die, the crucifixion was a superfluity, if men can save themselves by their own good works. Paul is very emphatic about the matter. He puts it as

plainly as possible: “If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.”

This exposition consisted of readings from Galatians 2:15-21; Galatians 3.

Verses 16-21

Galatians 2:16. *Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.*

This is the primary truth to be proclaimed by the Christian ministry. It is the foundation-stone of all gospel preaching; and yet, somehow or other, such is the hardness of the human heart, that it is the most difficult thing to induce our hearers to build on this foundation. Many of them are always trying to lean upon their own works, and so struggling to get back under the old legal dispensation, instead of rejoicing in the liberty of the dispensation of grace. One objection to the doctrine of grace rather than the doctrine of law is this, that some think it will lead to sin. The apostle puts it thus: —

Galatians 2:17. *But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid.*

For the tendency of the gospel of grace is to excite gratitude in those who receive it. If I am freely pardoned, then I must love him who has thus generously forgiven me. Gratitude is the root of true virtue, and the main-spring of all holiness. If there be base-minded men who can suck poison out of this honeycomb, is Christ to be blamed for their evil-doing? God forbid! But if, on the other hand, you and I go back to trusting in works, then we are indeed guilty in the sight of God.

Galatians 2:18. *For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.*

If I once said I would not trust in my good works, and now go back to trust in them, I have already, whatever may be my outward conduct, perpetrated a great sin.

Galatians 2:19-20. *For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*

I do not know a better epitome of Christian experience than this. This is the daily walk of a true child of God, if he liveth after any other sort, then he liveth not a Christian's life at all. Christ living in us, ourselves living upon Christ, and our union to Christ being visibly maintained by an act of simple faith in him, this is the true Christian's life.

Galatians 2:21. *I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.*

If a man can be saved by his own works, and willings, and doings, then Christ's death was an unnecessary piece of torture; and, instead of being the most glorious manifestation of divine love, it was a shameful waste, putting upon Christ a terrible burden of suffering which was totally unnecessary.

This exposition consisted of readings from Galatians 2:16-21; Galatians 2:3.

[GALATIANS CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 3

Verses 1-29

3:1. *O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?*

These Galatians thought that they were very philosophical, and very intellectual; but the apostle says, "O foolish Galatians!" They thought that they had been led by reason, and guided by the learning of their teachers; but Paul calls it witchery: "Who hath bewitched you?" he asks, as if anything which led a man to trust in his own works should be as much abhorred as the incantations of a witch, "Who hath bewitched you?" It is a dangerous state, it is a devilish snare to be brought into; to be led to trust to frames, and feelings, and experiences, and doings, and prayings, or to anything else but Christ. It is a strange thing that those who have seen Christ should ever go back to these things. Lord, keep us every day, amongst our other sins, from our own self-righteous nature!

Now the apostle is going to reason with the Galatians against their self-righteousness.

[Galatians 3:2.](#) *This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?*

“You know that the Spirit of God is necessary to salvation. You have received that; did you get the Spirit through the works of the law, or by simply hearing the gospel, and believing it?” The answer comes at once if we have received the Spirit, it was by the hearing of faith, and not by the works of the law.

[Galatians 3:3](#). *Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?*

Surely, the way in which the Christian life begins is the method in which it is to be sustained. “As ye have received Christ Jesus, the Lord,” the apostle says in another place, “so walk ye in him.” If you have begun in the flesh, go on in the flesh, but if you really know that your beginning was in the Spirit, then go not back to the flesh.

[Galatians 3:4](#). *Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain.*

This is another pertinent question.

[Galatians 3:5](#). *He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?*

They had miraculous gifts among them as a church, and the apostle asks them whether these were works of the law, or whether they were not exercised as the result of faith. The answer is clear. It was the believing man who wrought the miracle, not the self-righteous man. Paul is now going to take the Galatians far back in Jewish history.

[Galatians 3:6](#). *Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.*

He was not saved by his works, but by his faith. His faith was the means of the imputation to him of the righteousness of the Saviour who was yet to come.

[Galatians 3:7](#). *Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.*

He was called the father of the faithful, therefore the faithful, those who believe as he did, and are full of his faith, are his children.

[Galatians 3:8-10](#). *And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that*

continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.

Now, if every one who has once violated God's law is cursed for ever, how mad are those who hope to enter heaven by that very law which is the gate to shut them out! How dare they confide in that which is their worst enemy, which is sworn to curse them, in time and in eternity?

[Galatians 3:11](#). *But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith.*

Scripture lays it down as a rule, that justified men live by faith; if this be the rule, then certainly they do not live by works.

[Galatians 3:12](#). *And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.*

So that the justified man is not justified by the law, but by faith. He standeth before God, not in what he does, not even in what the Spirit enables him to do; his own prayers, and tears, and communings with Christ, his own labours, his earnest and indefatigable attempts to extend the kingdom of Christ, all tell for nothing in the matter of his justification. He hangeth them all upon the cross of Christ, and relieth only upon the cross, looking in no manner whatever to anything which cometh of himself.

[Galatians 3:13-14](#). *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.*

We were all under the curse of the law, but Christ voluntarily took our place, and was made a curse for us, so that the blessing might be ours.

[Galatians 3:15-16](#). *Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.*

Notice how important a single letter of the Scriptures may be. If vital doctrine may depend upon the use of a singular or plural noun, therefore let us jealously guard the smallest jot or tittle of the inspired Word of God.

[Galatians 3:17-19](#). *And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if*

the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise. Wherefore then serveth the law?

Some might argue that, as the law cannot justify, it is useless, but, on the contrary, it serves a very definite purpose, as Paul goes on to show.

[Galatians 3:19-22](#). *It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one. Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.*

Paul constantly comes back to this point, that salvation is all of grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

[Galatians 3:23-25](#). *But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterward be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.*

The apostle is not speaking of a schoolmaster, as we understand that word; but of the slave or servant who took the boys to school, watched over them in school and out, and even used the rod if occasion demanded.

[Galatians 3:26](#). *For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.*

The fatherhood of God is common to all believers; but there is no universal fatherhood, as many teach it in these days.

[Galatians 3:27-29](#). *For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

May this be true of all of us, for Christ's sake! Amen.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Galatians 2:16-21](#); [Galatians 2:3](#).

[GALATIANS CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 4

Verse 1

[Galatians 4:1-5](#). *Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: but when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.*

Like little children, the Jewish believers were under the law. They observed this ceremony and that, just as children, even though they may be heirs to vast estates, yet, while they are in their minority, are under tutors and governors. But now in Christ we have come of age, and we have done with those school-books and that tutorship, and we have received the adoption of sons. Now, we have joy and peace in believing; we have begun to enter into our possession; we have the earnest of it already, and by-and-by we shall receive the fullness of the inheritance of the saints in light.

[Galatians 4:6](#). *And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.*

While the Jewish believers, like children, were under the law, they did not have such direct access to the Father as we have. They could not enter into such close fellowship with God as now we can. We who are the sons of God, really born into his family, feel within us a something that makes us call God, "Father," not only in prayer, saying, "Our Father, which art in heaven;" but, inwardly, when we are not in the attitude of prayer, our hearts keep on crying, "Father, Father." The Jew may say, "Abba, and the word is very sweet; but we cry, "Father," and it means the same thing.

[Galatians 4:7](#). *Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.*

All God's sons are, in a certain sense, his servants; but there is a sense in which servants are not sons. We, therefore, are not like those servants who have no relationship to their master, and no share in his possessions; but we are sons. Whatever service we render, we are still sons, and we have a share in all that our Father has; we are heirs, "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." Are you living up to your privileges, brethren? Are we any of us fully realizing what this heirship means? Do we not often live as if we were only servants toiling for hire? Do we not tremble at God as if we were his

slaves rather than his sons? Let us remember that we are God's sons, his heirs; and let us come close to him, let us take possession of the blessed inheritance which he has provided for us.

[Galatians 4:8-11](#). *Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods. But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.*

Among the heathen, there were divers "lucky" and "unlucky" days; sacred days, and days in which they indulged in sensual excess. They had even "holy" months and "unholy" months. Now, all that kind of thing is done away with in the case of a Christian: he is set free from such weak and beggarly superstitions. Among the Jews, there were certain sacred festivals, times that were more notable than other seasons; but they also were done away with in Christ. We observe the Christian Sabbath; but beyond that, to the true believer, there should be no special observance of days, and months, and years. All that is a return to "the weak and beggarly elements" from which Christ has delivered him. That bondage is all ended now; but there are some who still "observe days, and months, and times, and years;" and Paul says to them, "I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain." Every day is holy, every year is holy, to a holy man; and every place is holy, too, to the man who brings a holy heart into it.

[Galatians 4:12](#). *Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am; for I am as ye are: ye have not injured me at all.*

"Be perfectly at home with me, for I am so with you. Though you Galatians have treated me very badly, yet ye have not really injured me, and I freely overlook your ill manners toward me."

[Galatians 4:13-15](#). *Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first. And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me.*

The apostle remembers how they received him at first, his gospel was to them like life from the dead; and though he was full of infirmities, — perhaps had weak eyes, — perhaps had a stammering tongue, — perhaps

was at that time very much depressed in spirit, — yet, he says, “You received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. You loved me so much that, if it had been possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me.”

[Galatians 4:16](#). *Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?*

There come times, with all God’s servants, when certain people proclaim something fresh and new in doctrine; and then the old messenger of God, who was blessed to them, comes to be despised. I have lived long enough to see dozens of very fine fancies started, but they have all come to nothing; I daresay I shall see a dozen more, and they will all come to nothing. But here I stand; I am not led astray either by novelties of excitement or novelties of doctrine. The things which I preached at the first, I preach still, and so I shall continue, as God shall help me. But I know, in some little measure, what the apostle meant when he said, “Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?”

[Galatians 4:17-20](#). *They zealously affect you, but not well; yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect them. But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you. My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you, I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you.*

The point of doubt was, that they had been led astray by legal teachers; they had been made to believe that, after all, there was something in outward ceremonies, something in the works of the law, and so they had come under bondage again. So the apostle says, —

[Galatians 4:21-23](#). *Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a free woman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; —*

By Abraham’s own strength; —

[Galatians 4:23](#). *But he of the freewoman was by promise.*

Born when Abraham and his wife were past age, — born by the power of God’s Spirit, according to promise.

[Galatians 4:24](#). *Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants: the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Hagar.*

It is the strength of the flesh which leads to bondage.

[Galatians 4:25-26](#). *For this Hgar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.*

That is, of all of us who believe in Christ Jesus. We are born of the free-woman, not of the bondwoman; not born of the covenant of works, and in the strength of the creature; but born of the covenant of grace, in the power of God, according to promise.

[Galatians 4:27-28](#). *For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband. Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.*

If we are God's children, it is not by our own strength, or by the strength of the flesh, in any measure or degree; but it is by the grace of God, and the promise of God, that we are what we are.

[Galatians 4:29-30](#). *But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless what saith the scripture?*

Make a compromise, and be friends? Let Isaac and Ishmael live in the same house, and lie in the same bed? No!

[Galatians 4:30-31](#). *Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.*

[Galatians 5:1](#). *Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.*

God grant us grace to keep to grace! God grant us faith enough to live by faith, even to the end, as the freeborn children of God, for his name's sake! Amen.

Verses 12-31

[Galatians 4:12](#). *Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am; for I am as ye are: ye have not injured me at all.*

He had told them the gospel, and other teachers had come in and alienated their affections. He says, "Now I am just the same to you as ever I was; I wish you would have the same love to me."

[Galatians 4:13-14](#). *Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first. And my temptation which was in my flesh ye*

despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus.

He dwells upon that. They had been so enthusiastic about his teaching when he first taught them, that he feels grieved that now they have gone aside to other teaching — not because it injured him, but because it injured them.

[Galatians 4:15](#). *Where is then the blessedness ye spake of?*

When you said that you were happy to live in Paul's days, glad to listen to so simple and plain a teacher.

[Galatians 4:15-16](#). *For I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me. Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?*

Ah! there are many who have incurred enmity through speaking the gospel very plainly, for the natural tendency of man is towards ceremony, towards some form of legal righteousness: he must have something aesthetic, something that delights his sensuous nature, something that he can see and hear, to mix up that with the simplicity of faith; and Paul was as clear as noonday against everything of that kind, and so the Galatians got at last to be angry with him. Well, he could not help that, but it did grieve him.

[Galatians 4:17](#). *They zealously affect you, but not well; yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect them.*

They would, if they could, turn you out of our love that you might run after them. These false teachers would shut us out of your hearts that your hearts might go after them.

[Galatians 4:18-21](#). *But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you. My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you. I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you. Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?*

Will you not listen to what the law itself teaches? Here is a little bit from one of its first books, the book of Genesis.

[Galatians 4:22-23](#). *For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, and the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh;*

In the strength of Abraham.

[Galatians 4:23](#). *But he of the freewoman was by promise.*

In the power of God, born after both father and mother had ceased to be capable of becoming parents, born in the power of God.

[Galatians 4:24](#). *Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants: the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Hagar.*

Those that are under the law are the children, therefore, of the bondwoman: they are born slaves.

[Galatians 4:25](#). *For this Hagar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children.*

It is old Judaism coming from Sinai, “This do, and thou shalt live,” and all the children that are born under it are children of nature, and they are not the children of promise.

[Galatians 4:26](#). *But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.*

This is Sarah, and they that believe are the Isaac-children, the children of holy laughter, born according to the power of God.

[Galatians 4:27-29](#). *For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not: break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband, Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.*

The child of Hagar could not hear the child of Sarah, and they that seek salvation by the works of the law, and by outward ceremonies, cannot endure the children of faith.

[Galatians 4:30-31](#). *Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son; for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.*

This exposition consisted of readings from [Galatians 4:12-31](#); [Galatians 5:1-4](#); [Galatians 5:19-26](#); [Galatians 6:1-11](#).

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CHAPTER 5

Verses 1-26

[Galatians 5:1-4](#). *Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ had made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.*

If you mean to have anything to with salvation by works, get you gone; you are the children of the bond-woman.

[Galatians 5:19-21](#). *Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, reveling, and such like:*

A black catalogue, but sin is very prolific. We must take care that we avoid each one of these works of the flesh, or else we shall give no proof that we are led by the Spirit of God and possess the grace of God.

[Galatians 5:21](#). *Of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*

Read over the list. Put the question to conscience, “Am I guilty of such things?” If so, do not suppose that the holding of orthodox doctrine will save you, or that any kind of religious ceremony will save you. You must be delivered from these lusts of the flesh — these deeds of the flesh, or you cannot inherit the kingdom of God.

[Galatians 5:22-23](#). *But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.*

Surely, neither human nor divine. These are things which are commended on all hands. But if we do not have them — if they are not found in us — then we have not the Spirit, for if we had the Spirit, we should boast the fruit of the Spirit.

[Galatians 5:24-26](#). *And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory,*

A very common sin — wishing to shine. Whether we deserve to be honoured or not, still wanting to be fore-horse in the team, and to take the leading place. “Let us not be desirous of vain glory.”

[Galatians 5:26](#). *Provoking one another, envying one another.*

If each would strive who should do the greatest deeds of love, and each were willing to take the lowest place, then this evil would never be known again.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Galatians 4:12-31](#); [Galatians 5:1-4](#); [Galatians 5:19-26](#); [Galatians 6:1-11](#).

Verses 13-26

[Galatians 5:13](#). *For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.*

Do not turn your liberty into license. The apostle, in this Epistle, had began urging the Christians of Galatians to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free, and never to be again entangled with the yoke of legal bondage. He warned them against that error into which many have fallen. But you know that it is often our tendency, if we escape from one error, to rush into another. So the apostle guards these Christian against that Antinomian spirit which teaches us that freedom from the law allows indulgence in sin: “Use not your liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.”

[Galatians 5:14](#). *For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.*

Oh, if that “one word” were so engraven on our hearts as to influence all our lives, what blessed lives of love to God and love to men we should lead!

[Galatians 5:15](#). *But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.*

When dogs and wolves bite one another, it is according to their nature; but it is bad indeed when sheep take to biting one another. If I must be bitten at all, let me rather be bitten by a dog than by a sheep. That is to say, the wounds inflicted by the godly are far more painful to bear, and last much longer, than those caused by wicked men. Besides, we can say with the psalmist, “It was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it.” It is natural that the serpent’s seed should nibble at our heel, and seek to do us injury; but when the bite comes from a brother, — from a child of God, then it is peculiarly painful. Well might the apostle write, “If ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.” I have lived long enough to see churches absolutely destroyed, not by any external attacks, but by internal contention.

[Galatians 5:16](#). *This I say then, walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.*

If your life is guided by the Spirit of God, — if you are spiritual men, and your actions are wrought in the power of the Spirit, “ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.”

[Galatians 5:17](#). *For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh:*

They will never agree; these two powers are always contrary one to the other. If you think that you can help God by getting angry, you make a great mistake. You cannot fight God’s battles with the devil’s weapons. It is not possible that the power of the flesh should help the power of the Spirit.

[Galatians 5:17-18](#). *And these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.*

The law is ever to you the blessed rule by which you judge your conduct, but it is not a law of condemnation to you, neither are you seeking salvation by it.

[Galatians 5:19-21](#). *Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like:*

The list is always too long to be completed; we are obliged to sum up with a kind of et cetera: “and such like.”

[Galatians 5:21](#). *Of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*

A very solemn, searching, sweeping declaration. Let each man judge himself by this test. “The fruit of the Spirit” — is equally manifest, as the apostle goes on to say,

[Galatians 5:22-23](#). *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.*

Neither human nor divine. Good men make no law against these things, nor does God, for he approves of them. What a wonderful cluster of the grapes of Eshcol we have here! “The fruit of the Spirit” — as if all this were but one after all; — many luscious berries forming one great cluster.

Oh, that all these things may be in us and abound, that we may be neither barren nor unfruitful!

[Galatians 5:24](#). *And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.*

It is not yet dead, but it is crucified. It hangs up on the cross, straining to break away from the iron hold fast, but it cannot, for it is doomed to die. Happy indeed shall that day be when it shall be wholly dead.

[Galatians 5:25-26](#). *If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.*

Do Christian people need to be talked to like this? Ay, that they do, for the best of men are but men at their best, and the godliest saint is liable to fall into the fondest sin unless the grace of God prevent. Oh, that we could expel from the Church of Christ all vain glorying, all provoking of one another, and all envying of one another! How often, if one Christian brother does a little more than his fellow-workers, they begin to find fault with him; and if one is blessed with greater success than others are, how frequently that success is disparaged and spoken of slightly! This spirit of envy is, more or less, in us all; and though, perhaps we are not exhibiting it just now, it only needs a suitable opportunity for its display, and it would be manifested. No man here has any idea of how bad he really is. You do not know how good the grace of God can make you, nor how bad you are by nature, nor how bad you might become if that nature were left to itself.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Galatians 5:13-26](#); and [Galatians 6:1-2](#).

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CHAPTER 6

Verse 1-2

[Galatians 6:1](#). *Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, —*

If he travels so slowly that his faults catch him up, and knock him down: “If a man be overtaken in a fault,” —

[Galatians 6:1](#). *Ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness;*

Set his bones for him if they have been broken; put him in his proper place again.

[Galatians 6:1](#). *Considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.*

What would you wish others to do to you if you were in the position of this fallen one? The apostle does not say, “Considering thyself lest thou also be overtaken in a fault.” No, but, “lest thou also be tempted,” — as much as to say, “It only needs the temptation to come to you, and you will yield to it.”

[Galatians 6:2](#). *Bear ye one another’s burdens, and fulfill the law of Christ.*

This exposition consisted of readings from [Galatians 5:13-26](#); and [Galatians 6:1-2](#).

Verses 1-10

[Galatians 6:1](#). *Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault,—*

He is a slow traveler; he is not speeding swiftly on the way to heaven, so the fault overtakes him. Had he been quicker of pace, he might have outstripped it; but he is “overtaken in a fault.” What then? Turn him out of the church? Have done with him? No. “If a man be overtaken in a fault,—

[Galatians 6:1](#). *Ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness;*

Pick him up, help him to run better than he did before.

[Galatians 6:1](#). *Considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.*

Paul does not say, “Lest thou also fall;” but, “Lest thou also be tempted,” — as much as to say, “You will be sure to fall if you are tempted;” and that man, who thinks that other people ought to be cast off because they have committed a fault, is so proud in his own heart that he only needs to be tempted, and he would fall, too. This is a very expressive way of putting the matter: “Considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.”

[Galatians 6:2](#). *Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.*

Help your brethren. If you see that they have more to do than they can accomplish, take a share of their labour. If they have a heavier burden than they can bear, try to put your shoulder beneath their load, and so lighten it for them.

[Galatians 6:3](#). *For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.*

Paul does not say, “He deceiveth other people;” no, “he deceiveth himself.” As a general rule, other people find him out, they learn what he really is, but “he deceiveth himself.”

[Galatians 6:4-5](#). *But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For every man shall bear his own burden.*

There is, after all, a burden which we cannot carry for others, and which we cannot shift upon others. There are burdens of care, and sorrow, and trouble, which we can take from other men’s shoulders; but the great burden of responsibility before God, each man must himself carry.

[Galatians 6:6](#). *Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.*

Those who are taught, should maintain those who are their teachers as far as they are able to do so.

[Galatians 6:7](#). *Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.*

That is true under the gospel as well as under the law.

[Galatians 6:8](#). *For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption;*

That is what always comes to the flesh; it decays and corrupts.

[Galatians 6:8](#). *But he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.*

No corruption shall come to that which belongs to the Spirit: “He that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.”

[Galatians 6:9-10](#). *And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season are shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are if the household of faith.*

This exposition consisted of readings from [Galatians 5:13-26](#); and [Galatians 6:1-10](#).

Verses 1-11

[Galatians 6:1](#). *Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.*

When Christians fall into a fault, it is on account of their traveling slowly on the road to heaven. Hence the expression, “If he be overtaken with a fault.” He would not have been overtaken if he had been traveling

faster. If his heart had been quick in the ways of the Lord, he would have outstripped the temptation. Now, when a brother falls into sin, it is too often the habit to push him down — to cast him out and forget him. But spiritually-minded persons must not do so. We must seek the restoration of the brother. Is there not more joy over the sheep that was lost than over those that went not astray? Have we not the best reason to deal tenderly with wanderers, since we cannot tell that we may not need the same generous offices for ourselves? “Considering thyself lest thou also be tempted.” He seems to take it for granted that we probably should, if we were tempted as the other brother was.

[Galatians 6:2](#). *Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.*

Help each other. If you have a light load, take a part of somebody else’s.

[Galatians 6:3](#). *For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.*

Mainly deceives himself. Other people generally find it out. It is no use estimating your fortune at so many millions, for it will not make it so; and it is of no use estimating yourself at a very high price, because it does not make it so. “He deceiveth himself.”

[Galatians 6:4-5](#). *But let every man prove his own work, and then, shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For every man shall bear his own burden.*

There are burdens of care and sorrow which we can help others to bear; but the burdens of responsibility each man must carry for himself. The load of service for the Master must be carried personally; and let us be glad to shoulder it, since Christ has done so much for us. And how else can we express gratitude but by serving him?

[Galatians 6:6](#). *Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.*

If he gives you spirituals, do not suffer him to lack for temporals.

[Galatians 6:7-8](#). *Be not deceived: God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap*

What the flesh always comes to by-and-bye.

[Galatians 6:8](#). *Corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit*

By faith in Christ — by being led of the Spirit.

[Galatians 6:8-10](#). *Shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.*

They have a first claim upon us. They are nearest of kin. They are our brethren in Christ. Let them have a Benjamin's portion.

[Galatians 6:11](#). *Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand.*

Paul did not often write his own epistles. It is thought that he had a defect of the eyes. He employed an amanuensis generally. When he did write, he wrote generally in great capitals. I suppose that is what he meant. "You see how emphatic my writing is — what great characters I have made in writing to you." Or he may have meant that for a letter, written by him, this was a lengthy one.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Galatians 4:12-31](#); [Galatians 5:1-4](#); [Galatians 5:19-26](#); [Galatians 6:1-11](#).

Verses 6-18

[Galatians 6:6-7](#). *Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things. Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.*

Paul puts that in connection with the support of those who are teachers of the truth, and I have sometimes thought that, in certain churches where God's ministers have been starved, it was not very wonderful that the people should be starved, too. They thought so little about the pastor that they left him in need, so it was not strange that, as they sowed little, they reaped little. One of these misers said that his religion did not cost him more than a shilling a year, and somebody replied that he thought it was a shilling wasted on a bad thing, for his poor religion was not worth even that small amount.

[Galatians 6:8](#). *For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption;*

He shall reap what flesh turns to in due time: "he shall of the flesh reap corruption." What is the end of flesh? The fairest flesh, that ever was moulded from the most beautiful form, ends in corruption; and if we live for the flesh, and sow to it, we shall reap "corruption."

[Galatians 6:8](#). *But he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting.*

He shall reap what the Spirit really is, and what the Spirit really generates: “life everlasting.” Of course, if a man sows tares, he reaps tares. If he sows wheat, he reaps wheat. If we sow to the flesh, we reap corruption. If we sow to the Spirit, we shall “reap life everlasting.”

[Galatians 6:9](#). *And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.*

It is a pity to faint just when the time is coming to reap; so, sow on, brother and sister, sow on!

[Galatians 6:10](#). *As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.*

Extend your love, your charity, to all mankind; but let the center of that circle be in the home where God has placed you, — in the home of his people: “especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”

[Galatians 6:11](#). *Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand.*

I suppose that he meant, “See what big characters I have made. My eyes are weak, and so, when I do write a letter,” says Paul, “in the dimness of this dungeon, with my poor weak eyes, and my hands fettered, I have to write text-hand, and give it to you in large letters. Well,” he says, “then carry it out in big letters. You see with what large letters I have written to you, now emphasize it all, take it as emphatic, and carry it out with great diligence. As I have written this with mine own hand, and not used an amanuensis, I beseech you to pay the more attention to it, you Galatians, who seem to be so bewitched that, to deliver you from false doctrine, and an evil spirit, I would even write a letter with my own blood if it were needful.”

[Galatians 6:12-13](#). *As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh.*

“See,” say they, “these Gentiles. We have converted them, and we have got them circumcised. Is not that a wonderful thing? “No, not at all, for he says,

[Galatians 6:14](#). *But God foretold that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.*

“I have ceased to care”, says Paul, “about glorying in men, and making other people glory in my converts. The world is dead to me, and I to it.”

[Galatians 6:15-17](#). *For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God. From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.*

I have the marks of the whips upon my body. I am the branded slave of Jesus Christ. There is no getting the marks out of me. I cannot run away. I cannot deny that he is my Master and my Owner: “I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus’.

[Galatians 6:18](#). *Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.*

And that is our benediction to you. The Lord fulfill it to each one of you!

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CHAPTER FORTY-EIGHT

Ephesians

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MAIN CONTENTS

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CHAPTER 1

Verse 1

[Ephesians 1:1-2](#). *Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.*

He wishes them grace, first, and peace afterwards, which is the right and natural order. There is no lasting peace without grace. There is no peace

worth having which does not spring from a work of grace in the soul. “Grace be to you, and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.”

[Ephesians 1:3](#). *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,*

How dear the Father is when we view him in association with the Redeemer. Never do the saints seem to delight so much in God as when they behold him in the person of Jesus Christ. Then is he inexpressibly lovely to us, and we preach him with joy and delight. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

[Ephesians 1:3](#). *Who have blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:*

“Blessed,” says he, “be God, who hath blessed us.” Well may we bless him with our feeble thanks who has blest us with his might; mercies. Nothing makes a man bless God like God’s blessing him. “He has blessed us,” says the apostle, “with all spiritual blessings.” The children of God have not only some blessings, but all they want. They are all theirs — all for time and all for eternity, but they are all in Christ. There is no blessing out of Christ. All the fullness of blessing dwells in Jesus, and in him only. And if thou wouldest be blessed, thou must come to Christ for a blessing. He has “blest us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.”

[Ephesians 1:4](#). *According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:*

The first great blessing of the covenant of grace is our election. We were chosen, but chosen in Christ — chosen not because we were holy, but chosen that we should be holy. The great object of the divine choice is our holiness. And let no man say that he is chosen of God unless God is working in him to this divine end, namely, holiness of character.

[Ephesians 1:5](#). *Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,*

After election comes adoption. Men are not by nature the children of God but they are heirs of wrath. And this is very clear, because a man never adopts his own children. But adoption in itself proves that by nature we are not the children of God, but he adopts us. “Then are ye begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” Happy they who know their adoption — who feel in themselves the spirit of children,

and can cry, “Abba, Father,” as they look up to God tonight. This is in Christ Jesus, for nothing comes to us except by him.

[Ephesians 1:6](#). *To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.*

Christ is so acceptable to God that that acceptance is sufficient to spread over all those who are in him. And tonight every believer here is accepted before God, but it is through Jesus Christ. Do notice that. Nothing comes but by that silver pipe. “He hath made us accepted in the Beloved.”

[Ephesians 1:7](#). *In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;*

Redemption by Christ, forgiveness by Christ, still everything through the Crucified. Those dear wounds of his are the five sacred founts from which a world of blessing flows to bless poor needy sinners. Well may we say, “None but Christ,” for, indeed, there is none but Christ who can bless us.

[Ephesians 1:8-10](#). *Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth: even in him:*

All the things that are in Christ are to be gathered together — believing Jews no longer to be divided from believing Gentiles. Today the Church of God is separated — disfigured and weakened by divers sects and parties, but it shall not be always so. There is a gathering under the Christ, and he will in the fullness of time perfectly accomplish it.

[Ephesians 1:11-12](#). *In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.*

Some people are dreadfully frightened at that word “predestination.” I am always astonished when members of the Church of England are so, for if they will turn to their own articles, they will find that the high end comfortable doctrine of predestination is there taught. It is to be wisely handled, but it is not to be gagged and sent into a corner, as it is by some. Are there truths in Scripture that are not to be taught? If any say so then I charge him with being like the Jesuit, who hides a part of what he believes.

Nay, the whole of God's truth is to be declared, and whatsoever we find in this book, that are we to state, and the keeping back of precious truth will be required of such as are guilty of it at the last great day.

[Ephesians 1:13](#) to [Ephesians 2:1](#). *In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory. Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power. Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all. And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;*

So that what he did for Christ he has done for you. He raised him and he has raised you, and, having begun thus to quicken you, he will go on to lift you up and to exalt you till you sit with him upon his throne. The only question, dear friends, is this. Do we belong to these of whom Paul here speaks? We look to the first verse to see who they are, and we find he is addressing the faithful in Christ Jesus; that is, those who are believing in Christ Jesus. If we are believing in him, then all the privileges, which are mentioned in this Chapter belong to us, and we are quickened and we shall be exalted even as Christ is, at the Father's right hand. So be it, gracious Lord.

Verses 1-14

In this chapter, we see what Paul, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, has to say about the possessions and privileges of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

[Ephesians 1:1-2](#). *Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Brethren and sisters in Christ, this is a benediction for you as well as for the saints at Ephesus; it is for all “the faithful in Christ Jesus.” May you all have grace without measure, and may you all have “the peace of God, which passeth all understanding,” to “keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus”! Grace and peace are both to be had by believing in Jesus.

[Ephesians 1:3](#). *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:*

It is right that we should bless God as he has so richly blessed us. Blessed be the Heavenly Father who has so abundantly blessed his children. How has he blessed us? “With all spiritual blessings in heavenly places (or, things) in Christ.”

[Ephesians 1:4](#). *According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world,*

That is the commencement of all the blessing, God’s electing love. This is the fountain from which the living waters flow. There would have been no stream of blessing to us at all if it had not been for this first primeval choice of us by God, even as Jesus said to his disciples, “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.”

[Ephesians 1:4](#). *That we should be holy and without blame before him in love:*

Here is the blessing of sanctification; we are chosen that we may be made holy. To what nobler end could we have been elected? Is not this the very highest of our heart’s desires, — “that we should be holy and without blame before him in love”?

[Ephesians 1:5](#). *Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,*

Oh, what a blessing this is, altogether inconceivable in its results!

“Behold what wondrous grace,

The Father hath bestow’d

On sinners of a mortal race,

To call them sons of God!”

[Ephesians 1:6](#). *To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.*

There is music for you: “accepted in the Beloved.” Are there grander words in any language than those four? Oh, the joy of being beloved, adopted, accepted by God the Father because of his beloved Son! Now comes something more: —

[Ephesians 1:7](#). *In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;*

Redemption from destruction, the forgiveness of our sins, — we have all this through “the riches of his grace.”

[Ephesians 1:8-14](#). *Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.*

There is no end to the blessing which God gives to his chosen. He is always blessing us with blessings upon blessings, grace upon grace, and then there will be glory to crown it all. Blessed be his holy name forever and ever.

Verses 1-23

[Ephesians 1:1](#). *Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God,*

He was not made an apostle by man, neither did he take the office upon himself, but he was made an apostle by the will of God.

[Ephesians 1:1](#). *To the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus:*

The saints in Ephesus, the saints where they cried, “Great is Diana of the Ephesians,” had to bear an earnest witness against idolatry. And, dear friends, today saints in London will not have a very easy time of it if they are faithful to their Lord, for there is much to protest against in this evil generation; but as there were holy ones in Ephesus, God grant that there may be many such in London.

[Ephesians 1:2](#). *Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Paul would have us peaceful, restful, quiet. That peace must be based upon grace, He does not pray that we may have peace apart from grace, but “Grace be to you, and peace.”

[Ephesians 1:3-4](#). *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world,*

The high mystery of election is taught in the Word of God, but some are afraid to speak of it. Not so our Apostle. He brings it out very clearly and distinctly, and so should we, only taking care to keep it in the proportion of other doctrines.

[Ephesians 1:4-5](#). *That we should be holy and without blame before him in love. Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.*

You hear much about the free will of man, hear a little about the free will of God. You would think, from the talk of some, that God was man’s debtor and must needs do according to the will of man. But it is not so. He is a sovereign, and gives his grace where he chooses, and he would have us know that it is according to the good pleasure of his will.

[Ephesians 1:6](#). *To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.*

Are there four words in any language which contain choicer meaning than these, “Accepted in the Beloved”? Oh! if you can say that, if you can feel it to be true, you are among the happiest of men and women. “Accepted in the Beloved.” You can never be accepted apart from Christ, the Father’s best Beloved. But there is merit enough in him to overflow and cover all our sins, and we are accepted in the Beloved.

[Ephesians 1:7](#). *In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace:*

Notice how the Apostle keeps on insisting that we have everything in Christ. He says, times out of number, “in him,” “in Christ.” We have redemption. We are free. We are under bonds no longer. What is the price? “Through his blood.” What is the result? “Forgiveness of sins.” What is the measure of our liberty? “According to the riches of his grace.”

[Ephesians 1:8](#). *Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence;*

Not drowning us with floods of his grace, but handing it out to us as we are able to take it. The riches of his grace we have, but he uses wisdom and prudence, teaching us little by little as we are able to bear it, and raising us up by degrees from one stage of grace to another, according as our poor frames can endure the joy.

[Ephesians 1:9-10](#). *Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:*

There are things in Christ in heaven: there the things in Christ on earth; but all the things in Christ shall be gathered together. All the redeemed shall come as one great host to bow before the throne of the infinite Majesty.

[Ephesians 1:11](#). *In whom also*

Notice those words.

[Ephesians 1:11](#). *We have obtained an inheritance,*

We have got the inheritance. Even now we have entered upon possession of the kingdom of grace.

[Ephesians 1:11-12](#). *Being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will; That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.*

The first saints led the way in the front of the army, and they are to the praise of God's glory to this day. We thank God for the apostles and martyrs who went before us. We will follow them as they followed Christ.

[Ephesians 1:13](#). *In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.*

After faith, the Holy Spirit is given to dwell in the soul. That is the seal. It is not that the Holy Spirit brings a seal with him. He is the seal. Where he dwells, he is the seal of God's love to that man.

[Ephesians 1:14](#). *Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.*

The Holy Ghost is first the seal, and next the earnest. We all know what an earnest is. It is different from a pledge. A pledge is given, and then it is taken back again when the stipulation is carried out, but an earnest is part of

what is to be received ultimately. The man who receives an earnest of his wage gets a few shillings, say, on Thursday, instead of taking all on Saturday. He never returns that. It is a part of his wage. And so the Holy Ghost is a part of him. When we have got him, we have got Christ.

“Thou art the earnest of his love,
The pledge of joys to come;
And thy soft wings, Celestial Dove,
Shall safe convey me home.”

[Ephesians 1:15-16](#). *Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers;*

Is that the way that we pray? Do we make mention of people in our prayers? It is well to do so. It is a good plan to keep a list of persons for whom we ought to pray, and to put it before us when we draw near to God, and go over the names. I knew one man of God who has kept a debtor and creditor list with God for many years. He puts his requests down in the book, and when they are answered he writes that down. If they are not answered he repeats them. It is a very wonderful book. I think that he told me that there is a name down there of a person for whom he has prayed, and that he is not converted yet. Out of several for whom he began to pray, he is the only one who is not converted, and is the only one that is left alive. The others were brought to Christ, and died in the faith, and he, not yet brought to Christ, still lives. He prays on with as great a confidence of the conversion of that man as I have that Christmas will come in due time. I wish that we did business with God in some such fashion as that, but our prayers are shadowy, unreal. God teach us how to pray!

[Ephesians 1:17-18](#). *That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling,*

You see he gave thanks to God for their faith and for their love. But there are three divine sisters that must never be separated — faith, hope, and love, and so the Apostle prays, “that ye may know what is the hope of his calling.”

[Ephesians 1:18-21](#). *And what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints. And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to he working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in*

Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:

See how high Christ is raised! The same power that brought Christ from the dead, and set him on high, works in the salvation of every believer. Nothing less than omnipotence can save a soul; and omnipotence at its very best in the glorification of Christ is none too great for the salvation of a sinner.

[Ephesians 1:22-23](#). *And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.*

May God bless to us the reading of that chapter.

This exposition consisted of readings from 1 Corinthians 13; Ephesians 1.

[EPHESIANS CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 2

Verses 1-22

[Ephesians 2:1](#). *And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins:*

These were your grave clothes. You were wrapped up in them. Nay, this was your sarcophagus. You were shut up in it, as in a great stone coffin: “Dead in trespasses and sins.”

[Ephesians 2:2](#). *Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.*

You were once no better than the workshop of the devil. He is the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience, as the smith works in his forge. When you hear foul language, when you see bad actions, these are the sparks coming out of the chimney that let you know who is at work within, down below. What a dreadful thing it is — a man dead to all that is good, but alive through the indwelling of the devil that is within him. “The spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.”

[Ephesians 2:3](#). *Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.*

Not children of God, even as some profanely assert when they talk about the universal fatherhood of God. Ye were children of wrath, even as others. And the best of men were no better than others by nature. They were as dead, as much under the influence of Satan, as much under the influence of the lusts of the flesh as others are who are left where they are. It is only sovereign grace that makes us to differ. “Were by nature,” not by error; by nature, not by a mistake, not by a few actions, but by nature, the children of wrath, even as others. See what you used to be. Let this make you humble. See what you would have been. Let this make you grateful. “You hath he quickened.” He has put life into you. He has made you quit your graves. He has made you come from under the dominion of Satan and the devices of your own heart. Will you not bless his name tonight?

[Ephesians 2:4-5](#). *But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ,*

Wonder! The life that quickens. Christ quickens all the members of his mystical body, and this has come to us through the riches of God’s mercy. Whatever God has, he has in abundance, but of his mercy we read that he has riches of it; and truly all those riches of mercy he has shown in our case. We cannot but have riches of gratitude for such riches of mercy.

[Ephesians 2:5](#). *(By grace ye are saved;)*

See, Paul puts that in a parenthesis. It was not necessary to the sense, but he knew that there would come a time when men would not like this doctrine, so he puts it in, “by grace are ye saved.” They cannot bear it, and therefore they shall have it. They shall have it when the sense does not seem to demand it. To make it quite clear, he will insert it, “by grace ye are saved.”

[Ephesians 2:6](#). *And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.*

We are not only raised from the dead with Christ, but we are spiritually raised into the heavenly places with him. It is a great thing when a man learns to look up from earth to heaven. It is a greater thing when he learns to look down from heaven upon earth — to have you sitting at the right

hand of God, and then to look down on all the things of this present life as far below you.

[Ephesians 2:7](#). *That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.*

Brethren, we are to be a show, an exhibition case, in which God will exhibit the riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. Angels will count it a high joy to study the life of a regenerate man, to see him rise from death in sin to the glory of God in Christ Jesus. What is so precious in God's esteem ought to excite our praise continually.

[Ephesians 2:8](#). *For by grace are ye saved*

There it is again. Paul rings that silver bell in the deaf ears of men. "By grace are ye saved."

[Ephesians 2:8-9](#). *Through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.*

We should be sure to boast if we could. We are a boasting people. Man is a poor mass of flesh, and he is largely given to the corruption of pride, He will boast if he can.

[Ephesians 2:10](#). *For we are his workmanship,*

If there is any good thing in us, he put it there. It is not for us to boast. It is for him to boast if he pleases.

[Ephesians 2:10-11](#). *Created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. Wherefore remember,*

Oh! that is a good word for us, "Remember," we are so apt to forget. "Remember."

[Ephesians 2:11-12](#). *That ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ,*

Had you to do with Christ? The Jews call you uncircumcised dogs. What had you to do with the Messiah? Was not the Messiah for God's Israel? You did not belong to Israel.

[Ephesians 2:12](#). *Being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise,*

The covenant was in Isaac. You are not the children of Isaac. You are not descended from Abraham. You were strangers from the covenants of promise.

[Ephesians 2:12](#). *Having no hope,*

Either here or hereafter.

[Ephesians 2:12-13](#). *And without God in the world:*

But now Oh! what a contrast.

[Ephesians 2:13](#). *In Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.*

You are brought near to Israel. You are brought nearer still to Israel's God. Now you are not aliens. You are not strangers from the covenant. You have a hope, you have a God.

[Ephesians 2:14-15](#). *For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace;*

There is no circumcision and uncircumcision now, for that is done away with. There is no Israel according to the flesh now, and Gentiles who are not of God, for there is a spiritual Israel, to which we belong, as well as those of Abraham's race. He has swept out of the way all the ordinances which divided us, and we are now one in him.

[Ephesians 2:16-17](#). *And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.*

To the Gentile and to the Jew, to the atrociously wicked, and to those who were religious after a fashion — he has brought them both in by the cross.

[Ephesians 2:18](#). *For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.*

Here you have the Trinity in a single line of Scripture, and it needs the Trinity to make an acceptable prayer. Through him (that is, Christ) we have access by one Spirit unto the Father, and now, today, the Church of God is one in prayer, whether Jew or Gentile. We come to God by the same Mediator, helped by the same Spirit. We have answers of peace from the same Father.

[Ephesians 2:19](#). *Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints and of the household of God:*

There are many here whom we do not know. We have not seen their faces before, but if they are in Christ and we are in Christ, we are very near of kin. There is an old proverb that blood is thicker than water, and depend upon it that when there is the blood of Christ sprinkled upon us, it makes very near kinship. When we are bought with the same price, quickened by

the same life, and are on the way to the same heaven, we are very near of kin. We are no mere strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints and all the household of God. They make a great fuss when they give a man the liberty of the City of London. There is a fine gold box to put it in. You have got the liberty of the new Jerusalem, and your faith, like a golden box, holds the deeds of your freemanship. Take care of them, and rejoice in them.

[Ephesians 2:20-21](#). *And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone: in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:*

The church is a framed house. It has an architect. Some seem to think that it is a load of bricks. They have no church officers. There are none set apart to this work, and none to the other. It seems to be just a heap of stones thrown down anyhow. But a true church is, by the Spirit of God, a building fitly framed together. One is a door, another is a window. One lies low and hidden in the foundation. Another may have a more prominent position in the wall; and it should be so with us — that we should each have a place that God has appointed him, and keep to that place. Lord, build up thy Church upon earth at this time.

[Ephesians 2:22](#). *In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.*

We are not builded to stand like a carcase. It is a ghastly sight to see houses in London nearly finished, but never occupied: but it is the glory of the Church of God that it is inhabited. It is a habitation of God through the Spirit. Holy Spirit, dwell in thy Church more evidently. Keep open house for all poor sinners that come to Christ, and glorify God.

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Ephesians Chapter 3

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER 4

Verses 1-32

[Ephesians 4:1](#). *I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,-*

“You are called to be sons of God, you are called to be one with Christ, you are called to be kings and priests unto God; this is the highest possible vocation that anyone can have, so walk worthy of it.” O beloved, if we walk worthy of this vocation, what holy and noble lives we shall lead! The apostle so much desired godliness and holiness to be the characteristics of those to whom he wrote that he used a very strong term of entreaty: “I beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,-

[Ephesians 4:2](#). *With all lowliness and meekness, with long suffering, forbearing one another in love;-“*

You are not called to hector over men, to be lords over God’s heritage; you are called to be Christ-like, to be gentle and tender, ready to bear and to forgive all manner of wrong that may be done to you;”

[Ephesians 4:3](#). *Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

Some people seem as if they endeavored to break the unity of the Spirit, and to snap every sacred bond of love and Christian affection; be ye not like unto them, but let Christ’s mind be in you; and with lowliness, and meekness, and longsuffering, endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

[Ephesians 4:4-6](#). *There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*

If there were two lords, you might be divided into two parties; if there were two faiths, you might split up into two sections; if there were two baptisms, you might be right in having two denominations; if there were two fathers, there might be two families; if there were two indwelling spirits, there would be, and there must be, two sorts of people; but, in the true Church of Jesus Christ, there is “one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”

[Ephesians 4:7](#). *But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.*

We have not all the same form of grace, and we cannot all perform the same service for the Saviour; we differ very much from each other as to our abilities, and as to the positions which we can occupy; and our Lord intended it to be so.

[Ephesians 4:8-10](#). *Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive. and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)*

Paul could not help giving us this lesson by the way, that he that ascended was also he that first descended; and you may depend upon it that the man who will attain the highest honour in the Church of Christ is the man who descends, who lays aside all ambition, and all desire to be honoured and respected, and who is willing to be nothing. He who thus descends, shall surely ascend.

[Ephesians 4:11](#). *And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;*

Not all alike, not all apostles or prophets; and not all equals, for pastors may not be equal in rank with apostles. They are not all to do the same work, for all teachers cannot prophesy, neither does a prophet always pasteurize, and watch over a flock. Jesus Christ gave divers gifts,-

[Ephesians 4:12-13](#). *For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.*

Then, whatever spiritual gifts we have, they are not our own to use as we please; they are only entrusted to us that we may employ them to help our fellow-Christians. Beloved brethren and sisters, we are one with Christ, and we are one with each other; and, therefore, we must not look every man upon his own things, but also upon the things of others; and it should be a question of the first importance to every Christian, "How can I best utilize myself for the benefit of the rest of the members of the Church?" Do not ask, "How can I benefit myself?" but let your enquiry be, "How can I be most profitable to my fellow-Christians?" I have heard some professors say of a sermon that they could not feed under it; the discourse was very likely to be useful to the unconverted, but they could not hear it because they could not feed under it. Their idea seems to be that preaching must always be a spoon used for feeding them; but it is not so. The Word of God contains much spiritual nutriment specially suitable for the lambs of the flock. These men, who are strong, want meat, so they say that they do not enjoy what they hear, it is of no use to them. But are the babes in Christ's

family never to be fed? Does not humanity itself teach us that, first of all, the weakest and feeblest should be cared for? Oh, for grace to be unselfish! There is such a thing as Christian selfishness; and, of all evil things in the world, it is the most unchristian. When the first and last concern of a man is his own salvation, his own comfort, his own advancement, his own edification, and nothing besides, he needs to be saved from such a selfish spirit as that.

[Ephesians 4:14-16](#). *That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, 'may grow up into him in all things, which is the head even Christ: from whom the 'whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.*

Every part of the body has its own special function; there are some secret vessels of which as yet the physiologists know very little. What may be the particular use of them has not yet been ascertained; but depend upon it, God has created no part of our body in vain; and, in like manner, in the mystical body of Christ, every Christian man has his own office, his own work, something that he can do that nobody else can do; and our great object should be to find out what that work is, and to give our whole strength to it, for the nourishing of the entire body of Christ.

[Ephesians 4:17-19](#). *This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: who being past feeling-*

That is a terrible expression: "past feeling"-

[Ephesians 4:19-25](#). *Have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: that ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Wherefore putting away lying,*

As a rotten, worn-out garment that you could not bear to wear,-

[Ephesians 4:26](#). *Speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another.*

Then, why should we lie one to another? Should one hand try to deceive the other hand? Should the eye mislead the foot? Surely, the union of one member with all the other members should ensure its truthfulness.

[Ephesians 4:26](#). *Be ye angry, and sin not:*

If you must be angry, (and you must, sometimes,) take care that you do not sin when you are angry. It is rather a difficult thing to be angry, and not to sin; yet, if a man were to see sin, and not to be angry with it, he would sin through not being angry. If we are only angry, in a right spirit, with a wrong thing, we shall manage to obey the injunction of the apostle: “Be ye angry, and sin not:”

[Ephesians 4:26](#). *Let not the sun go down upon your wrath:*

Never let it outlive the day, but forgive ere the sun goes down.

[Ephesians 4:27](#). *Neither give place to the devil.*

A man who harbours malice in his heart, invites the devil to come in, and keeps a place ready for him.

[Ephesians 4:28](#). *Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour,-*

For laziness is generally the cause of theft. If a man would work for what he wanted, he would not be tempted to steal it. Paul carries his argument very far, “let him labour,”-

[Ephesians 4:28](#). *Working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.*

What a rise there is here,-from a thief up to a giver to him that needeth! This is what the grace of God does. Here is a man, who used to take his neighbor’s goods if he could; but, when grace transforms him, he actually gives a share of his own goods to his poor neighbor; that is a marvelous change.

[Ephesians 4:29](#). *Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth,-*

I have heard unthinking people say, “Well, if it is in your heart, you may as well speak it; it is better out than in.” I do not agree with them! If you had a barrel of whiskey in your house, that would certainly be a bad thing to be in your possession; but it would not do any hurt so long as you kept it unopened, so that nobody could get at it, for the mischief arises when people begin to drink it. Undoubtedly, it is an evil thing for you to have

anything that is corrupt in your heart, but it will not be mischievous to other people until it begins to come out; so, “let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth,”-

[Ephesians 4:29](#). *But-*

Since some communication is sure to come out of your mouth, let it be a good one,-

[Ephesians 4:29-31](#). *That which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:*

Especially take heed of that “evil speaking” against which the apostle warns you, for there are many people who cannot live without speaking; they must talk a great deal, and they often say that which is false; they invent evil, they twist an honest action, and impute wrong motives to the doer of it. A few such persons in a community can cause much of heartache and distress; they little know what servants of Satan they may become. God help us to put away all evil speaking, and all malice!

[Ephesians 4:32](#). *And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.*

That is, very freely, very often, very abundantly, very thoroughly, very heartily: “even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you,” so also do ye.

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CHAPTER 5

Verses 1-33

[Ephesians 5:1](#). *Be ye therefore followers of God,*

Or, imitators of God,-

[Ephesians 5:1](#). *As dear children;*

Children are naturally imitators. They are usually inclined to imitate their father; this is, therefore, a most comely and appropriate precept: “Be ye therefore imitators of God, as dear children.”

[Ephesians 5:2](#). *And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor.*

What a path to walk in! “Walk in love.” What a well-paved way it is! “As Christ also hath loved us.” What a blessed Person for us to follow in that divinely royal road! It would have been hard for us to tread this way of love, if it had not been that his blessed feet marked out the track for us. We are to love as Christ also hath loved us and the question which will often solve difficulties is this, “What would Jesus Christ do in my case? What he would have done, that we may do: “Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us.” And if we want to know how far that love may be carried, we need not be afraid of going too far in self-denial; we may even make a sacrifice of ourselves for love of God and men, for here is our model: “As Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor.”

[Ephesians 5:3](#). *But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints;*

So far from ever falling under the power of these evils, do not even name them; count them sins unmentionable to holy cars. In what a position do we find “covetousness” placed, side by side with “fornication and all uncleanness”! In the Epistle to the Colossians, covetousness is called “idolatry”, as if the Holy Spirit thought so ill of this sin that line could never put it in worse company than it deserved to be in. Yet I fear it is a very common sin even amongst some who call themselves saints. God deliver us altogether from its sway, and help us to hate the very name of it!

[Ephesians 5:4](#). *Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient but rather giving of thanks.*

All sorts of evil, frivolous, fruitless talk should be condemned by the Christian. He should feel that he lives at a nobler rate, he lives to purpose; he lives to bear fruit; and that which has no fruit about it, and out of which no good can come, is not for him. “But rather giving of thanks.” Oh, for more of this giving of thanks! It should perfume the labours of the day, it should sweeten the rest of the night, this giving of thanks. We are always receiving blessings; let us never cease to give God thanks for them. If we never leave off thanking until we are beyond the need of blessing, we shall go on praising the Lord as long as we live here, and continue to do so throughout eternity.

[Ephesians 5:5](#). *For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath, any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.*

What a sweeping sentence! This is indeed a sword with two edges. Many will flinch before it; and yet, though they flinch, they will not escape, for Paul speaks neither more nor less than the truth when he declares that “no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.”

[Ephesians 5:6](#). *Let no man deceive you with vain words for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.*

These are the very things God hates. If, therefore, they are in you, God cannot look upon you with the love that he feels towards his children. “These things” he cannot endure, and “because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.”

[Ephesians 5:8](#). *Be not ye therefore partakers with them. For ye were sometimes darkness,*

Then, “these things” suited you.

[Ephesians 5:8](#). *But now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light;*

Get clean away from these dark things; travel no more in the thick gloom of these abominations. God help you to walk in the light as he is in the light!

[Ephesians 5:9-10](#). *(For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.*

We ought to pray that our whole life may be “acceptable unto the Lord.” We are ourselves “accepted in the Beloved;” and, that being the case, it should be our great desire that every thought and word and deed, ay, every breathing of our life, should be “acceptable unto the Lord.”

[Ephesians 5:11-12](#). *And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.*

It was so with the old heathen world in which Paul lived; he could not write or speak of those abominable vices, which defiled the age. But is London any better than Ephesus? Surely, old Corinth, which became a sink of sin, was not a worse Sodom than this great modern Babylon. There is great cause to say of the wicked even to this day, “It is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.”

[Ephesians 5:13](#). *But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light;*

Then drag them to the light! There will be a great howling when these dogs of darkness have the light let in upon them, but it has to be done.

[Ephesians 5:13-15](#). *For whatsoever doth make manifest is light. Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.*

See then that ye walk circumspectly, Not carelessly, not thinking that it is of no importance how you live; but looking all round you, “walk circumspectly,” watching lest even in seeking one good thing you spoil another. Never present to God one duty stained with the blood of another duty. “See then that ye walk circumspectly,”-

[Ephesians 5:15-16](#). *Not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time,*

Buying up the hours; they are of such value that you cannot pay too high a price for them.

[Ephesians 5:16-18](#). *Because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;*

If you want excitement, seek this highest, holiest, happiest form of exhilaration, the divine exhilaration which the Holy Spirit alone can give you: “Be filled with the Spirit.”

[Ephesians 5:19](#). *Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;*

We should have thought that Paul would have said, “singing and making melody with your voice to the Lord;” but the apostle, guided by the Holy Ghost, overlooks the sound, which is the mere body of the praise, and looks to the heart, which is the living soul of the praise: “Making melody in your heart to the Lord,” for the Lord careth not merely for sounds, though they be the sweetest that ever came from the lip of man or angel; he looks at the heart. God is a Spirit, and he looks spiritually at our spiritual praises; therefore, let us make melody in our heart to the Lord.

[Ephesians 5:20-21](#). *Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.*

That principle of maintaining your rights, standing up for your dignity, and so on, is not according to the mind of the Spirit. It is his will that you should rather yield your rights, and, for the sake of peace, and the profit of your brethren, give up what you might naturally claim as properly

belonging to you: “Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.”

[Ephesians 5:22-30](#). *Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ’s is the head of the church and he is the Saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands, in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church; for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones,*

What a wonderful expression! To think that we, poor creatures that we are, should be thus joined to Christ by a marriage union, nay, by a vital union,-is indeed amazing. Oh, the depths of the love of Christ, that such an expression as this should be possible!

[Ephesians 5:31-32](#). *For this cause shalt a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.*

There is the mystery, that he should leave his Father, and quit the home above, and become one flesh with his elect, going with them, and for their sakes, through poverty, and pain, and shame, and death. This is a marvel and a mystery indeed.

[Ephesians 5:33](#). *Nevertheless, let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself, and the wife see that she reverence her husband.*

Thus the Spirit of God follows us to our homes, and teaches us how to live to the glory of God. May he help us so to do, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

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CHAPTER 6

Verses 1-15

Ephesians 6:1. *Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Fitting by nature, and pleasing in the sight of God.*

Ephesians 6:2-4. *Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise: That it may be, well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*

For the duties are like birds with two wings, or like a pair of scales, balance for each side. There is the child's duty, but there is the parent's duty too.

Ephesians 6:5-9. *Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ;*

Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the saint shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free. And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, Mind that. We may hear a good deal about the duties of servants. Let us hear something about the duties of masters and mistresses. "Ye masters, do the same things unto them."

Ephesians 6:9. *Forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him.*

Very beautifully balanced is the whole system of gospel morals. There is no undue advantage given by the fact of our being rendered equal in Christ, so that the servant is to be less obedient to the master, or the child to the parent; neither is there any undue power given to those who are in authority; but the grace of God teaches all to do unto all as we would that they should do unto us.

Ephesians 6:10. *Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord,*

You cannot do right if you are not strong. Unless you have the backbone of principle — unless you have spiritual muscle and sinew by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in you, you cannot continue to do that which is right. "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord."

Ephesians 6:10-11. *And in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God,*

First, be strong, and then put on armor. It is no use putting armor on a weak man, or else it will be what James said it was — a capital invention. He said, because he who wore it would come to no harm, and certainly do no harm, for he could not stir in it. Now you must be strong first, but then not trust in your strength, but put on the armor which is here described. And

yet it would be useless to have the armor unless you are first strong. “Put on the whole armor of God.”

Ephesians 6:11; Ephesians 6:13. *That ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.*

To keep your ground, not to give way in any respect, and blessed is that man whose name is Stand-fast, and whose practice is to hold fast — “having done all to stand.”

Ephesians 6:14. *Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth,* Nothing will so tighten up your garments and keep them right as a girdle of sincerity and truthfulness. If we are not true, whatever else we are, we are but loosely arrayed. We shall come to mischief. “Having your loins girt about with truth.”

Ephesians 6:14. *And having on the breastplate of righteousness;*

A grand protection when God has given you to be holy, and when the principle which covers your heart and shields your members is righteousness.

Ephesians 6:15. *And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;*

Peace in year own heart, peace with God, peace with man. Peacefulness and peace. No shoes like these. A man that has a merry heart makes many a mile fly beneath him, but a heavy heart is a slow traveler. “Your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.”

This exposition consisted of readings from Ephesians 4. and Ephesians 6:1-15.

Verses 10-24

Ephesians 6:10. *Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.*

Everything depends upon that. Whether you are called upon to work, or to wait, or to watch, or to suffer, you have need to be strong. If you are not yourself strong, the very armor that you wear will be a burden to you. It is of the utmost importance that Christians should be as strong in grace as they can possibly be. And the power that is to be in them is to be the power of God: “the power of his might.” What a wonderful power that is! The power

of flesh is weakness, and the power of man is fading but the power of God is almighty and unchangeable; and if we can be girt about with this power there is scarcely any limit to what we may successfully attempt. “Finally,” — as if this were a matter of the highest importance, to be considered first and last. — “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.” You know how strong Paul himself was; he was a veritable giant for Christ, and he here calls upon his brethren to be as he was, he did not want to be brother to dwarfs, so he appealed to his brethren to “be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.”

Ephesians 6:11. *Put on the whole armor of God,* —

The armor of God will not serve you unless you yourself are strong. It needs a strong man to carry girdle, and breastplate, and shoes, and shield, and helmet, and sword. Let me impress upon you the fact that we must first of all get strong within, and after that “put on the whole armor of God,” that armor which God has provided for the good soldiers of Jesus Christ, that armor which distinguishes men as belonging to the army of God. Do not merely put on a part of it, but put on the whole of it. Do not simply look at the armor, and clean it up so as to keep it bright, but put it on, wear it, it is meant for you to use in the great battle for the right against the wrong: “Put on the whole armor of God,” —

Ephesians 6:11. *That ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*

He will attack you sometimes by force and sometimes by fraud. By might or by sleight he will seek to overcome you, and no unarmed man can stand against him. Never go out without all your armor on, for you can never tell where you may meet the devil. He is not omnipresent, but nobody can tell where he is not, for he and his troops of devils appear to be found everywhere on this earth.

Ephesians 6:12. *For we wrestle not against flesh and blood,* —

Our great fight is not against our fellow-men. As Christians, we go not forth armed with sword and shield to fight against “flesh and blood,” —

Ephesians 6:12. *But against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.*

Our battle is against evil wherever it is to be found, against evil in every shape and form. Evil is as much in the world today as it was in Paul’s time, and we must fight against it everywhere. We are not to shut our eyes to it, or

try to patch up a compromise with it. Christians are bound to fight against evil principalities, evil powers, the evil rulers of the darkness of this world, and wicked spirits in high places.

Ephesians 6:13. *Therefore take unto you the whole armor of God,*

What stress the apostle lays upon this point! He repeats the command he had just given, and again emphasizes the fact that it is “the whole armor of God” that is to be worn. There are some professing Christians who only in part obey the injunction here given, but it is no use to wear a part of the Christian armor, and to leave the rest of the soul unarmed. A little leak will sink a ship, and the absence of one piece of the armor of God may cost a man his soul: “Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God,” —

Ephesians 6:13. *That ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.*

That is what we have to do, to keep our place and our standing as Christians right to the end. To be apparently pure and holy for a time is no use at all. Transient professors will find everlasting ruin; “but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.” We are in God’s army for life; we can never quit this warfare till God shall call us home.

Ephesians 6:14. *Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth,*

—
Let this girdle of the everlasting truth of God brace you up. Let it tighten all the rest of your armor.

Ephesians 6:14. *And having on the breastplate of righteousness;*

Let your heart be guarded by the knowledge that you are right with God, — that you love that which is holy and true. Put on the righteousness of Christ himself as the best possible protection for your heart.

Ephesians 6:15. *And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;*

Rough roads grow smooth when these blessed gospel sandals are on your feet. A little stone in the shoe will make the pilgrim’s progress a very wearisome and painful one, so try to keep out all the stones, — everything about which you have any scruple, or that you think may be wrong; and walk in the safe and narrow way set forth in the gospel of peace.

Ephesians 6:16. *above all, —*

Over all, covering all from head to foot, —

Ephesians 6:16. *Taking the shield of faith*

For you need this shield to protect both your armor and yourself.

Ephesians 6:16. *Therewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.*

Not only the fiery darts of the wicked one, but those also of wicked men and wicked women who may throw at you afar darts that are all ablaze, which would burn as well as pierce you if you were not well guarded against them. Nothing can quench these fiery darts but the shield of faith.

Ephesians 6:17. *And take the helmet of salvation, —*

You used to wear the helmet of pride with its fine nodding plumes, but that has been taken off by you long ago. Now put on “the helmet of Salvation.” This will effectually defend your head, and no sword will be able to cleave through it to injure you. Your brain and everything that is connected with your mental powers will be right when you know that you are saved, and when the power of God’s salvation is working within you.

Ephesians 6:17. *And the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*

There is no sword like that; it pierces even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Nothing can resist the Word of God if it is only wielded aright. There is one more weapon in the heavenly armoury: —

Ephesians 6:18. *Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, —*

When you cannot use your sword, and even when you can hardly grasp your shield, you can pray. That weapon of “all prayer” is of the handiest kind, because it can be turned in any and every direction. “Praying always with all prayer” — groaning prayers, weeping prayers, prayers that are made up of single words, prayers that have not a word in them, prayers for others, prayers of confession, prayers of thanksgiving, — “praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit,” —

Ephesians 6:18. *And watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;*

But will prayer for other people help us? Yes, very much. You will sometimes find that, when you cannot pray for yourself, it is a good plan to pray for somebody else. Think of some child of God, and pray for him, and then the fire of supplication will soon burn up in your heart. The Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends, and he will do the same for you. I have heard many of our members say that, when they have felt bound in prayer, they have pleaded for their Pastor and afterwards they have been able to pray for themselves. I advise more of you to try that

plan; it will do me good, and then if it also does you good, there will be a double advantage in it. Paul was of the same mind as I am, for he added, —

Ephesians 6:19-20. *And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds:*

“An ambassador in bonds!” Such a thing was never heard of in earthly courts. We never think of chaining an ambassador, but this is how men treated this great messenger from the court of heaven.

Ephesians 6:20-22. *That therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak. But that ye also may know my affairs, and how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things: whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs, and that he might comfort your hearts.*

It is well for Christian people to know how it fares with their spiritual guides. Paul wished the Ephesian saints to know in what state of heart he found himself, that they might the more intelligently pray for him.

Ephesians 6:23-24. *Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen*

I am sure that we can heartily repeat that benediction. May the Lord send much of his grace to all his people, in every part of the earth, who love him in sincerity! Amen.

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CHAPTER FORTY-NINE

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CHAPTER 1

Verses 12-30

Philippians 1:12-14. *But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the thing, which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places; and many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.*

Notice the beautiful self-forgetfulness of the apostle Paul. So long as the, gospel could be more widely published, he did not mind where he was, or what he suffered. He was able to witness for Christ among the Praetorian guards, who had the charge of the prison where he was confined, and who also, in their turn, were on duty in Caesar's palace; so Paul says that, through his being in bonds there, the particulars concerning his imprisonment were talked about even in the imperial palace, and by that means the gospel was made known to many in Caesar's household. Then, in addition, other brethren, who might perhaps have felt compelled to be quiet in his presence, finding that their leader was removed from them, waxed confident to come out and" speak the word without fear." The same sort of thing has often happened since. You have sometimes seen a widely-spreading oak tree cut down, and you have missed its grateful shadow; yet, afterwards, you have discovered that many little trees, which would have, been dwarfed beneath its shade, have grown more rapidly in its absence; and, in like manner, the removal of some eminent servant of the Lord Jesus Christ has frequently made room for others to spring up, and more than fill his place.

Philippians 1:15-19. Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: the one preach Christ of contention not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: but the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defense of the gospel. What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice. For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,—

It is much to be desired that all who preach Christ should preach in a right spirit; but even if they do not, let us be glad that Christ is preached anyhow, Even though it is only a portion of the gospel that is proclaimed, and there is much mixed with it from which we greatly differ, yet, if Christ is preached, his gospel will win its own way, and work out his great purposes of love and mercy, You have, perhaps, sometimes seen a little fire kindled among the dead autumn leaves which are dank and damp; and you have noticed that, despite, all the smoke, the fire has continued to live and burn. So is it with the eternal truth of God. Notwithstanding all the error with which it is often damped, and almost smothered, it will live, and the truth will conquer the error which is piled upon it. So Paul says, "I know

that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,” —

Philippians 1:20-21. *According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*

Again I bid you remark Paul’s devotion and self-forgetfulness. It seems to be a matter of no choice with him whether he serves God in life or glorifies him in death. The emblem of the American Baptist Missionary Union is an ox standing between a plough and an altar, with the motto, “Ready for either,”—Ready to spend and be spent in labour, or to be a sacrifice, whichever the Lord pleases.

Philippians 1:22-23. *But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith; that your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again. Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.*

What a happy church is that where the members all “stand fast in one spirit,” and where they are all “with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;—not striving with each other, but all fighting for the faith once for all delivered to the saints!

Philippians 1:28. *And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God.*

They give you up as lost because they cannot frighten you; they take it as a token of your perdition that you are not terrified by them, and it is so to them; yet, to you, the peacefulness with which you can endure slander and persecution should be a token of your salvation.

Philippians 1:29. *For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;*

What an honour this is to be conferred upon any follower of Christ, —“not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake”! It is not

every Christian who receives this mark of honour. There are some believers who have peculiarly tender places in their hearts, and who are wounded and gashed by the unkind remarks of those who love them not because they love the Lord Jesus Christ. To you, my brother, my sister, it is given—and you may well rejoice in such a gift,—“not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.”

Philippians 1:30. *Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me.*

This exposition consisted of readings from Philippians 1:12-30; and Philippians 2:1-13.

Verses 21-30

Philippians 1:21. *For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*

“To me to live is Christ.” If he lived, he lived to know more of Christ studying his person, and learning by his happy experience so that he increased in his knowledge of his Lord and Saviour. If he lived, he lived to imitate Christ more closely, becoming more and more conformed to his image. If he lived, he lived to make Christ more and more known to others, and to enjoy Christ more himself. In these four senses, he might well say, “For to me to live is Christ,” — to know Christ more, to imitate Christ more, to preach Christ more, and to enjoy Christ more. “And to die is gain,” because death, he felt, would free him from all sin and from all doubts as to his state in the present and the future. It would be gain to him, for then he would no longer be tossed upon the stormy sea, but he would be safe upon the land whither he was bound. It would be gain to him, for then he would be free from all temptations both from within and from without. It would be gain to him, for then he would be delivered from all his enemies; there would be no cruel Nero, no blaspheming Jews, no false brethren then. It would be gain to him, for then he would be delivered from all suffering, there would be no more shipwrecks, no more being beaten with rods, or being stoned, for him then. Dying, too, would be gain for him, for he would then be free from all fear of death; and having once died, he would die no more for ever. It would be gain to him, for he would find in heaven better and more perfect friends than he would leave behind on earth; and he would find, above all, his Saviour, and be a partaker of his glory. This is a wide subject, and the more we think over it, the more sweetness shall we get out of it.

Philippians 1:22. *But if I live in the flesh,*

That is a very different thing from living to the flesh.

Philippians 1:22. *This is the fruit of my labour;*

He lived to work for Christ, and to see souls saved as the fruit of his labour.

Philippians 1:22-23. *Yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:*

There were the two currents flowing in opposite directions. The apostle seemed to hear two voices speaking to him; one of them said, "Live, and you will gather the fruit of your labour, you will see sinners saved, churches established, and the kingdom of Christ extended in the earth." The other said, "Die, and you will be with Christ;" so he knew not which to choose.

Philippians 1:24-26. *Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. And having this confidence, I know that I shalt abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith; that your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again.*

The apostle desired to die, yet he was willing to live. Death would have been gain to him, yet he would endure the loss of living if he might thereby benefit others. Let us also always prefer the welfare of others before our own, and care rather to serve others than to make ourselves never so happy. Now the apostle gives these saints at Philippi a loving exhortation: —

Philippians 1:27. *Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;*

The unity of the church is of the utmost importance. When there is pockets of brotherly love, the perfect bond is lost; and as a bundle of rods, when once the binding cord is cut, becomes merely a number of weak and single twigs, so is it with a divided church. May we always be kept in one holy bond of perfect union with each other!

Philippians 1:28. *And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition,*

"Away with them! Away with them!" cried the heathen; "those who are not ashamed to acknowledge the crucified Christ are only worthy of perdition." But of what was their courage a token to themselves?

Philippians 1:28. *But to you of salvation, and that of God.*

For when saints can bear fierce persecution without flinching it is an evident sign that they are saved by the grace of God.

Philippians 1:29. *For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him,*

Which is a great gift.

Philippians 1:29. *But also to suffer for his sake;*

Which is a still greater gift.

Philippians 1:30. *Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me.*

“The same agony” it is in the Greek, as if every Christian must, in his measure, go through the same agony through which the apostle went, striving and wrestling against sin, groaning under its burden, agonizing to be delivered from it and labouring to bring others out of its power.

This exposition consisted of readings from Philippians 1:21-30; and Philippians 2:1-11

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CHAPTER 2

Verses 1-11

[Philippians 2:1-2](#). *If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies fulfill ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord of one mind.*

He knew that these saints at Philippi loved him. They had sent once and again to relieve his necessities, so he pleaded with them, by their love to him, to love each other. He does as much as say, “If you really do love me, if it is not a sham, if you have any sympathy with me, and with my labours and sufferings, if you really have the same spirit that burns in my breast, make my heart full of joy by clinging to one another, by being like-minded, ‘having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.’”

[Philippians 2:3](#). *Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory;*

This would be a good motto for those who are intending to build new places of worship. Let them not be built through strife, because of a squabble among the people of God, but make sure that all concerned are actuated by right motives, and seeking only the glory of God. Then,

sometimes, if one gives a guinea, another feels that he must give two so as to excel him; this is giving out of vainglory. Let nothing be done in this way, but as unto the Lord, and as in his sight, let us do all our works, and give all our gifts.

[Philippians 2:3-4](#). *But in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.*

Consider how you can help others, and in what way you can prosper them both in temporal things and in spiritual. You are members of a body, so one member is not to think for itself alone, the unity of the whole body requires that every separate and distinct part of it should be in harmony with the whole.

[Philippians 2:5-8](#). *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*

He humbled himself, so be you not unwilling to humble yourself. Lower than the cross Christ could not go, his death was one of such extreme ignominy that he could not have been more disgraced and degraded. Be you willing to take the lowest place in the Church of God, and to render the humblest service, count it an honour to be allowed to wash the saints feet. Be humble in mind; nothing is lost by cherishing this spirit, for see how Jesus Christ was honoured in the end.

[Philippians 2:9-11](#). *Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

Some foolish and superstitious persons make this passage a pretext for bowing their heads at the name of Jesus whenever it is mentioned. Nothing can be more senseless, because the passage means no such thing. What we are taught here is the great truth that Jesus Christ, though once he stooped to the lowest shame, is now exalted to the very highest glory, and even the devils in hell are compelled to own the might of his power. We are also to learn from this passage that the way to ascend is to descend. He who would

be chief must be willing to be the servant of all. The King of kings was the Servant of servants; and if you would be crowned with honour by-and-by, you must be willing to be despised and rejected of men now. The Lord give us this gracious humbleness of mind, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Philippians 1:21-30](#); and [Philippians 2:1-11](#)

Verses 1-13

[Philippians 2:1-4](#). *If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfill ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, be one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things,—*

Do not obey the world's maxim "Take care of Number One." "Look not every man on his own things,"—

[Philippians 2:4-7](#) *But every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation,—*

Observe that expression: "of no reputation,"—

[Philippians 2:7](#). *And took upon him the form of a servant,—*

A slave,—

[Philippians 2:7-8](#). *And was, made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*

What a cruel and ignominious death for the Son of God to suffer! Did he lose anything by all this wondrous condescension? Will you lose anything by any dishonour that may come upon you for Christ's sake, for the truth's sake? No; listen to what followed our Saviour's humiliation:—

[Philippians 2:9-11](#). *Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

Note how the apostle, after writing on this high theme, again seeks the practical good of his friends at Philippi:—

[Philippians 2:12-13](#). *Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*

This exposition consisted of readings from [Philippians 1:12-30](#); and [Philippians 2:1-13](#).

Verses 1-18

[Philippians 2:1-2](#). *if there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfill ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.*

Paul did not mean to doubt that there is “any consolation in Christ, any comfort of love, any fellowship of the Spirit, any bowels and mercies,” for no one knew better than he did how those blessings abound to them that are in Christ Jesus. He put it by way of argument. If there be consolation in Christ, since there is consolation in Christ, since there is comfort of love, since there is fellowship of the Spirit, be one in Christ; be not divided; love one another: “be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.”

[Philippians 2:3](#). *Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory;*

“Nothing”: never give to exceed other givers. Never preach that you may be a better preacher than anybody else; never work in the Sunday-school with the idea of being thought a very successful teacher. “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory.”

[Philippians 2:3](#). *But in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.*

There is some point in which your friend excels you. Notice that rather than the point in which you excel him. Try to give him the higher seat; seek yourself to take the lowest room.

[Philippians 2:4](#). *Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.*

Have a large heart, so that, though you care for yourself in spiritual things, and desire your own soul prosperity, you may have the same desire for every other Christian man or woman.

[Philippians 2:5](#). *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:*

What an example we have set before us in the Lord Jesus Christ! We are to have the mind of Christ; and that in the most Christly way, for here we

have Christ set out to the life.

[Philippians 2:6](#). *Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:*

For he was equal with God.

[Philippians 2:7](#). *But made himself of no reputation, Emptied himself of all his honour, of all his glory, of all his majesty, and of all the reverence paid to him by the holy spirits around the throne.*

[Philippians 2:7-8](#). *And took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself,*

He had not descended low enough yet, though he had come down all the way from the Godhead to our manhood: “he humbled himself.”

[Philippians 2:8-9](#). *And became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him,*

He stooped, who can tell how low? He was raised, who shall tell how high? “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him.”

[Philippians 2:9](#). *And given him a name which is above every name;*

He threw away his name; he emptied himself of his reputation. How high is his reputation now! How glorious is the name that God hath given him as the reward of his redemptive work!

[Philippians 2:10-11](#). *That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

Now is he higher than the highest. Now every one must confess his divinity. With shame and terror, his adversaries shall bow before him; with delight and humble adoration, his friends shall own him Lord of all: “that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” See how the greatest glory of Christ is the glory of the Father. He never desired any other glory but that. The highest honour you can ever have, O child of God, is to bring honour to your Father who is in heaven. Do you not think so? I know you do.

[Philippians 2:12](#). *Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.*

Get out of self. Work out your salvation from pride, from vainglory, from disputations and strife.

[Philippians 2:13](#). *For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*

You may very well work out what God works in. If he does not work it in, you will never work it out; but while he works within your spirit both to will and to do, you may safely go on to will and to do; for your willing and your doing will produce lowliness of spirit, and unity of heart with your brethren.

[Philippians 2:14](#). *Do all things without murmurings and disputings:*

Do not say, "You give me too much to do; you always give me the hard work; you put me in the obscure corner." No, no; "do all things without murmurings." And do not begin fighting over a holy work; for, if you do, you spoil it in the very beginning, and how can you then hope for a blessing upon it? "Do all things without murmurings and disputings."

[Philippians 2:15](#). *That ye may be blameless and harmless,*

None finding fault with you, and you not finding fault with others; neither harming nor harmed: "blameless and harmless."

[Philippians 2:15](#). *The sons of God, without rebuke,*

So that men cannot rebuke you, and will have to invent a lie before they can do it; and even then the falsehood is too palpable to have any force in it: "without rebuke."

[Philippians 2:15](#). *In the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;*

You cannot straighten them; but you can shine. They would destroy you if they could; but all you have to do is to shine. If Christian men would give more attention to their shining, and pay less attention to the crooked and perverse generation, much more would come of it. But now we are advised to "keep abreast of the times," and to "catch the spirit of the age." If I could ever catch that spirit, I would hurl it into the bottomless abyss; for it is a spirit that is antagonistic to Christ in all respects. We are just to keep clear of all that, and "shine as lights in the world."

[Philippians 2:16](#). *Holding forth the word of life;*

You are to hold forth the Word of life as men hold forth a torch. Your shining is largely to consist in holding forth the Word of life.

[Philippians 2:16](#). *That I may rejoice in. the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.*

God's ministers cannot bear the thought of having laboured in vain; and yet if some of us were to die, what would remain of all we have done? I

charge you, brethren, to think of what your life-work has been hitherto. Will it remain? Will it abide? Will it stand the test of your own departure? Ah, if you have any fear about it, you may well go to God in prayer, and cry, “Establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands, establish thou it.” Paul cared much about God’s work; but he did not trouble about himself.

[Philippians 2:17](#). *Yea, and if He offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.*

If he might be poured forth as a drink-offering on their behalf, or offered up as a whole burnt-offering in the service of the Saviour, he would be glad. He could not bear to have lived in vain; but to spend his life for the glory of his Lord, would be ever a joy to him.

[Philippians 2:18](#). *For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me.*

To live and to die for Jesus Christ, with the blessing of the Father resting upon us, is a matter for us to joy in unitedly and continually. God help us so to do!

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CHAPTER 3

Verses 1-21

[Philippians 3:1](#). *Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord.*

Let this be the end of everything; before you get to the end of it, and when you do get to the end of it, “rejoice in the Lord.” It is incumbent upon us, as Christians, to rise out of our despondencies. Joy should be the normal state of the Christian. What a happy religion is ours in which it is a duty to be happy! “Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord.”

[Philippians 3:1](#). *To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe.*

To go over the same old truths again and again, to proclaim the same precepts, and teach the same doctrines, is not grievous to us, and it is safe for you to hear these things again and again. If they have not made their due impression upon you already, perhaps they will do so when they are repeated in your hearing. At any rate it is safe for you to hear or read over and over again the old, old story with which you are already familiar.

[Philippians 3:2](#). *Beware of dogs, —*

Contentious persons, — persons of coarse and corrupt habits: “Beware of dogs,” —

[Philippians 3:2](#). *Beware of evil workers,*

However prettily they may talk, if they are workers of evil, beware of them.” By their fruits ye shall know them.” Their speech may be clever, but if their lips be unclean, beware of them.

[Philippians 3:2](#). *Beware of the concision.*

Beware of the cutters off, those who excommunicate and cut off others because they do not happen quite to agree with them in certain rites and ceremonies.

[Philippians 3:3](#). *For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.*

This is the real circumcision, which is of the spirit, and not of the flesh. The men who have abandoned all confidence in themselves, the men who have come to rely upon Christ alone, the men who “rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,” those who care not for outward rites and ceremonies, but who worship God in the spirit, — these are the true circumcision.

[Philippians 3:4](#). *Though I might also have confidence in the flesh.*

“If any man might trust in outward religion, I might,” said Paul; yet he was the very man who would not do so, and who warned others against doing it.

[Philippians 3:4-6](#). *If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: circumcised the eight day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.*

So that, if anybody could have boasted of what he was by birth, what he was by profession, what he was by the display of religious zeal, Paul could have boasted as boldly as anyone could, for in all those respects he was second to nobody. You know that it is a very easy thing, or it ought to be a very easy thing, for some people to be humble, for they have nothing to be proud of, but here is a man who had much of which he might have been proud. According to the letter of the law, he was a diamond of the first order; yet see what a different verdict he gives after grace has opened his eyes.

[Philippians 3:7-9](#). *But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yet doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith*

Everything else must go in order to secure that. Paul thinks that to be righteous by faith is infinitely better than all the righteousness that can come by works and ceremonies. He therefore utterly despises that which he once thought to be more precious than gold; and he takes possession of, as his greatest treasure, that which he once trampled in the mire. Now his great desire is —

[Philippians 3:10-12](#). *That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made comfortable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect.*

You perhaps suppose that Paul's present satisfaction arises out of a consciousness of personal perfection, but it is not so. He has not won the race yet, his joy arises from the fact that he is in the right course and that he is running in the right direction: "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect:

[Philippians 3:12](#). *But I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.*

"I want to lay hold of that for which Christ has laid hold of me. He has grasped me in order to make me perfect, and I want to grasp that perfection. He has laid hold of me to rid me of my sin, and I want to lay hold of a glean riddance of sin, apprehending that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus."

[Philippians 3:13-15](#). *Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.*

If you are a true believer in Jesus, be of this mind, always to be pressing forward to something higher and better. If God has given you one form of

perfection, press onward to a much higher form of perfection. Seek continually to rise. The eagle's motto is, "Higher, Higher!" Let it be your motto too. Many of God's people do not believe that he can make them what he means to make them, or, at least, they act as if they did not believe that he can. They are not, apparently, conscious of what their privileges really are, and are living far below where they might live in the happy enjoyment of peace and power and usefulness. May God help us, by his gracious Spirit, to know all of Christ that we can know, and to be as much like Christ as we can be.

[Philippians 3:16-18](#). *Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing. Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. (For many walk,-*

I suppose Paul is referring to many even in the church of his day: "For many walk," —

[Philippians 3:18](#). *Of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ*

The worst enemies that the cross of Christ has are the enemies inside the professing church of Christ.

[Philippians 3:19](#). *Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)*

They call themselves spiritual, yet they live for earthly things; indulging their appetites, living for self, yet pretending to be Christians, whereas selfishness is the very reverse of Christianity.

[Philippians 3:20-21](#). *For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.*

[PHILIPPIANS CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 4

Verses 1-9

[Philippians 4:1](#). *Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.*

It is a great joy to a minister, as it was to the apostle Paul, to have converts; but that joy is greatly diminished when they do not stand fast: then, indeed, every supposed joy becomes a sorrow, and instead of the roses which yield a sweet perfume to the Lord's servant, thorns begin to prick and wound his heart.

[Philippians 4:2](#). *I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord.*

Only two women, and we do not know who they were; yet Paul gives them a "beseech" each: "I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord." If there are only two of the most obscure sisters in the church who are quarrelling, their differences ought to be brought to an end at once. There should be no disagreements amongst Christians, love should reign, peace should predominate. If there is anything contrary to such a state as that, God grant that it may soon be brought to an end!

[Philippians 4:3](#). *And I entreat thee also, true yoke fellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellow-labourers, whose names are in the book of life.*

Brother, do all the good you can to help everybody else to do good. Help those whose names are in the book of life, even if they are not known anywhere else. Also help the "Clement" whose name is known; be sure to help him; indeed, help everybody. There is an office, in the Church of Christ, which we do not sufficiently recognize; but which ought to be abundantly filled. Paul mentions it in writing to the Corinthians. He says, "And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues." It is the office of certain Christians to be "helps." May we always have many such "helps" amongst us! Did you ever notice that, almost every time that Bartholomew is mentioned in Scripture, we read, "and Bartholomew"? He is never spoken of alone; but it is written, "Philip, and Bartholomew," or "Bartholomew, and Matthew." It is good to have some Bartholomews who are always helping somebody else, so that, when there is any good work to be done, Bartholomew is always ready to share in it; for he shall also have a part in the reward at the last.

[Philippians 4:4](#). *Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.*

The very word “rejoice,” seems to imply a reduplication; it is joy, and re-joy, joy over again; but here, you see, it is a fourfold rejoicing; joy, and re-joy; and again I say, joy, and re-joy; and this is to be the Christian’s continual experience, for the apostle says, “Rejoice in the Lord always.”

[Philippians 4:5-6](#). *Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.*

Have no care, but much prayer. Prayer is the cure for care. If you are in trouble, “Let your requests be made known,” not to your neighbors, but “unto God.”

[Philippians 4:7-8](#). *And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.*

Be on the side of everything that is good and right, everything that helps on true human progress, everything that increases virtue and purity. As a Christian man, take an interest in everything that helps to make men true, honest, just, pure, and lovely.

[Philippians 4:9](#). *Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do; and the God of peace shall be with you.*

May the Lord fulfill that gracious word to all of us, “The God of peace shall be with you”! Amen.

This exposition consisted of readings from 1 John 4 and [Philippians 4:1-9](#).

Verses 1-23

This Epistle was written by Paul when he was in prison, with iron fetters about his wrists; yet there is no iron in the Epistle. It is full of light, life,

love, and joy, blended with traces of sorrow, yet with a holy delight that rises above his grief.

[Philippians 4:1](#). *Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.*

See how the heart of the apostle is at work; his emotions are not dried up by his personal griefs. He takes a delight in his friends at Philippi; he has a lively recollection of the time when he and Silas were shut up in prison

there, and that same night baptized the jailor and his household, and formed the church at Philippi.

[Philippians 4:2](#). *I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord.*

These two good women had fallen out with one another. Paul loves them so much that he would not have any strife in the church to mar its harmony; and he therefore beseeches both of these good women to end their quarrel, and to “be of the same mind in the Lord.” You cannot tell what hurt may come to a church through two members being at enmity against each other. They may be unknown persons, they may be Christian women, but they can work no end of mischief; and therefore it is a most desirable thing that they should speedily come together again in peace and unity.

[Philippians 4:3](#). *And I entreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellow-labourers, whose names are in the book of life.*

He tenderly thinks of all those who had helped the work of the Lord, and, in return, he would have all of them helped, and kindly remembered, and affectionately cherished. May we always have this tender feeling towards one another, especially towards those who work for the Lord with us! May we ever delight in cheering those who serve our Lord!

[Philippians 4:4-5](#). *Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.*

We have come to understand this word “moderation” in a sense not at all intended here. The best translation would probably be “forbearance.” Do not get angry with anybody; do not begin to get fiery and impetuous: be forbearing, for the Lord is at hand. You cannot tell how soon he may appear; there is no time to spare for the indulgence of anger; be quiet; be patient; and if there be anything very wrong, well, leave it. Our Lord Jesus will come very soon; therefore be not impatient.

[Philippians 4:6](#). *Be careful —*

That is, be anxious —

[Philippians 4:6](#). *For nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.*

See how the apostle would bid us throw anxiety to the winds; let us try to do so. You cannot turn one hair white or black, fret as you may. You cannot add a cubit to your stature, be you as anxious as you please. It will be for your own advantage, and it will be for God’s glory, for you to shake

off the anxieties which else might overshadow your spirit. Be anxious about nothing, but prayerful about everything, and be thankful about everything as well. Is not that a beautiful trait in Paul's character? He is a prisoner at Rome, and likely soon to die; yet he mingles thanksgiving with his supplication, and asks others to do the same. We have always something for which to thank God, therefore let us also obey the apostolic injunction.

[Philippians 4:7-8](#). *And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.*

If there is any really good movement in the world, help it, you Christian people. If it is not purely and absolutely religious, yet if it tends to the benefit of your fellow-men, if it promotes honesty, justice, purity, take care that you are on that side, and do all you can to help it forward.

[Philippians 4:9](#). *Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do:*

Paul was a grand preacher to be able to say that; to hold up his own example, as well as his own teaching, as a thing which the people might safely follow.

[Philippians 4:9](#). *And the God of peace shall be with you.*

In the seventh verse, we had the expression, "the peace of God." In this ninth verse, we have the mention of "the God of peace." May we first enjoy the peace of God, and then be helped by the Spirit of God to get into a still higher region, where we shall be more fully acquainted with the God of peace!

[Philippians 4:10](#). *But · rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity.*

"I rejoiced." So Paul was himself in a happy mood; these saints in Philippi had sent to him in prison a gift by the hand of one of their pastors, and Paul, in his deep poverty, had been much comforted by their kind thoughtfulness about him.

[Philippians 4:11](#). *Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.*

That was not an easy lesson to learn, especially when one of those states meant being in prison at Rome. If he was ever in the Mamertine, those of us who have been in that dungeon would confess that it would take a deal of grace to make us content to be there; and if he was shut up in the prison of the Palatine hill, in the barracks near the morass, it was, to say the least, not a desirable place to be in. A soldier chained to your hand day and night, however good a fellow he may be, does not always make the most delightful company for you, nor you for him; and it takes some time to learn to be content with such a companion; but, says Paul, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."

[Philippians 4:12](#). *I know both how to be abused, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.*

These are both hard lessons to learn; I do not know which is the more difficult of the two. Probably it is easier to know how to go down than to know how to go up. How many Christians have I seen grandly glorifying God in sickness and poverty when they have come down in the world; and ah! how often have I seen other Christians dishonouring God when they have grown rich, or when they have risen to a position of influence among their fellow-men! These two lessons grace alone can fully teach us.

[Philippians 4:13](#). *I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*

What a gracious attainment! There is no boasting in this declaration; Paul only spoke what was literally the truth.

[Philippians 4:14-15](#). *Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction. Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only.*

The Philippians were the only Christians who had sent any help to this great sufferer for Christ's sake in the time of his need.

[Philippians 4:16-18](#). *For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.*

I do not suppose that they sent him very much; but he knew the love that prompted the gift, he understood what they meant by it. I always had a

fancy that Lydia was the first to suggest that kind deed. She, the first convert of the Philippian church, thought of Paul, I doubt not, and said to the other believers, "Let us take care of him as far as we can. See how he spends his whole life in the Master's service, and now he may at last die in prison for want of even common necessities; let us send him a present to Rome." How grateful is the apostle for that gift of love! What gladness they had put into his heart! Now he says: —

[Philippians 4:19](#). *But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*

"You have supplied my need out of your poverty; my God shall supply all your need out of his riches. Your greatest need shall not exceed the liberality of his supplies."

[Philippians 4:20-21](#). *Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen. Salute every saint in Christ Jesus.*

The religion of Christ is full of courtesy, and it is full of generous thoughtfulness. I do not think that he can be a Christian who has no knowledge nor care about his fellow church-members.

[Philippians 4:21](#). *The brethren which are with me greet you.*

They saw that he was writing a letter, and they therefore said, "Send our love to the Philippians."

[Philippians 4:22](#). *All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household.*

Only think of saints in the household of Nero, saints in the service of such a demon as he was, and saints who were first in every good thing: "Chiefly they that are of Caesar's household."

[Philippians 4:23](#). *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.*

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CHAPTER FIFTY

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CHAPTER 1

Verses 1-19

[Colossians 1:1-14](#). *Paul an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timotheus our brother, to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints, for the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of*

the truth of the gospel; which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth: as ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellowservant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ; who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit. For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:

As we read these words, we cannot help noticing how positively the apostle speaks. There are no “hope so’s,” “trust so’s,” and “ifs,” and “buts”; but it, is all, “it is so,” and “it is so.” And, beloved brethren, concerning eternal matters, nothing but certainties will suffice for us. Allow uncertainties about your estates if you will, but we must have positive assurance concerning eternal things; and nothing short of this ought to content our spirits. Can we all say, as we listen to these words, “God hath delivered us from the power of darkness; he hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son, in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins”?

[Colossians 1:15](#). *Who is the image of the invisible God,—*

Admire this delightful passage, in which the apostle seems to burn and glow while he describes his Lord and Master: “who is the image of the invisible God,”—

[Colossians 1:15-19](#). *The firstborn of every creature: for by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him,, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell.*

Blessed be his glorious name! Amen.

This exposition consisted of readings from [John 14:1-12](#) : and [Colossians 1:1-19](#).

Verses 1-29

[Colossians 1:1-2](#). *Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timotheus our brother, to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Kindness is the very breath of Christianity, so the apostle will not begin the subject matter of his letter until first of all he has breathed out a benediction upon those to whom he writes.

[Colossians 1:3](#). *We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you,*

Paul very graciously blends his giving of thanks and his constant prayer for these Christians at Colosse, and therein sets us an example that we may well imitate.

[Colossians 1:4-6](#). *Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints, for the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel; which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth:*

If there is a way of knowing the grace of God which is of no value, it is when it is not known in truth, that is to say, when it is only head-knowledge, not heart-knowledge. But, oh, when in truth the grace of God sinks into the soul, and changes the whole nature, then it is an experience for which we may well give thanks to God.

[Colossians 1:7-8](#). *As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellowservant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ; who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit.*

Epaphras told them of Paul's prayers for them; and when he came back from Colosse, he told Paul of their great love in the Spirit.

[Colossians 1:9](#). *For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in his wisdom and spiritual understanding,*

See! the apostle asks for them something more even than faith, and hope, and love, — that they “might be filled with the knowledge of his will

in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.” This shows what a valuable thing it is to know and understand the will of God.

[Colossians 1:10-11](#). *That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness;*

If we have faith, and hope, and love, it is desirable that we add to these a fullness of knowledge, and to this holiness of life and fruitfulness of service that we may have patience to endure the afflictions of this life, and longsuffering with which to put up with the provocations of the ungodly.

[Colossians 1:12-14](#). *Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:*

And now Paul, having mentioned his Master’s great work, — redemption by blood and the forgiveness of sins — goes on at a tangent, as it were. He is so enthusiastic with regard to Christ and his great atoning sacrifice that the very thought of Christ’s blood stirs his own blood, and he seems like a man all on fire with holy fervor as he writes: —

[Colossians 1:15-17](#). *Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: for by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist.*

How can anyone ever read this passage, and yet say that Christ Jesus is only a man? By what twisting of words on such language as this be applied to the most eminent prophet or apostle who ever lived? Surely he must be God by whom all things were created, and by whom all things consist. But Paul’s next sentence is to us the sweetest of all: —

[Colossians 1:18](#). *And he is the head of the body, the church:*

He is joined by an indissoluble union to his people, and is the head of their glory, their wisdom, and their strength.

[Colossians 1:18](#). *Who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.*

Are we giving him the pre-eminence in all things? That theology must be false which puts Jesus in the second place, or even lower than that, and

that experience is a wrong one which does not put Christ always in the front. He must in all things always stand first.

[Colossians 1:19](#). *For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell;*

That we might have to go to him for it; it pleased the Father to make errands for us so as to take us to Christ, and to make our very emptiness thus to minister to the glory of Christ.

[Colossians 1:20-23](#). *And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable his sight: if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled,*

This is a text that ought to be read and pondered every day by the many unstable professors who are in the church at this present time: “if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled,” like a building that will have no further settlements, no more starting of the stones, no more cracking of the walls, because your foundation is secure, and you are firmly built upon it.

[Colossians 1:23-24](#). *And be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven, whereof I Paul am made a minister; who now rejoice in my sufferings for you,*

Oh how blessed it is when a man has so mastered himself that his sufferings for his fellow-Christians become a matter of rejoicing for himself! He not only accepts them, and bears them with patience, but he says: —

[Colossians 1:24](#). *And fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church:*

There is nothing “behind” as to the atoning efficacy of the sufferings of Christ, but there is much yet to be endured in order that all the elect may be brought to Christ. Some must suffer through their extraordinary labours in preaching the gospel, others through bearing reproach for the truth's sake, and Paul was glad to take, in his mortal body, his share of the sufferings to be endured for the sake of Christ's Church, which is his mystical body.

[Colossians 1:25-27](#). *Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfill the world of*

God; even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ is you, the hope of glory.

This is the most blessed of all mysteries, I trust that many of us understand it; may the Holy Ghost reveal it to any who know it not!

[Colossians 1:28](#). *Whom we preach, —*

That is, Christ; it is not so much what we preach as whom we preach. We preach the person of Christ: “whom we preach,” —

[Colossians 1:28-29](#). *Warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.*

There will never be any mighty work come from us unless there be first a mighty work in us, no man truly labours for souls unless the Holy Ghost has first wrought mightily in him.

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CHAPTER 2

Verses 1-23

[Colossians 2:1](#). *For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh;*

Paul had not met these Colossian Christians, but he had heard of their faith, and hope, and love, and he so desired their good that he had a continual care for them in his heart. He carried that care to God in prayer, yet he still bore them in loving remembrance. They were always on his heart as a sick child is ever on the heart of its mother.

[Colossians 2:2-3](#). *That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ.*

In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. He wanted them to know God, and to rest comforted and happy in what he revealed. He saw in them a tendency to look abroad for something more than that, a

desire to tack something else on to the gospel, a wish to try and find some fresh light outside the Word, and over this he greatly grieved. He himself was more than satisfied with the gospel, and he wanted them to be, in that respect, as he was.

[Colossians 2:4](#). *And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words.*

They did not openly contradict the gospel, they pretended to have a great affection for it, and then they tried to tear the very heart out of it with their enticing words of man's wisdom.

[Colossians 2:5](#). *For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the stedfastness of your faith in Christ.*

He never forgot them; and it was his joy when he found them standing fast in Christ, and his sorrow and his horror when they went away after anyone else.

[Colossians 2:6](#). *As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:*

“Do not turn away from him, do not dream of going beyond him. You received him at first very simply, you trusted in him entirely, so go on doing so. You were satisfied with Christ when you first came to him, so be satisfied with him still, for you do not need anything more than Christ, and there is nothing more than Christ.”

[Colossians 2:7](#). *Rooted and built up in him,*

“Take a living hold of Christ as a tree does of the soil. Be also built up in him; as a building settles down upon the foundation, so do you settle down upon Christ.”

[Colossians 2:7](#). *And stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.*

When a man is established in the truth that he knows, and rejoices in what he has already received, he will not go away from it.

[Colossians 2:8](#). *Beware lest any man spoil you*

(plunder you, it might be rendered,)

[Colossians 2:8](#). *through philosophy and vain deceit,*

“Beware of those who pretend that they are going to enrich you, but whose real object is to plunder you. They say that they will give you advanced thought, deeper ideas, a system more congruous with the age; but it is” —

[Colossians 2:8](#). *After the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.*

“What do you want with their traditions? Christ has revealed his truth to you. What do you want with the world’s rudiments? You have gone beyond such elementary, useless knowledge as that, for you have got the truth itself.”

[Colossians 2:9](#). *For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.*

In Christ, we enter into the fullness and completeness of life both materially and spiritually.

[Colossians 2:10-11](#). *Which is the head of all principality and power: in whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ;*

“The Jew boasts that he is a circumcised man, but you have spiritually all that circumcision meant literally. Even though you have not the wounded your flesh, you have more than that, for you have the death of the flesh and your very flesh has been buried with Christ. All that circumcision can possibly mean you have in Christ.”

[Colossians 2:12](#). *Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.*

“You have death, burial, and resurrection, all in Christ; and you received the outward sign and token of this when you were baptized, so believe firmly that it is so, and do not look anywhere else for it. You are neither dead nor buried apart from Christ, nor are you driven apart from him all you have is in him.”

[Colossians 2:13](#). *And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses.*

“You do not need to go to a ‘priest’ for pardon, for Christ has forgiven you all your trespasses. You are so complete in Christ that confession to man and priestly absolution from man would be of no use to you.”

[Colossians 2:14](#). *Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;*

“All the Mosaic ceremonials, from which you were shut out as Gentiles, are abolished. Christ has driven a nail through them and fastened them up to

his cross.” As, sometimes, a banker stamps through a cheque when it is paid, so has Christ but through the very heart of all Jewish ordinances by what he has done for his people.

[Colossians 2:15](#). *And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.*

Exhibiting them as his prisoners in a triumphal procession, as the victorious Roman Generals did when they returned from war.

[Colossians 2:16](#). *Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days;*

“Do not put yourselves under rules and regulations which God has not ordained. If you think it is right for you to abstain from certain drinks do so, but do not act thus simply because others do so. If you abstain from certain meats, because they have been offered to idols, and the consciences of others might be offended if you partook of them, do not act thus as though it would save you. Do not make yourself subject to the judgment of other men, for Christ is your Law-giver and Lord.”

[Colossians 2:17](#). *Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.*

“You can do without the shadow now that you have the substance; so keep to that.” Some men multiply church ordinances; they have this form and that form, well, let them have them if they find them of service; but do not you bring yourself under subjection to anything of the kind; follow the New Testament and above all things keep close to Christ, for he is everything to you.

[Colossians 2:18](#). *Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility-*

We know those who say, “We do not know anything, we are only seekers, trying to find out the truth.” They talk very humbly considering how desperately proud they really are, but that humility which makes men doubt is mock humility, and is not of God. “Let no man beguile you of your reward.” When you have learned the truth from the Scriptures, be dogmatic about it, do not be afraid of the presumption of which venue will accuse you, or the bigotry which they will impute to you.

[Colossians 2:18](#). *And worship of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,*

Agnostics by their name confess that they do not know, but do not let them take away from you what you do know, and set you to investigate

matters which are beyond you with a judgment which they would lead you to think is well nigh infallible, whereas your judgment is very fallible indeed. Be not puffed up by your fleshly mind.

[Colossians 2:19](#). *And not holding the Head,*

That is the point, these people get away from the Deity of Christ, they get away from the atoning blood, they get away from glorifying him who alone is the Truth.

[Colossians 2:19](#). *From which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increased with the increase of God.*

Take away the head, and there is death, everything is out of order then. If the Head be denied, if any doctrine be taught which is contrary to the glory of Christ, you have killed the body however much you may pretend to be increasing and feeding it

[Colossians 2:20-22](#). *Therefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances. (Touch not; taste not; handle not; which, all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men?*

You may and you should feel that there are some things which you will not touch, or taste, or handle. You had better let poisonous drugs alone; but, at the same time, if any man seeks to impose upon you any regulation concerning them as a part of the faith, you may resist it and repudiate it, and plead your freedom in Christ.

[Colossians 2:23](#). *Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship,-*

There were some of the Jews who would not eat certain kinds of meat, and others who would fast for long periods. Some thought it was very wicked to eat flesh meat on a certain day, and there were many such notions; and similar superstitions still survive among us, such as not eating meat on Fridays, being afraid of thirteen people sitting at table, and so on: but you have nothing to do with all that kind of rubbish so get away from it. If you are a believer in Christ, tread all such nonsense under your feet. “Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship,” —

[Colossians 2:23](#). *And humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour-*

There is no honour about such things, they are contemptible: “not in any honour” —

[Colossians 2:23](#). *To the satisfying of the flesh.*

That is all such things would do, — make you seem better than other people; so do not be led into these ways, but stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made his people free.

Verses 6-17

[Colossians 2:6](#). *As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:*

Do not go away from him. You have received him; keep to him. Whatever he was to you at first, let him be that to you to the very last. Do not begin with Christ, and then go back to self; let it be all Christ from first to last.

[Colossians 2:7](#). *Rooted and built up in him,*

Growing in him. Have your very life, like a tree, rooted in Christ; and like a temple, built up in Christ.

[Colossians 2:7](#). *And stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein, with thanksgiving.*

Do not forget what you have been taught; do not reject it; keep to it. He who should learn one system of philosophy, and then unlearn it, and begin another, and then unlearn that, and begin another, would be more likely to turn out a fool than a philosopher; and he who begins to learn the faith in one way, and then tries to learn it in another way, and then attempts to learn it in yet another way, is more likely to be a skeptic than to be a saint.

[Colossians 2:8](#). *Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.*

Plenty of people would spoil you in this way, by teaching you their profound thoughts, their grand inventions, their bright ideas. Beware of all of them.

[Colossians 2:9](#). *For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.*

Everything, then, must be in Christ if all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in him. Why do you want to go anywhere else for wisdom? What can you find by going elsewhere? “For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.”

[Colossians 2:10](#). *And ye are complete in him,*

You are like vessels filled up to the brim. You are like warriors thoroughly furnished, fully armed for the fight: “Ye are complete in him.”

[Colossians 2:10-11](#). *Which is the head of all principality and power: in whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:*

All that the Jew ever had you have in Christ, only you have the real purification of which his rite was but a symbol.

[Colossians 2:12](#). *Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.*

It is only as you are one with Christ that baptism will be to you what he intended; but “buried with him in baptism,” you are dead to all beside, and all your life lies in him.

[Colossians 2:13](#). *And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision, of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him,*

All your life is in Christ; you are “quickened together with him.”

[Colossians 2:13](#). *Having forgiven you all trespasses;*

Your pardon is given to you in Christ. Oh, how full and how free is that forgiveness that comes to you through Christ Jesus!

[Colossians 2:14-15](#). *Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; and having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.*

His cross was his triumph. Then he led captivity captive. What more do you want? Your enemy is vanquished, your sins blotted out, your death changed to life, your necessities all supplied. Will you not stay at home with Christ? “Why gaddest thou about so much to change thy way?” Canst thou have a better lover than thy Lord, a dearer husband than the heavenly Bridegroom? Oh, love the Lord, ye his saints; cling to him, and make much of him; let him be all in all to you!

[Colossians 2:16](#). *Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days:*

Do not let anybody come in, and tell you that it is necessary for your salvation that you should abstain from this meat or that drink, that there is a merit in fasting for forty days in Lent, or that you cannot be saved without observing such and such a holy day. Your salvation is in Christ. Keep you to that, and add nothing to this one foundation which is once for all laid in him.

[Colossians 2:17](#). *Which are a shadow of things to come;*

That is all that they are: “a shadow of things to come.”

[Colossians 2:17](#). *But the body is of Christ.*

Christ is the real one thing needful. Mind that you have the substance, for then you can let the shadows go. May God bless to us all this brief reading of his Word!

Verses 6-23

[Colossians 2:6](#). *As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: —*

That is, keep on as you began. Christ was enough for you when, as poor, guilty sinners, you came and trusted him; so keep on trusting him in the same way as you did at the first. Do not try to live by feeling, after having lived by faith. Do not begin to live upon outward forms and ceremonies after having found salvation by grace through faith: “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:”

[Colossians 2:7](#). *Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.*

Christians are to make progress in the heavenward road; but they are not to have any other foundation for their faith than they had at the beginning of their Christian career. We are still to stand fast as we stood at the first; we are to be rooted, grounded, “stablished in the faith,” keeping to the old truth that saved our souls, and laying hold upon the same Saviour with greater tenacity every hour of our lives. We are not to be like chaff driven before the wind,— for ever moving; but to be like the cedars of Lebanon, firmly rooted, and withstanding the heaviest storms.

[Colossians 2:8](#). *Beware lest any man spoil you —*

Or, “rob you”

[Colossians 2:8](#). *Through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.*

Cleave to Christ, beloved. Go no further than he leads you; and turn not away from him either to the right hand or to the left. In him are contained all the riches of grace, and all the treasures of knowledge. If you would become truly wise, seek to know more of the wisdom of God in Christ Jesus.

[Colossians 2:9-10](#). *For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:*

You have everything in Christ that you ought to want; you are fully furnished, completely supplied and equipped for all future service. You need not go to Christ for the supply of some of your needs, and then go elsewhere for the supply of other needs; but, “ye are complete in him.”

[Colossians 2:11](#). *In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:*

Anything good that there was in Judaism, you have secured to you in Christ. Whatever there was of blessing and privilege in the covenant mark in the flesh of those whom God made to be his people in the olden time, you have handed on to you by the death of Christ.

[Colossians 2:12-15](#). *Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; and having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.*

The Lord Jesus Christ has done everything for his people, fought their battle, won their victory, and, on their behalf, celebrated the triumph in the streets of heaven, “leading captivity captive.” What more, then, do we want? Surely Christ is enough for us.

[Colossians 2:16](#). *Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days:*

Do not put yourself under the bondage of any rules and regulations that may be made by men. If you choose to do anything, or to abstain from something else, because you judge it to be right and beneficial, do so. Christ is your only Ruler and Leader; and if he does not command anything, let it not signify to you who does command, it,

[Colossians 2:17](#). *Which are a shadow of things to come;*

All this regard for meats, and drinks, and holy days, and new moons, is but a shadow; what is the great substance that is all-important?

[Colossians 2:17-18](#). *But the body is of Christ. Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, —*

Do not be beguiled by those who tell you that you ought to pay reverence to angels, and saints, and I know not what besides. One day is

called St. Matthew's, and another is St. Michael's, and one, I suppose, is St. Judas's day; there are all sorts of supposed saints, some of whom are never mentioned in the Bible, and about whom nobody ought to care at all: "Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels," —

[Colossians 2:18-20](#). *Intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, and not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God. Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, —*

Such ordinances as these, —

[Colossians 2:21-22](#). *(Touch not; taste not; handle not; which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men?*

I have actually seen this text quoted as though it stood as a matter of teaching, — "Touch not; taste not; handle not;" — whereas the apostle here means, "Why are ye subject to such ordinances of men when Christ has set you free from them all? If, with a view to the good of your fellowmen, you choose not to touch, or taste, or handle, you will act very wisely; but, as far as your own conscience is concerned, do not submit to any merely human regulations as to your manner of life,"

[Colossians 2:23](#). *Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.*

This exposition consisted of readings from [Colossians 2:6-23](#); and [Colossians 3:1-3](#).

COLOSSIANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

Verses 1-3

[Colossians 3:1](#) *If ye then be risen with Christ, —*

Leave all these outward rituals, and formalities, and ordinances of men,

—

[Colossians 3:1-3](#). *Seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on*

things on the earth.

For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Colossians 2:6-23](#); and [Colossians 3:1-3](#).

Verses 1-4

[Colossians 3:1](#). *If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.*

Oh! how often we need to be called to this, for the flesh is groveling, and it holds down the spirit; and very often we are seeking the things below as if we had not yet attained to the new life, and did not know anything about the resurrection power of Christ within the soul. Now, if it be that you, believers, have risen with Christ, do not live as if you had never done so, but “seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.”

[Colossians 3:2](#). *Set your affection.*

Not “your affections.” Tie them up into one bundle. Make one of them.

[Colossians 3:2](#). *On things above, not on things on the earth.*

You say that you were dead with Christ, and that you have risen with Christ. Live, then, the risen life, and not the life of those who have never undergone this matchless process. Live above.

[Colossians 3:3](#). *For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.*

The old life is dead. You are dead to it. You will not be consumed by it: you cannot be controlled by it. You have a newer and higher life. Let it have full scope.

[Colossians 3:4](#). *When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.*

Christ was hidden while he was here. The world knew him not. So is your life. But there is to be a glorious manifestation. When Christ is made manifest, so shall you be. Wait for him.

[Colossians 3:5](#). *Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:*

Since you are dead, let all the lusts of the flesh be put to death. Kill those.

They were once a part of you. Your nature lusted this way. Mortify them.

Do not merely restrain them and try to keep them under. These things you are to have nothing to do with.

[Colossians 3:6-7](#). *For which things sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.*

“When ye lived in them” But now you do not live in them. You are dead to them. If it should ever come to pass that you fall into any of these things, you will loathe yourself with bitterest repentance that you could find comfort, satisfaction, life in them. You are dead to them.

[Colossians 3:8-10](#). *But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds: And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:*

No lies. Such communications are filthy. But you put these things away through your union with Christ in his risen life. Therefore, abhor them.

Avoid the very appearance of them, and cry for grace to be kept from them, for you have been “renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.”

[Colossians 3:11](#). *Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.*

In the new life there is no distinction of race and nationality. We are born into one family; we become members of Christ’s body; and this is the one thing we have got to keep up — separation from all the world beside: no separations in the church, no disunion, nothing that would cause it, for we are one in Christ, and Christ is all. Now, as we have to put off these things, that is the negative side: that is the law’s side, for the law says, “Thou shalt not” — “Thou shalt not.” But now look at the positive side.

[Colossians 3:12](#). *Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering:*

This is what you have got to wear, even on the outside — to put it on; not to have a latent kindness in your heart, and a degree of humbleness deep down in your soul if you could get at it; but you are to put it on. It is to be the very dress you wear. These are the sacred vestments of your daily priesthood. Put them on.

[Colossians 3:13](#). *Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.*

Just as readily, just as freely, just as heartily, just as completely.

[Colossians 3:14-15](#). *And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts.*

For that is the great foundation of every godly fruit. We are in such a hurry, in such dreadful haste, so selfish, so discontented, so impetuous, and the major part of our sins spring from that condition of mind. But if we were godly, restful, peaceful, how many sins we should avoid! “Let the peace of God rule in your hearts.”

[Colossians 3:15](#). *To the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.*

It looks like a very small virtue to be thankful. Yet, dear friends, the absence of it is one of the grossest of vices. To be ungrateful is a mean thing: to be ungrateful to God is a base thing. And yet how many may accuse themselves of it! Who among us is as grateful as he should be? Be thankful.

[Colossians 3:16](#). *Let the word of Christ dwell in you.*

Alexander had a casket of gold studded with gems to carry Homer’s works. Let your own heart be a casket for the command of Christ. “Let the word of Christ dwell in you.”

[Colossians 3:16-18](#). *Richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him. Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.*

See how our being Christians does not relax the bonds of our Christian relationship, but it calls us to the higher exercise of the responsibilities and duties connected therewith.

[Colossians 3:19](#). *Husbands love your wives, and be not bitter against them.*

Oh! there are some spirits that are very bitter. A little thing puts them out, and they would take delight in a taunt which grieves the spirit. I pity the poor woman who has such bitterness where she ought to have sweetness: yet there be some such husbands.

[Colossians 3:20-21](#). *Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord. Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.*

The duties are mutual. Scripture maintains an equilibrium. It does not lay down commands for one class, and then leave the other to exercise whatever tyrannical oppression it may please. The child is to obey, but the father must not provoke.

[Colossians 3:22](#). *Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers;*

How much there is of that! How quickly the hands go when the master's eye looks on! But the Christian servant remembers God's eye, and is diligent always. "Not with eye service as men-pleasers."

[Colossians 3:22-25](#). *But in singleness of heart, fearing God: And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done; and there is no respect of persons.*

[Colossians 4:1-2](#). *Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven. Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving.*

See how he keeps putting that in — "Be ye thankful" — "with thanksgiving." Why, that is the oil that makes the machinery go round without its causing obstruction. May we have much of that thanksgiving.

[Colossians 4:3-4](#). *Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds: that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.*

So the preacher of the gospel asks your prayers: and it is a part of the duties arising out of the relationship between Christian men that those who are taught should pray for those who teach God's Word.

This exposition consisted of readings from Colossians 3; [Colossians 4:1-4](#). [Psalms 28:1-6](#).

Verses 1-17

[Colossians 3:1](#). *If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.*

Your Lord and Master has gone up to heaven. You profess that he represents you, and that you have gone up there in him and with him. Then do not seek the things that are down here below, the things of earth; but live

where your life has gone. Where your treasure is, there let your heart be also. “Seek those things which are above.”

[Colossians 3:2-3](#). *Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, —*

You profess to be dead to the world; is that profession false? You have observed that Scriptural ordinance in which you profess to be buried with Christ; was that observance only an empty form?

If there was any truth in your profession, “Ye are dead,” —

[Colossians 3:3](#). *And your life is hid with Christ in God.*

You have a new life now; it is up yonder, “where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.” Do you not feel drawings upward? Are there no longings after the high and heavenly estate where Jesus is? Come, beloved, let your soul break loose for a while; and, like a lark that, having found its liberty, ascends with joyous wing, singing as it rises till it is out of mortal sight, so let it be with you.

[Colossians 3:4](#). *When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.*

You are hidden now, your life is veiled in him; but, at his second coming he shall shine forth in all his glory, and “then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.” Beloved, seek no greatness here; ask not for any exaltation of yourself among the sons of men; but wait for your true manifestation with Christ in glory.

[Colossians 3:5](#). *Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:*

Kill all these evil things; do not let them live in you for a single moment. The command applies, not only to the grosser actions which are summed up under the head of fornication and uncleanness, but to all that leads to those foul sins; not only to the fire, but also to the sparks, such as “inordinate affection,” a sort of softness which is seen in some persons, men and women, too, and which often leads to something far worse; — and “evil concupiscence,” the first desires towards that which is unchaste. God give us grace to kill these loathsome things at once, for if thoughts of evil are indulged, they soon become acts of evil, and then who knows how far we may go in the way of unholiness? Sin, if allowed to grow in the heart, will soon take gigantic strides, and come out in the life. Depend upon it, whenever a professing Christian goes into overt sin of the kind mentioned

here, he does not do it on a sudden. The evil has long been festering and fomenting within his heart, or it would not have manifested itself thus. Oh! if he had only watched, and destroyed the thief ere he broke open the house, what a mercy it would have been! You notice that covetousness is put down with the most filthy sins, and it is described as idolatry. The desire to possess the goods that belong to others, the lust to get gain at any price, this is idolatry.

[Colossians 3:6-7](#). *For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: in the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.*

This was true of the Colossians, and it was true of almost all those to whom Paul wrote, for these gross evils were scarcely regarded as sins in his time, so polluted had the nations become. I hope that, in the case of many now living, they have been preserved by Christian training from having walked even for a time in such sins.

[Colossians 3:8](#). *But now ye also put off all these; —*

Put them all off, like old clothes that are never to be worn again: “Put off all these;” —

[Colossians 3:8](#). *Anger, —*

It is hard work for some to pull that garment off, for it fits them so tightly. This burning coat of wrath will not readily come off; but the apostle's command is, “Put it off! Put it off!” It does not become a Christian to be an angry man.

[Colossians 3:8](#). *Wrath, malice,*

Christ will not live in a heart that harbors malice.

[Colossians 3:8](#). *Blasphemy, —*

Thank God that, if we ever wore that robe, we pulled it off long ago.

[Colossians 3:8](#). *Filthy communication out of your mouth.*

All talking that is of a dubious character must go. Anything which savours of corruption and defilement must be put away from every Christian.

[Colossians 3:9](#). *Lie not one to another, —*

In Paul's day, lying was thought to be a virtue unless the liar happened to be found out; in that case, it was considered wrong; but to lie through thick and thin, and to lie so dexterously as to deceive, was looked upon by an Oriental as an accomplishment of which he might be proud. So the apostle might well write, “Lie not one to another,” —

[Colossians 3:9-10](#). *Seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:*

There is nothing false or untrue in God. God is true, and in him is no falsehood at all; and if you and I have really been renewed, as we profess to have been, we shall hate the very semblance of a lie, and our word will be as good as our bond.

[Colossians 3:11](#). *Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.*

Whenever you hear certain very wise brethren say, “Such-and-such a promise in the Bible is for Israel, not for the Gentiles,” do not you be misled in the least by their assertion; but just quote this text to them: “There is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.” These distinctions all vanish when once we come to Christ; we are one in him, and every promise to believers is good to all who are in Christ Jesus, for “Christ is all, and in all.”

[Colossians 3:12](#). *Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, —*

Be ready to feel for others; be very considerate of their needs. Look at others as if they were your kith and kin; if you and they are in Christ, they are indeed your kin, so put on kinned-ness, or “kindness,” —

[Colossians 3:12](#). *Humbleness of mind, —*

Do not try to be a big man. He who thinks himself big has not yet learnt the true spirit of Christianity. Especially towards those who are sorrowful and sad, be pitiful, be kind, be humble.

[Colossians 3:12](#). *Meekness, —*

If others try to provoke you, do not be provoked by them; but be gentle and meek.

[Colossians 3:12](#). *Longsuffering; —*

Continue to put up with others, remembering the Lord’s longsuffering with you.

[Colossians 3:13](#). *Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.*

Hear this, beloved, I pray you; especially those of you who have hot tempers, and have fallen out with one another. “Let not the sun go down upon your wrath.” Remember how much Christ has forgiven you, and show a forbearing and forgiving spirit to others.

[Colossians 3:14](#). *And above all these things put on charity, —*

Or, rather, “love,” —

[Colossians 3:14](#). *Which is the bond of perfectness.*

The perfect bond, the girdle that goes round, and keeps every other garment of virtue in its place.

[Colossians 3:15](#). *And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body;*

Do not fall out with one another. You are called to peace, for you are cared in one body. Does one hand in the body fight with the other hand? Does the foot contend with the eye? Of course not, for they are in one body. So are you in one body with all your fellow-Christians, therefore lay aside all strife. I deeply deplore when I see Christians — and especially eminent Christians — contending with one another about minor matters of small account. Surely, almost anything ought to be borne before there should be public strife among members of the one body. God grant that such a state of things may speedily come to an end wherever it has existed! We have enough to do to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints,” without contending for our own dignity or honour.

[Colossians 3:15](#). *And be ye thankful.*

That is a nice little text, “Be ye thankful.” When you are grumbling at your plain food, put this as a sandwich between your bread and butter, “Be ye thankful.” When you are complaining of the East wind, just try if you cannot spell this little sentence, “Be ye thankful.” When you are murmuring about those sharp pains and that long sickness, this is the kind of tune for the little bird to whistle at your window, “Be ye thankful.” We have all much for which we ought to be thankful, however sad we may think our lot to be. Look on the bright side, rejoice in God: “Be ye thankful.”

[Colossians 3:16-17](#). *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.*

Do not draw any line of demarcation, and say, “So far is secular, and so far is religious.” Let your whole life be religious; and if there is anything proposed to you, in which you cannot glorify God, do not touch it., “Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.” If any of you go to the theater, can you go there in the name of the Lord Jesus? Why, you would not dare to cross the threshold with such blasphemy in your soul! And when you go to any place of doubtful amusement, can you go there giving thanks to God and the Father by Jesus Christ? Can you thank the Lord that you are permitted to go, and pray for divine blessing when you go, and when you come away? A lady once said to a Christian minister, “The pleasures of going to the play are very great; there is the pleasure of thinking of it beforehand, the enjoyment of it at the time, and then the pleasure of thinking of it afterwards.” “Yes, madam,” said the good man, “and there is one other pleasure which you seem to have forgotten, that is the pleasure of thinking of it on your dying bed; I would like you to remember that.” Let me read this verse again: “Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.” If you cannot do it in the name of the Lord Jesus, do not do it at all if you are a Christian; and even if you are not a Christian, you will be accountable to God, by-and-by, for all that you do.

Verses 1-25

[Colossians 3:1-2](#). *If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.*

This is the best proof that we are really “risen with Christ,” that we set our affection on things above.

[Colossians 3:3-15](#). *For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: for which things’ sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: in the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor*

uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all. Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.

You notice that the apostle again and again speaks of what we have put off and what we have put on, or of what we are to put off and to put on: “Ye have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man.” “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; . . . And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.” Let the blessed girdle of love bind upon you all these choice adornments of a true Christian’s character.

[Colossians 3:16-17](#). *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.*

Now the apostle, guided by the Holy Spirit, gives injunctions concerning various family and domestic relationships:—

[Colossians 3:18](#). *Wives, submit yourselves unto your husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.*

It is seemly according to nature; and it is still more “fit in the Lord.”

[Colossians 3:19](#). *Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.*

Never say a bitter word against them; and, especially, never dishonour them in the household, before children or servants, as some have done; but do all that you can to manifest love and tenderness toward them.

[Colossians 3:20](#). *Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.*

Nowadays, there are some children who seem to be at the head of the family, and the parents obey them in all things. This is very foolish and wrong; and when their children grow up, and become their plague and curse, they will bitterly lament their folly in putting things out of joint, and

not keeping the house as God would have it kept, the children in their place, and the father in his.

[Colossians 3:21](#). *Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.*

Some fathers do; they expect more of children than they will ever get, and more than they ought to expect; and they lay heavy burdens upon them, which are grievous to be borne; and for little faults there are severe chastisements. This also is wrong.

[Colossians 3:22-24](#). *Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: and whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.*

If you do all your work in that spirit, how noble it becomes, and how cheerfully you will get through it! You may have a master who is unworthy of your service; yet, if you “do it heartily, as to the Lord,” you will have rest of heart even in serving those who are froward and perverse, and the Lord will reward your service in due time.

[Colossians 3:25](#). *But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.*

This exposition consisted of readings from Colossians 3 and [Colossians 4:1-4](#).

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CHAPTER 4

Verses 1-4

[Colossians 4:1](#). *Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal;—*

I sometimes think that the good men who chopped the Bible up into chapters—for it is not in chapters in the original,—must have hoped that we should not read this message to the masters, as he had put it in another chapter. But I never like to read about the servants without also reading about the masters. There is six for one, and half-a-dozen for the other; and, as is usual, in the Scriptures, there are balanced duties. If there is an exhortation to the children, there is generally one to the parents close by;

and if there is a word to wives, there is one for husbands, too. So let us read that verse, “Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal;—

[Colossians 4:1-4](#). *Knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven. Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving; withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds: that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.*

This exposition consisted of readings from Colossians 3 and [Colossians 4:1-4](#).

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CHAPTER FIFTY-ONE

1 Thessalonians

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CHAPTER 1

Verses 1-10

[1 Thessalonians 1:1](#). *Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Paul is very full of Christ. His heart is full of love to God our Father, and, therefore, it is that twice over in as many lines he mentions both

names. He uses no vain repetitions, as the heathen do; but his inmost soul is taken up with communion with the Father and with the Son; and so in one single verse he twice gives us their names.

[1 Thessalonians 1:2-4](#). *We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father; Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.*

Paul had a very high opinion of the Church in Thessalonica, and no doubt it deserved it. See how he speaks of it — with such confidence. “Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.” Their character was such that he felt sure that he saw the mark of God’s elect about them, and he speaks most positively of them — perhaps more positively than he does of any other church. Well, there were three grand signs. There was the work of faith, the labour of love, and the patience of hope; and where we see three works of the Spirit we may be fully persuaded that electing love is there.

[1 Thessalonians 1:5](#). *For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.*

Paul never had a happier time in preaching, it would seem, than when he preached to these Thessalonians. He felt a power resting upon him. He spoke the gospel with great positiveness and assurance, and consequently the people received it in power, and the assurance of the hearer made the assurance of the speaker. It is a great mercy when it is so.

[1 Thessalonians 1:6](#). *And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost:*

Ah! dear friends, we read of one that he was more honourable than his brethren because his mother bore him with sorrow. And so when faith is born in the heart in the midst of affliction, it is a very precious faith. It is faith indeed. “Having received the Word in much affliction with joy.” I seem to see that joy of theirs floating, like Noah’s ark, above the floods of their affliction. It seems to be a contradiction that we can be in affliction and yet be full of joy. But many a believer will tell you that there is no contradiction in it. He knows what it is to be sorrowful, and yet to be always rejoicing.

[1 Thessalonians 1:7](#). *So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.*

Brethren, let us not only be Christians, but let us be samples of Christians. They are sure to pick out the best for a sample. Oh! that we might be such that, if God himself were to select Christians to show what they are like, he might select us to be samples.

[1 Thessalonians 1:8-10](#). *For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak anything. For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.*

Paul here states that all the churches abroad knew what a wonderful time he had had with the Thessalonians, and with what alacrity they had received the gospel, and how they had turned away from their idols in thorough earnest to become worshippers of the living God. This was a great comfort to Paul, and he speaks about them here with great joy.

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SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

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CHAPTER 4

Verses 13-18

[1 Thessalonians 4:13](#). *But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.*

You cannot help sorrowing, for you miss your dear ones so much; but you do not sorrow like the heathen who believe their departed friends to be

extinct and annihilated. You have a glorious hope concerning those who have fallen asleep in Christ, you believe that they are still live, and that, by-and-by, their bodies will rise again.

[1 Thessalonians 4:14](#). *For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.*

There is such a union between Christ and his people that they never can be divided from him. In life, they live in him, in death, they sleep in him; and when he comes again, he will bring them with him. Christ cannot be without his people. A head without a body would be a ghastly thing, and Christ without his people would be incomplete and imperfect.

[1 Thessalonians 4:15](#). *For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.*

We shall have no preference over the saints who are sleeping in Jesus, we shall not go before them, we shall be on a blessed equality with them.

[1 Thessalonians 4:16-17](#). *For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*

Whatever ideas we have concerning the details of Christ's coming, this summing up of the whole matter is unutterably precious to us: "so shall we ever be with the Lord." There is no separating Christ and his people. If you are one with him, he will not be in heaven and leave you behind; nor will he be glorified in the presence of his Father without making you to be partakers of the glory. What joy there is for us in this blessed truth!

[1 Thessalonians 4:18](#). *Wherefore comfort one another with these words.*

This exposition consisted of readings from [1 Thessalonians 4:13-18](#); and 1 Thessalonians 5.

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CHAPTER 5

Verses 1-28

[1 Thessalonians 5:1-2](#). *But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the*

day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.

It will be a great surprise to the wicked. It will take them at unawares. Just at that moment when they least expect it will Christ come; and as the thief comes to destroy and to kill, so will the coming of Christ be the death of their carnal ease — the destruction of their earthly hopes.

[1 Thessalonians 5:3](#). *For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.*

A terrible text that “They shall not escape.” They shall not escape by their own power or force or wisdom. They shall not escape even by the annihilation which they might well desire, but which shall not come to them. They shall not escape.

[1 Thessalonians 5:4](#). *But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.*

You know that Christ will come. You expect the dissolution of this present state. To you therefore, it will come as one who calls at daytime. You cannot know the hour. You must not know it; but since you know that he will come, and come to your joy; and since you are in the light, you look with gladness to that coming.

[1 Thessalonians 5:5-6](#). *Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others;*

If we were children of the night, sleep is a proper occupation for the night; but as we are the children of the day, let us not sleep as others.

[1 Thessalonians 5:6](#). *But let us watch and be sober.*

Watchfulness and sobriety are appropriate duties for the day. To be ever serving our Lord with constancy, and to keep ourselves from the fascinations of the world which make men’s minds drunk — may these two things be our daily care.

[1 Thessalonians 5:7](#). *For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night.*

There are a few who have reached to such a pitch of shameless idleness that they sleep in the day, and there are others who have come to such a state of debauchery that they are drunken in the day. But this is not the common way of things, nor even in the judgment of the most licentious of the world is this at all a proper state of things. “They that sleep sleep in the night. They that are drunken are drunken in the night.” Let us who are of

the day be sober, and let us of course be awake, but let us be more than awake, since watchfulness is here joined to wakefulness, and watchfulness in a soldier requires that his armor be on. So Paul pushes the parallel a little farther.

[1 Thessalonians 5:8](#). *But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.*

Soldiers when they sleep put off their armor; but in the day when they are awake and on their guard they wear their armor, and are ready for the fray. See how much is involved in Christian wakefulness. God help us to carry out every virtue to its legitimate consequences, not to be wakeful after a fashion, but wakeful after God's fashion.

[1 Thessalonians 5:9](#). *For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.*

In making us children of light, he gave evidence that our appointment was for the light — that his eternal ordinances were that through the light of gospel grace we should enter into the light of eternal glory by and by. “God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.”

[1 Thessalonians 5:10](#). *Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.*

They who have served their day and generation, when they sleep are not parted from their Lord. They become not the children of the darkness by that fact, for he died for us, that whether we wake or sleep we should live together with him. Whether we are living here or living there, we shall still live together with him.

[1 Thessalonians 5:11](#). *Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.*

The more of this the better. Christian people should constantly converse with one another for mutual edification.

[1 Thessalonians 5:12-13](#). *And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake.*

You see, in the church of old they edified one another, but for all that they did not cast off God's ordinance of Christian ministry. There was rule in the church then as there should be now; and the apostle, when he speaks of this individual edification, this mutual instruction, does not forget to notice those who were the pastors of the flock. He says, “Know them which

labour among you and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake.”

[1 Thessalonians 5:13](#). *And be at peace among yourselves.*

How can a church prosper if it is not?

[1 Thessalonians 5:14-16](#). *Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men. See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men. Rejoice evermore.*

Here follows a string of Christian precepts a golden chain. “Rejoice evermore.”

[1 Thessalonians 5:17-19](#). *Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. Quench not the Spirit.*

Do not despise his operations, either in yourselves or in your brethren. Do not quench him by neglect, much less by open opposition.

[1 Thessalonians 5:20-22](#). *Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil.*

Not from that which other people choose to think evil, but from all real evil whatever it is — even from the very shadow that it casts and the shape which it assumes.

[1 Thessalonians 5:23-26](#). *And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it. Brethren, pray for us. Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss.*

Give one another a hearty shake of the hands. That is the western interpretation of the eastern form. Outward forms differ. The inward sense abides the same. Let brotherly love continue in a hearty friendliness among yourselves.

[1 Thessalonians 5:27-28](#). *I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.*

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CHAPTER FIFTY-TWO

2 Thessalonians

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Verses 1-12

[2 Thessalonians 1:1](#). *Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians* —

Paul loved to associate his fellow-workers with himself when writing to his brethren and sisters in Christ. Although he had a superior experience to theirs, he put Silvanus, and Timothy, his own son in the faith, with him as his fellow-evangelists in writing to “the church of the Thessalonians” —

[2 Thessalonians 1:1](#). *In God our Father* —

What a wonderful expression! The Church is in God as God is in the Church, what a blessed dwelling-place for the people of God in all generations: “in God our Father” —

[2 Thessalonians 1:1-2](#). *And the Lord Jesus Christ:s grace unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

This is the apostle’s usual salutation when he is writing to a Christian church. When he is writing to a minister, it is “grace, mercy, and peace,” for God’s most prominent servants especially need great mercy on account of their heavy responsibilities and many shortcomings; but to the church Paul’s greeting is, “Grace unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

[2 Thessalonians 1:3](#). *We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth;*

What a kind of sacred network Christian love makes, intertwisting every believer in Christ with every other believer! “The love of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth.” Oh, that this might really be the case in all the churches of our Lord Jesus Christ!

[2 Thessalonians 1:4-5](#). *So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure: which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God,*

One of the clearest proofs of the judgment to come is to be found in the present sufferings of the saints through persecutions and tribulations; for if they, for the very reason that they love God, have to suffer here, there must be a future state and time for rectifying all this that is now so wrong.

[2 Thessalonians 1:5-7](#). *That ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye do suffer: seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled rest with us,*

For us who believe in Jesus there is a long Sabbath yet to come, to be spent with the apostles and the other holy ones around the throne of God and of the Lamb, even as Paul wrote to the Hebrews, “where remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.”

[2 Thessalonians 1:7-11](#). *When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the*

Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day. Wherefore also we pray always for you, —

The very people in whom Paul gloried, and over whom he rejoiced, were those for whom he continued still to pray; and he did well, for the highest state of grace needs preserving, and there is a possibility of going beyond the utmost height to which any have yet attained. Hence Paul says, “Wherefore also we pray always for you,” —

[2 Thessalonians 1:11-12](#). *That our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power: that the name of Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

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CHAPTER 2

Verses 1-4

[2 Thessalonians 2:1-2](#). *Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.*

In his former Epistle to the Thessalonians, Paul had written as if he expected Christ to come immediately, and the people seem to have taken his words so literally as to have lived in expectation of Christ’s advent, and perhaps to have exhibited some degree of fear concerning it. He now calms their minds by telling them that Christ would not come until certain events had happened. The history of the world was not complete, the harvest of the Church was not ripe; neither had the sin of man and especially the “man of sin” become fully developed.

[2 Thessalonians 2:3-4](#). *Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.*

If this “man of sin” be not the Pope of Rome, we cannot tell who is the antichrist. Certainly, if this description were put in the Hue-and-Cry, and we were police officers, we should at once arrest the Pope as the man whose character agreed with the warrant in our hands. What does he call himself? “Vicar of Christ on earth.” What does he do but set himself up to be adored and worshipped as though he were divine, making himself out to be the fountain and channel of all grace. Beloved, this “man of sin” has been revealed. Now we may look for the coming of the Son of man; but the day and the hour when he shall come no man knoweth; no, and not even the angels of God.

This exposition consisted of readings from 2 Thessalonians 1; [2 Thessalonians 2:1-4](#).

Verses 1-17

[2 Thessalonians 2:1-2](#). *Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.*

In the Church of Christ, the teaching has always been that Christ is coming quickly, and that teaching must never be withdrawn, for he is coming quickly, as he said to John in the Revelation. At the same time, this teaching has given an opportunity to certain presumptuous people to prophesy that at such and such a time Christ will come. They know nothing about it, and their prophecies are not worth the breath they spend in uttering them, and we have today what the apostle wrote to the Thessalonians: —

[2 Thessalonians 2:3](#). *Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;*

I believe that, to a large extent, this has already happened, and that the “man of sin” has been revealed. This “son of perdition” has had a long, dark, and terrible reign over myriads of men, and still he sitteth on the seven hills of Rome, and ruleth over multitudes of his fellow-sinners. But Paul held that it was consistent to expect the Lord to come quickly, and yet to know that certain events must occur before he did come. That is just the condition, I think, to which a man’s mind will come if he diligently and impartially reads the Scriptures, especially the prophetic parts of them. The Lord will come in such an hour as we think not, yet there are clear indications of certain things which are to happen before he does come.

[2 Thessalonians 2:4](#). *Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.*

It has been said that the Pope of Rome is infallible, that his interpretation of Scripture, whatever it may be, is as valid as the Scripture itself, and that whatever he chooseth to decree must be obeyed by the faithful. Such are some of the pretensions even at this day of the “man of sin.”

[2 Thessalonians 2:5-7](#). *Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work:*

There were certain reasons why that gigantic iniquity should begin to be developed even while the Roman Empire was in power to keep it in check; and when that passed away, there was the opportunity for “the mystery of iniquity” to become the despot of the world.

[2 Thessalonians 2:7-10](#). *Only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.*

This is the last sin of all, that ungodly men do not receive “the love of the truth.” If they were themselves true, they would love the truth; if the grace of God was in them, his own precious truth would be prized by them above everything else, but when men finally reject the truth by which they might be saved, God visits them with terrible judgments.

[2 Thessalonians 2:11-17](#). *And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle. Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us*

everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.

So may it be, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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CHAPTER 3

Verses 1-5

[2 Thessalonians 3:1](#). *Finally, brethren, pray for us,*

“Pray for us,” says the apostle, “pray for myself and the brethren who are with me, pray for all the apostles and preachers of the Word.” “Finally, brethren.” If this were the last word we had to say to you, we would make just this request, “Finally, brethren, pray for us.” You cannot tell how much God’s servants are helped by the prayers of his people. The strongest man in Israel will be the better for the prayers of the weakest saint in Zion. If you can do nothing else, you can pray for us; therefore, day and night, be ye at the mercy-seat on our behalf: “Finally, brethren, pray for us.”

[2 Thessalonians 3:1](#). *That the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you:*

“You Thessalonians enjoy the power of the Word. Pray that it may be so everywhere else.” Paul is said to have written this Epistle from Corinth or Athens, and he longed that there the Word of God might prevail as it had done at Thessalonica. Pray just now that, in every part of the world, God’s Word may have free course. There are many who stand in the way of it, pray God that they may be swept out of the way, that the Word of the Lord may have free course. We want the gospel to run, and spread, till the whole earth shall know its blessed message.

[2 Thessalonians 3:2](#). *And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith.*

All men are not candid, or true: “all men have not faith.”

[2 Thessalonians 3:3](#). *But the Lord is faithful,*

What a wonderful contrast this is, and how suggestive of comfort! “All men have not faith. But the Lord is full of faith, faithful.” True, he keeps all his promises: “The Lord is faithful.”

[2 Thessalonians 3:3-5](#). *Who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil. And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and will*

do the things which we command you. And the Lord direct your hearts —

You see, Paul does not command the Thessalonians to do anything but what he can pray God to work in them. The command of a man, by itself, is nothing, but when he only asks that to be done which he can pray God to do, then there is power about his message: “We have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and will do the things which we command you. And the Lord direct your hearts” —

[2 Thessalonians 3:5](#). *Into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.*

May the Lord hear that prayer for all of us, for Christ Jesus’ sake! Amen.

This exposition consisted of readings from 2 Thessalonians 2 and [2 Thessalonians 3:1-5](#).

Verses 1-18

[2 Thessalonians 3:1](#). *Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you:*

A most important request. What can the ministers of the gospel do, if their people cease to pray for them? Even if their own prayers be heard, as they will be, and a measure of blessing be given, yet it will be but a scant measure, compared with what it would be if all the saints united in their intercessions. Whenever we see the word of God very mighty in one place it ought to encourage us to pray that it may be the same in another place, for it is the same word and the hearts of all men are alike. The same spirit can give the same blessing in every place. Hence Paul says, “Pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified even as it is with you.” Now, if any of you in your church are enjoying rich prosperity, pray for others, that they may have the same. And, if you are without it, take courage from any church which you see prospering, and ask the Lord to do the same things for you. Very likely if we prayed more for ministers they would be more blessed to us. There is many a man who can not “hear” his minister and the reason may be that God never hears him pray for his minister.

[2 Thessalonians 3:2](#). *And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith.*

I really do not know which is the worst to put up with — an unreasonable man or a wicked man. A wicked man may do you all sorts of mischief, but you soon know him. But an unreasonable man — you do not

know where to find him, and he can attack you from all sorts of places. Alas! there are some very unreasonable Christians — very good in some points, but very stupid; and a stupid man may set a village on a blaze quite as easily as a wicked man. The stupid man's accident may be as dangerous as another man's design. Pray also "that we may be delivered from wicked and unreasonable men, for all men have not faith," and all men have not sense, I may also add.

[2 Thessalonians 3:3](#). *But the Lord is faithful,*

There is the mercy. Whether men be fools or knaves, the Lord is faithful.

[2 Thessalonians 3:3](#). *Who shall establish you, and keep you from evil.*

We are taught to pray for this grace. We are here told that we shall have it. Since God is faithful he will keep us from evil.

[2 Thessalonians 3:4](#). *And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and will do the things which we command you.*

Our obedience to apostolic ordinances should be of the present and of the future. It should be fixed in our souls. What the Lord has commanded in his church by his apostles should be carefully regarded by us.

[2 Thessalonians 3:5](#). *And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.*

The two things go together. When we love God, we long for the glory and the appearing of his Son. The most loving spirits in the world have had most an eye to that glorious coming. Note Enoch who walked with God and prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord cometh." Note Daniel, "a man greatly beloved," and a seer who looked into the future and saw the Ancient of Days. Mark also John who leaned his head on Jesus' bosom, we may say of him that he spoke more of the second coming than all the rest of the apostles. When the heart gets right away from earth and is set upon God, then it is that we begin to long for the manifestation of the Lord from heaven.

[2 Thessalonians 3:6](#). *Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.*

Paul had been to Thessalonica, and had given oral teaching, and now he commits to the book what he had spoken; but he bids them take care not to associate with those who wilfully broke the ordinances of the church which he had taught them. There are some brethren with whom it is ill for us to associate, lest they do us hurt, and it is ill for them that we associate with

them, lest we seem to assist them in their evil deeds. Especially is this so in the case of brethren of the class that he is about to describe — mischief makers, troublers, people that can always tell you the gossip of a congregation, that can tear a neighbour's character to pieces, that are able to perceive spots on the sun; people who delight in parading the fault of God's own children, and are never so happy as when they are making others unhappy by what they have to retail. These are the kind of people to whom you should give a wide berth.

[2 Thessalonians 3:7-9](#). *For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us.*

The apostle had a right to be supported by those among whom he laboured. He always insists upon that right; but for their good, knowing the tendency of that age, he himself abjured that right; and he is indignant that there should be others who did nothing whatever as to Christian ministry, but who availed themselves of the charity of the church at Thessalonica so as to be able to live upon it without work.

[2 Thessalonians 3:10](#). *For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.*

A very capital rule, indeed. There are some so very spiritually minded that to soil their hands is also to soil their conscience. They are afraid of hard work. They think it is unspiritual; whereas there is nothing in the world, next to the grace of God, that is more likely to keep men out of mischief than having plenty to do.

[2 Thessalonians 3:11](#). *For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies.*

Not doing their own business, and therefore putting their noses into everybody else's business. If they had minded their own affairs, they would have left other people alone. There are such people alive now. We must not be surprised if we meet them seeing that they were alive in the apostle's days; if they troubled him it must be small marvel if they trouble us.

[2 Thessalonians 3:12](#). *Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.*

The best bread and the sweetest, is our own. We are to work for it. We are to work with quietness. I suppose to some that is very hard work, but they must labour after it, for quietness is a Christian grace, it is indeed a high Christian attainment.

[2 Thessalonians 3:13-15](#). *But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing. And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.*

This kind of Christian discipline ought to be carried out still, in reference not only to this one case of busybodies, but to all other cases. When a church grows large, there can be no efficient discipline from one man, or from all his officers with him. There must be the discipline of the whole church towards itself, each Christian, according to his measure of grace, seeking the good of the whole; for while every man must bear his own burden, yet is it said, “Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” “Look not every man upon his own things, but also upon the things of others.” The careful desire to promote the Christian welfare of all our fellow members is a very different thing from being busybodies. We must have equal desire not in any way to interfere where we should not.

[2 Thessalonians 3:16](#). *Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means.*

What a sweet benediction! And how he heaps the words together, as if peace was one of the greatest blessings a church could have. Indeed, dear brethren it is the essential to all other blessings. I am quite certain that we never should have enjoyed here the long years of perpetual prosperity which we have had, if it had not pleased the Lord to keep us always in peace. So may we be for many and many a year to come! May no root of bitterness ever spring up to trouble us, but may this text be fulfilled — “Now the Lord of peace give you peace always by all means.”

[2 Thessalonians 3:16-17](#). *The Lord be with you all. The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write.*

I suppose he always wrote a part of each epistle. Probably through the failure of his eyesight he was unable to write the whole of it with his own hands, but employed some one of his brethren to be his amanuensis. But, in order that every one might know the epistle to be genuine, there was always a little of Paul’s writing, sometimes in big text-hand, as when he says to one

church, “You see how large a letter I have written unto you with my own hand.”

[2 Thessalonians 3:18](#). *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.*

So with great courtesy and a comprehensive prayer he finishes his letter.

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CHAPTER FIFTY-THREE

1 Timothy

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CHAPTER 1

Verses 1-17

[1 Timothy 1:1](#). *Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope;*

Christ is our hope; we have not a shadow of a hope apart from him. I remember, when on the Continent, seeing on a cross the words “Spes

unica,” the unique, the only hope of man; and that is true of the cross of Christ, and of Christ who suffered on it, he is our hope.

[1 Timothy 1:2](#). *Unto Timothy, my own son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Notice the apostle’s triple salutation, “Grace, mercy, and peace.” Whenever Paul writes to a church, he wishes “grace and peace”; but to a minister he wishes “grace, mercy, and peace.” Ah! we want mercy more than the average of Christians; we have greater responsibilities; and, consequently, might more readily fall into greater sin, so to a minister Paul’s salutation is, “grace, mercy, and peace.”

[1 Timothy 1:3-4](#). *As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine, neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do.*

You see, the apostle, in his day, had to contend against those who ran away from the simplicity of the gospel into all manner of fables and inventions. Such, in our day, are the doctrine of evolution, the doctrine of the universal fatherhood of God, the doctrine of post-mortem salvation, the doctrine of the final restitution of all men, and all sorts of fables and falsehoods which men have invented.

[1 Timothy 1:5-7](#). *Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: from which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling; desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.*

There were some who put the law into its wrong place. They made it a way of salvation, which it never was meant to be, and never can be. It is a way of conviction. It is an instrument of humbling. It shows us the evil of sin; but it never takes sin away.

[1 Timothy 1:8](#). *But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully;*

In its own place it has its own uses, and these are most important.

[1 Timothy 1:9-13](#). *Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any*

other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine; according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust. And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemer,

Paul must have written this verse with many tears. What a wonder of grace it was that he should be put into the sacred ministry, to bear testimony for Christ, when he had been before a blasphemer!

[1 Timothy 1:13](#). *And a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.*

He almost thought that, if he had done all this wilfully, he might not have been forgiven; but he felt that here God spied out the only extenuating circumstance, namely, that he was mistaken: "I did it ignorantly, in unbelief."

[1 Timothy 1:14-15](#). *And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.*

He spoke from his heart, from deep experience. This indeed was to him the glorious gospel of the blessed God, that had saved him, the very chief of sinners. He could therefore with confidence commend it to others as worthy of all acceptation.

[1 Timothy 1:16](#). *Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.*

The case of Paul is not a singular one; it is the pattern one. If there are any here who feel that they have sinned like Saul of Tarsus, they may be forgiven like Paul the apostle. He is a pattern to all who should thereafter believe in Christ to life everlasting. Just as we often see things cut out in brown paper, and sold as patterns, so is the apostle Paul the pattern convert. What God did for him, he can do for thousands of others.

[1 Timothy 1:17](#). *Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

Paul could not help this outburst of praise. He must put in a doxology. When he remembered his own conversion and pardon, and his being entrusted with the ministry of the gospel, he was obliged to put down his pen, and lift up his voice in grateful thanksgiving to God. So may it be with us, as we remember what great things the Lord hath done for us!

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CHAPTER 1

Verses 1-8

[2 Timothy 1:1-2](#). *Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus, to Timothy, my dearly beloved son:*

There is the greatest possible affection between the preacher and his convert. This is a relationship which even death will not destroy. They neither marry nor are given in marriage in the Heavenly Kingdom, but this fatherhood and sonship shall endure for ever.

[2 Timothy 1:2](#). *Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the father and Christ Jesus our Lord.*

It is not a little remarkable that, when the apostle writes to churches, he usually wishes them “Grace and peace”; but when he writes to a minister, he generally prays for “Grace, mercy, and peace”, as if we needed more mercy than other Christians. Having so great a work to do, and falling into such great sin if we are unfaithful in it, we may well ask that we may have special mercy showed unto us by the God of mercy.

[2 Timothy 1:3](#). *I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day;*

At that time, Timothy was very specially laid upon the apostle’s heart and he did not seem to think of anything without young Timothy’s image rising up before him “night and day.”

[2 Timothy 1:4](#). *Greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy;*

Paul had seen Timothy’s tears when he parted from him. He remembered, perhaps, his tears when under conviction of sin, his tears of joy when he found the Saviour, and the tears he shed in his early preaching, when the gracious youth touched the hearts of others because he so evidently spoke out of his own heart.

[2 Timothy 1:5](#). *When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also.*

There is no transmigration of souls, but there is a kind of transmigration of faith, as if the very form and shape of faith, which was in Lois and Eunice, afterwards appeared in Timothy. Truly, there are certain idiosyncrasies which may pass from some Christian people to others; and when those idiosyncrasies are of a high and noble kind, it is a great mercy to see them reproduced in children and children’s children. “I thought I heard your mother speak,” said one, when she heard a Christian woman talking of the Saviour, “you speak in just the way in which she used to tell out her experience, and describe the love of Christ.”

[2 Timothy 1:6](#). *Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.*

The fire needs stirring every now and then; it is apt to die out if it is not stirred.

[2 Timothy 1:7-8](#). *For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the Gospel according to the power of God;*

Timothy, never be ashamed of the gospel of Christ, and never be ashamed of Paul when he is put in prison for the sake of the gospel; but ask to partake, not only of the gospel, and of the power of it, but even of the afflictions which come for its sake, for this is one of the highest honours that can be put upon us, that we may suffer with God's saints for the truth's sake. Paul, in the 3rd chapter, goes on to tell Timothy of the danger of his times.

This exposition consisted of readings from [2 Timothy 1:1-8](#); 2 Timothy 3; and [2 Timothy 4:1-6](#)

Verses 1-18

[2 Timothy 1:1](#). *Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus,*

Paul takes high ground. He is not an apostle by the will of the Church, but an apostle by the will of God. God's will is the great motive power in the Church of God. Some talk a great deal about man's will. What think you of God's will, the will of the Almighty? Surely that shall stand. Paul felt that he had that at the back of him. "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God." Hence he always speaks very boldly. He never asks leave of anybody. If he is an apostle by the will of God, he exercises his office without fear.

[2 Timothy 1:2](#). *To Timothy, my dearly beloved son:*

Son in the faith. When all the ties of natural descent shall be forgotten. sonship in Christ will continue. I do not doubt that in heaven Timothy is still Paul's son; Paul is still father to Timothy, for the relation is of the Spirit.

[2 Timothy 1:2](#). *Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.*

I think I have called upon you to notice that when Paul writes to a church, it is "Grace and peace." Whenever he writes to a minister, it is "Grace, mercy, and peace." I have sometimes wondered whether we ministers need mercy more than other people, and I suppose that we do, or else the Apostle would not have said, "Grace, mercy, and peace." Oh! if a minister gets to heaven, it will be a wonder. His responsibilities are so great.

“Who is sufficient for these things?” It will be a marvelous display of mercy if any of us shall be able to say at last, “I am clear of the blood of all men”; for we have not only our own blood, but the blood of others to look to in this matter.

[2 Timothy 1:3](#). *I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day;*

For this Paul thanks God. He never forgot to pray for Timothy, and it is a matter of thankfulness. When we feel moved to pray, though it be for another, the spirit of prayer is essentially the same, whatever its object; and we ought to be thankful when we feel continually able to pray for a friend. “I thank God,” says he, and he says that he had served God with a pure conscience all his days. So he had, but it was a blind conscience. At first, when he was a Pharisee, he still served God, though he then persecuted ignorantly the people of God. Oh! but it is a good thing sincerely to follow after God. May we be helped to do so. “I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day.”

[2 Timothy 1:4](#). *Greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy;*

What were those tears? Tears of holy men and women are as precious as diamonds. Paul had noticed the tear twinkling in brother Timothy’s eye — the tear of repentance, the tear of gratitude, the tear of fervent desire. He had noticed that, and, being mindful of all this, he wished to see that dear face again. Christianity does not make us unsociable. It gives us new ties of love, fresh brothers, fresh sons.

[2 Timothy 1:5](#). *When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also.*

Happy son who has grandmother and mother before him in the faith. Unhappy young man who has quitted the faith of his fathers, and has turned altogether aside. If such be here, we would remember them in our prayers, but we cannot say that we can remember them with joy.

[2 Timothy 1:6](#). *Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.*

Stir up your gifts like a fire. It will not burn without poking sometimes. Stir it up. And every now and then it is a good thing to have our heart stirred up, aroused, quickened, brought to a higher diligence. We must try to

do this. Perhaps there are some dear friends here who have a large measure of latent gift, dormant faculty. Stir up the gift that is in thee.

[2 Timothy 1:7](#). *For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.*

Neither Paul, nor Timothy had a craven spirit. They were none of them afraid. God had taught them his truth, and they knew it, and they held it, defying all opposition.

[2 Timothy 1:8](#). *Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of the Lord, nor of me his prisoner:*

What! were people ashamed of Paul? Oh! yes, dear friends. The great Apostle, because he was persecuted, found himself despised by some of the very people who owed their souls to him. It is the lot of those who are faithful to Christ to find even good men sometimes turning against them. But what of that? They are responsible to their Master, not to their fellow-servants. Yet it is a hard thing when any come to be ashamed of you — ashamed of you, though you know that you have done right. I do not wonder that he puts it even to Timothy, “Be not thou, therefore, ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me, his prisoner.” Some of us know what it is to have trained and brought up these about us, who were to us what Timothy was to Paul, who have been ashamed of us, and of the testimony of our Lord.

[2 Timothy 1:8](#). *But be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God;*

You will want the power of God to do it, and mind you do it. Take your full share in whatever affliction the gospel brings upon Christians. “According to the power of God.”

[2 Timothy 1:9](#). *Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,*

How plain it is that he earnestly believed in the eternal election of believers — in their being in Christ, and in their possession of grace in Christ. “Grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.” God’s love to his people is not a thing of yesterday. He loved them before the world was made, and he will love them when the world has ceased to be. “It was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.”

[2 Timothy 1:10-12](#). *But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and*

immortality to light through the gospel: Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.

Paul knew that grace could keep his soul, but I think that he here means that he could keep his own gospel. Paul had kept it, kept the faith, but he committed it now into the hand of the greater One, who would keep it when every apostle was dead, and every faithful witness had passed away. “He is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.”

[2 Timothy 1:13](#). *Hold fast the form of sound words,*

Many say they have no creeds, and there is hardly an Epistle in which there is not a distinct mention of a creed.

[2 Timothy 1:13](#). *Which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.*

Hold fast the truth. Hold fast the very form and shape of it. If you are to keep the life that is in an egg, you must not even break the shell. Take care of it all, and take care of it all the more when with specious reasoning they say, “We will hold the same truth, only in a different form.” Why a different form at all, if they do not wish to hold a different doctrine altogether? Nay, my brethren, especially you that are like young Timothy, take this passage to heart. “Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.”

[2 Timothy 1:14](#). *That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.*

This is what we want. If the Holy Ghost be in us, we shall never trifle with the truth. He is the lover and revealer of truth, and we shall press the doctrines of the Word of God itself nearer and nearer to our hearts in proportion as the Holy Spirit dwells in us.

[2 Timothy 1:15](#). *This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me;*

What! turned away from Paul? Some people think it is an awful thing because certain people turn away from a minister of Christ. It is not an awful thing at all, except for them. Paul stands fast; even he, the bravest of the brave, and they all turn aside from him. What of that? Does Paul flinch? Nay, not he. “This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me.”

[2 Timothy 1:15](#). *Of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes.*

Two men who ought to have known better. Paul evidently fixed his eye upon them — more bitter than others, more perverse, more cruel, more willfully guilty in turning aside from him.

[2 Timothy 1:16-17](#). *The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain: But, when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me.*

You could not tell in Rome where a prisoner was. The registers were not open to investigation. You had to go from prison to prison, and fee the guards to get admission, or to be told who might be there, and Onesiphorus was determined to find out Paul. I suppose that he went to the Mamertine, a dungeon in which some of us have been — one dungeon under the bottom of another. The first one has no light, except through a round hole at the top, and the second has a round hole through which you drop into the lower one. We think that Paul was there. And then there is the Palatine prison, which was at the guard-house of the Praetorian guards, near the palace on the Palatine Hill. There Paul certainly was, and Onesiphorus went from one jail to another. “Have you seen a little Jew with weak eye?” I daresay that was his description of him. “He is a friend of mine. I want to speak with him.” “What! that Paul? — the man that is chained to one or another of us every morning? We have twelve hours of it, and he preaches to us most of the time.” “Oh! that is the man,” said Onesiphorus. “That is the man. Does he talk about Jesus Christ?” “Oh! nothing else but that. He will not let any soldier go from being bound to him without hearing about Jesus Christ.” “That is my man,” said Onesiphorus. He sought him out very diligently, and he found him.

[2 Timothy 1:18](#). *The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day: and in how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus, thou knowest very well.*

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CHAPTER 2

Verses 1-13

[2 Timothy 1:1-2](#). *Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many*

witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

This is the true apostolical succession,—one minister brings another to Christ, and then charges that other to train other preachers and teachers to carry on the blessed work of evangelization.

2 Timothy 1:3-4. *Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.*

The man who has given himself wholly to the service of Christ must not undertake any other business that would prevent his giving his whole strength to his Master's work.

2 Timothy 1:5-8. *And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully. The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits. Consider what I say, and the Lord give thee understanding in all things. Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to My gospel:*

The resurrection of Christ is the corner-stone of the glorious temple of truth, the key-stone of the arch of revelation. Paul tells us, in that great chapter, 1 Corinthians 15, how hopeless our case would be if Christ was not “raised from the dead; “but he also proves most conclusively that he was raised “the third day, according to the Scriptures.”

2 Timothy 1:9. *Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound.*

Thank God that it is not yet bound though many have tried to fetter it. When they think that they have manacled it, it breaks loose again, and so it always will. However low this heavenly fire may burn, it soon blazes up again, and so it shall to the world's end. Immortal as the Christ who is the sum and substance of it is the everlasting gospel of the blessed God.

2 Timothy 1:10-13. *Therefore I endure all things from the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us: if we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.—*

Blessed truth, God grant us the grace to mediate upon it until we also shall become faithful to him and to his truth!

This exposition consisted of readings from 2 Timothy 1; and 2 Timothy 2:1-13.

Verses 1-14

2 Timothy 2:1. *Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.*

Is an exhortation to every one of us, not only to have grace, but to be strong in it. There are many professors who, so long as they are just saved, are content. We are not content with being barely alive spiritually; we do not wish to have our life shivering with cold, but we seek after comfort as well as existence, and we seek to be in health, as well as to be in life. So should it be with the Christian. He should pray, "Lord, make me strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." Oh! that these words might be, not merely an exhortation, but a divine fiat, that as God said, "Let there be light," so he may say to his children, "Be ye strong," and then oh! how soon shall the weakest of us leap into immortal strength!

2 Timothy 2:2. *And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.*

So, then, there is to be a succession of teachers in the church, and these do ill who are always speaking against the ministry of God. Timothy receives his ministry of Paul; he is to commit it to faithful men, and these are to hold it in custody to teach to others also. But there are some who say that all Christians should be teachers. To which we answer, if the whole body were a mouth, where were the ear. The mouth is, after all, but a vacuum; if the whole body be mouth, there will be no body at all. If all are to be shepherds, where are to be the sheep? If all are to sow, where are we to find the ground? Nay, brethren, we must be careful to pray God to continue the ministry in our midst, for without it we miss many blessings. "The same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."

2 Timothy 2:3. *Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.*

If thou desirest delicacy, join not the army. A soldier's calling is not to be linked with softnesses, and if thou desirest ease and comfort, join not the army of Christ, for a Christian's profession and these go not together.

2 Timothy 2:4. *No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.*

So Timothy, as a Christian minister, is to act as the Roman soldier did. It was a law in Rome that no soldier was to plead in court for another as a lawyer, or to act in business for another as a bailiff, or to have anything to do, while a soldier, with either husbandry or merchandise. And so should it be with the men of God who strove to break the Word, and every Christian indeed, though he meddleth with common things, is to take care that he be not entangled by them, not to be caught, as it were, as game is entangled in a net. There is a way, you know, of making the actions of common life subservient to the purposes of divine grace. This is the Christian's business; let him take care that 'he be not entangled with the cares of this life.

2 Timothy 2:5. *And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully.*

There were rules in the Grecian games. When they struck each other, the blow was not to be given except upon a certain part of the body, and if a man fought unlawfully, he could not get the prize. So there are laws, too, for the Christian ministry, and also holy regulations for the great wrestling of Christians.

2 Timothy 2:6. *The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits.*

This is a law. No man has any right to be a partaker at all till he has first tasted of the fruits of the field. Until we have first tasted that the "Lord is gracious," we cannot effectively or properly minister the things of God.

2 Timothy 2:7-9. *Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things. Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel: Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doers; even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound.*

See how the apostle comforts himself. Here he is in prison, but the truth is free. He sits with the chains about his wrists, but the Word of God travels from nation to nation, from continent to continent, like the free spirit that dwelleth in it.

2 Timothy 2:10. *Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.*

Not that the sufferings of Paul had anything meritoriously to do with the salvation of the elect, but that by his earnest strivings and sufferings the

word of the gospel was brought to their hearing; faith then came by hearing, and so they were saved.

2 Timothy 2:11-13. *It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us: If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.*

Glory be to God, the unbelief of man cannot make God break his promises. Christian, all thine unbelief has not made God unfaithful to thee: and sinner, though thou cast out the promise of God as being good for nothing, yet he will not therefore raise the recompense of reward, for Jesus will save others if he save not thee. "He abideth faithful."

2 Timothy 2:14. *Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers.*

There are some Christians who need this exhortation given to them in these days, for they are always striving about words to no profit. Beware of these men, if you would not have your faith staggered.

Verses 15-26

2 Timothy 2:15. *Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*

This is a metaphor taken from the action of the priest at the sacrifice. The priest cut up the bullock, and then laid it in its different pieces according to order. Or, as some think, it is taken from the part of the father at the table, when he carves the meat and gives to every child its portion. Old Master Trapp says that "there are some ministers who are only fit to be Gibeonites and certainly not to be Levites, for they hardly understand the cutting of wood, much less the art of cutting up the sacrifice of God." Brethren, it is well so to handle the word as to be able to give rebuke when rebuke is wanted, exhortation when it is needed, and comfort when consolation is required, for otherwise we do mischief. As it is said in the old fable of the simpleton, that he gave to the ass a bone and to the dog hay, so there are some who give wrong exhortations, not because they are wrong in themselves, but because they are wrong in their application.

2 Timothy 2:16-17. *But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker:*

Now, there are some people who can never be content except they make their religion a sort of wrangling match. They get a-hold of a word in

Scripture, and away they go with it. Here shall be another opportunity for finding fault with all the church of God; here shall be another occasion for railing against all the preachers of the truth. How delighted they are when they can do this! Shun profane and vain babblings. Martin Luther said that there were some in his day so nice and precise about the letter of Scripture that when one of them had delivered an exposition upon the Book of Job, Luther said that by the time the man had got to the tenth chapter Job had been a thousand times more plagued by the expositors than he had ever been by the losses which he suffered upon the dunghill, and doubtless there are many truths of Scripture which are turned to mischief because men will be for ever making them opportunities for strife, and not bonds of love. Brethren, hold the five points of the Calvinistic doctrine, but mind you do not hold them as babbling questions. What you have received of God do not learn in order to fight with it, and to make contention and strife, and to divide the church of God, and rail against the people of the Most high, as some do. But, on the contrary, love one another as brethren, and hold the truth in love, and seek after the unity of the Spirit and the perfect bond of charity. The word of those who raise these questions will eat as doth a cancer, which eats till it gets to the bones, and turns the sound flesh into rottenness. Oh! there are many contentions which have done this mischief in the church of Christ.

2 Timothy 2:17-19. *Of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some. Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his.*

How careful the apostle is lest we should think that any have turned aside who were the Lord's people. He says the faith of some was overthrown, but nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure. Oh brethren, whenever we see apparent apostasy, let us not therefore think that any of God's people have perished. Oh, no; for the Lord knoweth them that are his.

2 Timothy 2:19-21. *And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.*

When Mr. Philpot the martyr, was addressing a young man about to die for Christ, he said to him, “Brother, thou art a vessel in the great house of thy Master, and this day he will scour thee, scour thee hard, but remember thou shalt soon stand upon the shelf, shining bright and glorious.” Well, sometimes pains, and troubles, and tribulations do have this effect of scouring the vessels of God to make them bright for heaven. We must all be purged and scoured from sinful lusts, from all the contamination of the flesh and of the creature, and then we shall be fit for the Master’s use.

2 Timothy 2:22. *Flee also youthful lusts:*

Run away from them; it is no use contending with them. Fight with the devil. Resist the devil, and make him flee, but never fight with the flesh. Run away from that. The only way to avoid the lust of the flesh is to keep out of its way. If you subject yourself to carnal temptations and fleshly lusts, remember it is almost certain that you will be overcome by them. “Flee youthful lusts”, and as you must keep going and have something after which to follow —

2 Timothy 2:22-23. *But follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes.*

It is generally a good thing to avoid all questions that gender strife, except they be upon vital and important matters. For, oh! brethren, it is so important to keep the unity of the Spirit, it is such a blessed thing to preserve love among Christian brethren, and there be some who in order to create disunion, go about the land, and tear, and rend the body of Christ as much as ever they can. Beware of such; seek not their company; come not nigh unto them, lest their canker pollute you also.

2 Timothy 2:24-26. *And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.*

We have here laid down, then, the duty of the Christian minister, and the duty of each Christian, too, and let us seek, in the Holy Spirit’s grace, to carry it out, being at once firm, and gentle, and loving of heart, and yet honest for the truth as it is in Jesus.

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CHAPTER 3

Verses 1-6

[2 Timothy 3:1-7](#). *This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sin, led away with divers lusts, ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.*

This is the photograph of the present age, and I do not doubt that Paul spoke of it when thus the spirit of prophecy was upon him. This is the very motto of the present age, “Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.” It glories in knowing nothing; and its great boast is in its continual progress, “never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

[2 Timothy 3:8-9](#). *Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as their's also was.*

For, when God was with Moses and Aaron, Jannes and Jambres were soon, by the power and wisdom of God, proved to be fools.

[2 Timothy 3:10-12](#). *But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecution I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.*

The world does not love Christ, or his gospel, an atom more today than it did in Paul's day. “The carnal mind is” still “enmity against God.”

[2 Timothy 3:13](#). *But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.*

We may look for even worse days and darker days than we have at present.

[2 Timothy 3:14-17](#). *But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*

[2 Timothy 4:1-6](#). *I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry for I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.*

This exposition consisted of readings from [2 Timothy 1:1-8](#); 2 Timothy 3; and [2 Timothy 4:1-6](#)

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CHAPTER 4

Verses 1-11

[2 Timothy 4:1-2](#). *I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word;*

We are not to use such strong language as this, unless there is some sufficient reason for it. We must not be too hot upon cold matters, but even this is better than to be cold upon matters that require heat. When John Calvin wished to leave Geneva to complete his studies elsewhere, that man of God, Farrell, knowing how necessary it was for the Church that Calvin should remain at Geneva, charged him before God that he dared not go, and hoped that a curse might light upon all his studies, if for the sake of them he should forsake what he held to be his duty. So sometimes, like the Apostle,

we may before the Judge of quick and dead, charge men not to forsake their work and calling.

[2 Timothy 4:2](#). *Be instant in season, out of season;*

The Greek word means, “Stand up to it;” as when a man is determined to finish his work, he stands right up to it. Stand over your work, putting your whole strength into it up-standing over it. “In season, out of season,” because the Gospel is a fruit which is in season all the year round. Sometimes these “out of season” sermons, preached at night or at some unusual time, have been of more service than the regular ordinances of God’s house. Mr. Grimshaw used to ride on horseback from village to village throughout the more desolate parts of Yorkshire, and wherever he met with ten or a dozen people, he would preach on horseback to them, preaching sometimes as many as four and twenty sermons in a week. That was being instant “out of season” as well as “in season.” So should God’s Timothys be, and, indeed, all of us.

[2 Timothy 4:2](#). *Reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.*

That is, do not exhort with mere declamation, but put some argument into your exhortation. Some men think it quite enough to appear to be in earnest, though they have nothing to say. Let such exhorters remember that they are to exhort with doctrine, with solid teaching.

[2 Timothy 4:3](#). *For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;*

When men have not good preachers, they are sure to have a great many of them. Those nations which have the worst priests always have them in swarms. So let us be thankful if God sends us a glowing and zealous minister, for even those who count it an affliction to have a minister, would be more afflicted if they had not a good one. But how evil is it when men get itching ears, when they want some one to be perpetually tickling them, giving them some pretty things, some fine pretentious intellectualism. In all congregations there is good to be done, except in a congregation having itching ears. From this may God deliver us.

[2 Timothy 4:4](#). *And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.*

When a man will not believe the truth, he is sure ere long to be a greedy believer of lies. No persons are so credulous as skeptics. There is no

absurdity so gross but what an unbeliever will very soon be brought to receive it, though he rejects the truth of God.

[2 Timothy 4:5-6](#). *But watch thou in all things, endure affliction, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.*

How complacently he talks about it! It is only a departure, though Caesar's sword might smite his head from his body. And truly death to the believer is no frightful thing. "Go up," said God to Moses, and the prophet went up, and God took away his soul to him, and he was blessed. And so, "Come up," saith God to the Christian, and the Christian goeth up, first to his chamber, and then from his chamber to Paradise.

[2 Timothy 4:7-8](#). *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.*

This seems, then, to be a distinguishing mark of a true child of God, he loves the appearing of Christ. Now there are some professors who never think of the Second Advent at all. It never gives them the slightest joy to believe that —

"Jesus the king will come,
To take his people up To their eternal home."

Truly they are mistaken and are surely wrong, for was not this the very comfort that Christ gave to his disciples: "If I go away, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also." I trust, dear friends, we are among those "who love his appearing," and if we are, it is a sure prophecy that we shall have a crown of righteousness.

[2 Timothy 4:9-10](#). *Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me: for Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica;*

Demas was once almost a martyr, he was upon the very edge of suffering, but now you see he goeth back to the world again; he is not content to lie in the dungeon and rot with Paul, but will rather seek his own ease. Alas! Demas, how hast thou dishonoured thyself for ever, for every man who reads this passage as he passes by, flings another stone at the heap which is the memorial of one of cowardly spirit who fled from Paul in danger.

[2 Timothy 4:10](#). *Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia.*

It is likely that Paul had sent Crescens and Titus away upon a mission but now, from certain intimations, the Apostle is sure that his time of death is coming on, and so indeed it was, for his head was struck off by Nero's orders a few weeks after the writing of this Epistle, and now he somewhat laments that he had sent them away. And would not you and I want the consolation of kind faces round about us, and the sweet music of loving voices in our ears, if we were about to be offered up?

[2 Timothy 4:11](#). *Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry.*

That is one of the prettiest verses in the Bible, because you will remember that the Apostle Paul quarreled with Barnabas about this very Mark, because John Mark would not go into Bithynia to preach the Word, but left Paul and Barnabas, therefore Paul would not have Mark with him any more, because he had turned in the day of trouble. But now Paul is about to die, and he wishes to be perfectly at peace with everyone. He has quite forgiven poor John Mark himself for his former weakness; he sees grace in him, and so he is afraid lest John Mark should be under some apprehensions of the Apostle's anger, and so he puts in this very kind passage, without seeming to have any reference at all to the past, but he gives him this great praise — “for he is profitable to me for the ministry.”

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CHAPTER FIFTY-FIVE

Titus

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CHAPTER 1

Verses 1-16

While reading this chapter, we must understand that Titus was sent to Crete, to superintend the preaching of the gospel throughout that island. Crete was at that time inhabited by a people who were only partially civilized, and sunk in the very worst of vices. Paul, therefore, tells Titus to speak to them about things which would hardly be mentioned to Christians nowadays.

[Titus 1:1-4](#). *Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth*

which is after godliness; in hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began; but hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour; to Titus, mine own son after the common faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour.

You have probably noticed that Paul's benediction, when he is writing to a minister, is always, "Grace, mercy, and peace." Writing to churches, his usual formula is, "Grace be to you, and peace;" but God's servants, called to the work of the ministry, need very special "mercy"-as if the higher the office, the greater the liability to sin, and therefore, in his Pastoral Epistles, whether he is addressing Titus or Timothy, Paul wishes for his sons in the faith, "Grace, mercy, and peace." Oh, what a mercy it will be for any of us ministers if, at the last, we are clear of the blood of all men! If, having been called to preach the gospel, we shall do it so faithfully as to be acquitted and even rewarded by our Lord and Master, it will be mercy upon mercy. This "charge" of the beloved Pastor has even more force and pathos now that he has gone "away" to heaven.

[Titus 1:5-6](#). *For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee: if any be blameless, the husband of one wife,*

For there were many converts there who had two or three wives. Whatever position they might be permitted to occupy in the church, they could not become officers, they must keep in the rear rank.

[Titus 1:6-12](#). *Having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; but a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake. One of themselves, even a prophet of their own,*

According to Jerome, this was Epimenides, a prophet-poet, who lived in Crete in the sixth century before Christ.

[Titus 1:12](#). *Said, The Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies.*

They were a degraded people; and hence, those who would teach them had a most difficult task, and needed great grace. Paul exhorts Titus that only specially fit men, men whose example would have influence, and whose characters would have weight, should be allowed to be elders in such churches.

[Titus 1:13-16](#). *This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith; not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth. Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled. They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.*

This was bad soil; but it had to be ploughed, and to be sown, and with an Almighty God at the back of the gospel plougher and sower, a fruitful harvest came even in Crete. We need not be afraid of the adaptation of the gospel to the lowest of the low. If there be any quarter of the town where the people are more sunken in vice than anywhere else, there the gospel is to be carried with more prayer and more faith than anywhere else. Depend upon it, God can bless his Word anywhere, among Cretans, or among any other sort of degraded people.

This exposition consisted of readings from Titus 1. and Titus 2.

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CHAPTER 2

Verses 1-15

[Titus 2:1](#). *But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine:*

There are certain things which are suitable to go with sound doctrine; they are meet and fit and appropriate thereto.

[Titus 2:2](#). *That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience.*

Among the heathen, old men often gave themselves up to drunkenness and gluttony; so now, this is the teaching that is to be given to aged Christian men. They need faith, love, and patience, as well as the virtues of sobriety, gravity, and temperance. The infirmities of old age often create

petulance, so the grace of God is to make the venerable Christian to be full of faith, love, and patience.

[Titus 2:3](#). *The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things;*

Old women also among the heathen were often addicted to the taking of much wine, so here they are cautioned against it by the Spirit of God. They are also tempted to spread slanderous reports against people: having little to do in their old age, they are apt to do that little by way of mischief; so they are warned that they are not to be “false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things.” And how beautifully can an aged Christian woman, by her kindly example, be a teacher of good things! There is no more charming sight under heaven, I think, than that of an elderly Christian lady, whose words and whose whole life are such as becometh the gospel of Christ.

[Titus 2:4-5](#). *That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.*

There were some women who supposed that, the moment they became Christians, they were to run about everywhere. “No,” says the apostle, “let them keep at home.” There is no gain to the Christian Church when the love, and the industry, and the zeal, which ought to make a happy home, are squandered upon something else. The young women of Crete appear to have been such that they needed to be taught “to love their husbands.” That expression does not occur elsewhere in Scripture. Christian women do not need to be told to love their husbands; but these Cretans, just brought out of the slough of sin, had to be taught even this lesson. Oh, what a blessing is love in the marriage relationship, and what a gracious influence love has upon children! How are they to be brought up aright except the whole house be perfumed with love?

[Titus 2:6](#). *Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded.*

That exhortation is as necessary in London as it was in Crete. Young men often know a great deal, or think they do; and they are very apt to be intoxicated with the idea of knowing so much, and being able to do so much, so that the exhortation to them is to “be sober minded.”

[Titus 2:7-9](#). *In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you. Exhort servants--*

Or, as it might and should be rendered, “bond-slaves”

[Titus 2:9-10](#). *To be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again; not purloining,*

Not picking and stealing, which very naturally was the common habit of slaves; and who wonders at it in their wretched condition?

[Titus 2:10](#). *But shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.*

Is not that a wonderful passage? Here is a slave able to be an ornament to the gospel of Christ! This blessed gospel is not sent to kings and princes only; when Paul preached it, the great mass of the population were in cruel bondage, treated like dogs, or even worse; yet the gospel had a message even for them, it told them that they might, by a godly character, adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour.

[Titus 2:11-15](#). *For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.*

These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.

This exposition consisted of readings from Titus 1. and Titus 2.

Verses 6-15

[Titus 2:6](#). *Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded.*

They are full of spirits, they are very sanguine, they are apt to be carried away with novelties; exhort them to have that which is thought to be a virtue of age, namely, sobriety. Let them be old when they are young that they may be young when they are old.

[Titus 2:7](#). *In all things skewing thyself a pattern of good works:*

Titus was himself a young man; he must, therefore, be a pattern to young men; and as a pastor or evangelist he must be a pattern to all sorts of men.

[Titus 2:7-8](#). *in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.*

It is a pity when truth suffers at the hand of its own advocate; and perhaps the very worst wounds that truth has received have been in the house of its friends. You must be careful, therefore, “that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.”

[Titus 2:9](#). *Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters,*

They were mostly slaves in those days. A sad condition of society was that in which service meant slavery; yet even slaves were “to be obedient unto their own masters.”

[Titus 2:9-10](#). *And to please them well in all things; not answering again; not purloining,*

Not practicing petty thefts, as, alas! some servants do even now,--

[Titus 2:10](#). *But shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.*

The life of the Christian, even if he be a servant, is to be an ornament of Christianity. Christ does not look for the ornament of his religion to the riches or the talents of his followers, but to their holy lives “that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.”

[Titus 2:11-12](#). *For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;*

Christians are not to run out of the world, as monks and hermits sought to do, but to live “in this present world.” Yet, while in the world, we are to be godly, that is, full of God. That kind of life which is without God is not for Christians. Those worldly desires, the pride and ambition, which are common to worldly men, are not to have power over us; we are to deny them, and to live soberly. This word relates not only to eating and drinking, but to the general sobriety of a man’s mind: “Denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.”

[Titus 2:13-14](#). *Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.*

See what Christ died for, see what Christ lives for, see what we are to live for, that we should not only be a people purified, but purified unto Himself. We are not only to have good works, but we are to be zealous of them; we are to burn with zeal for them, for zeal is a kind of fire, it is to burn and blaze in us until we warm and enlighten others also.

[Titus 2:15](#). *These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.*

As I have already reminded you, Titus was a young man; and people are apt to despise the pastoral office when it is held by a young man. Yet they ought always to respect it, whether it be held by a young man or an old man. God knows best who is most fitted for the work of the ministry: and those of us who are getting old must never look with any kind of scorn or contempt upon those who are commencing their service, for we, too, were young once. You cannot measure a man's grace by the length of his beard, nor by the number of his years.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Titus 2:6-15](#), and Titus 3.

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CHAPTER 3

Verses 1-15

[Titus 3:1](#). *Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work,*

You see, they were a rough, wild, rebellious people in Crete, and Christianity comes to civilize, to sober, to sanctify, to save.

[Titus 3:2](#). *To speak evil of no man,*

Oh, how necessary is this exhortation even to this day!

[Titus 3:2](#). *To be no brawler, but gentle, shewing all meekness, unto all men.*

Meekness and gentleness are two of the ornaments of our faith. I would that some professed Christians would understand that unholy contentiousness is not after the mind of Christ, it is not according to that gracious command, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart and ye shall find rest unto your souls." No, the Christian must be willing to suffer wrongfully, and to bear it in patience; he is never to be one who renders evil for evil, or railing for railing.

[Titus 3:3](#). *For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish,*

Well, then, if other people are foolish, we ought to bear with them.

[Titus 3:4](#). *Disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.*

That is what we were once; and if the grace of God has made a change in us, we must not boast, we must not censure others, we must not set up as self-righteous judges of others. Oh, no! our action must be the very reverse of all this.

[Titus 3:4-7](#). *But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*

This is a very practical Epistle. See how closely Paul keeps to the doctrines of grace. He is never like Mr. Legality, he never teaches that we are to be saved by works; but, being saved by the grace of God alone, and being made heirs according to the hope of eternal life, we are then, out of gratitude to God, to abound in everything that is good, and holy, and kind, and after the mind of Christ.

[Titus 3:8-9](#). *This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men. But avoid foolish questions,*

There are always plenty of thorn about, and there are certain professors who spend half their lives in fighting about nothing at all. There is no more in their contention than the difference between Tweedledum and Tweedledee; but they will divide a church over it, they will go through the world as if they had found out a great secret, it really is not of any consequence whatever, but having made the discovery, they judge everybody by their new-found fad, and so spread a spirit that is contrary to the Spirit of Christ.

[Titus 3:9-10](#). *And genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain. A man that is an heretic-*

One who really turns aside from the truth, and sets up something contrary to the Word of God; what is to be done with him? "Burn him,"

says the Church of Rome. “Fine him, put him in prison,” say other churches; but the inspired apostle says only this,-

[Titus 3:10](#). *After the first and second admonition reject;*

Just exclude him from the church, that is all. Leave him his utmost liberty to go where he likes, believe what he likes, and do what he likes; but, at the same time, you as Christian people must disown him, that is all you ought to do, except to pray and labour for his restoration.

[Titus 3:11-14](#). *Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself. When I shall send Artemas unto thee, or Tychicus, be diligent to come unto me to Nicopolis: for I have determined there to winter. Bring Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey diligently, that nothing be wanting unto them. And let ours also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful.*

How the apostle comes back to that point! Let all our people, our friends, our brethren, our kinsfolk, “let ours also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful.”

[Titus 3:15](#). *All that are with me salute thee. Greet them that love us in the faith. Grace be with you all.*

Amen.

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CHAPTER FIFTY-SIX

Philemon

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CHAPTER 1

Verse 1

[Philemon 1:1](#). *Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, —*

This is one of Paul's private letters, though it has the stamp of inspiration upon it. It was not written concerning church business, nor to teach some great doctrinal truth, but there was a runaway slave who had come to Rome, and who had been converted under Paul's ministry, and Paul was sending him back to his master; and this was the letter which he was to take with him, to make some sort of apology for him, and to ask his master to receive him with kindness, and to forgive his fault. Every word of this Epistle is very wisely put. Paul begins by calling himself "a prisoner of Jesus Christ." Who would not grant him his desire when he was wearing a

chain for Christ's sake? If a letter were to come to you from some beloved minister, whom you knew to be lying in a dungeon and likely soon to die, you would be greatly touched if you noticed the traces of the rust of his fetters on the letter. "Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ," —

[Philemon 1:1-2](#). *And Timothy our brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellowlabourer, and to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellowsoldier, and to the church in thy house:*

He joins Timothy with himself, to give double weight to the message. Probably Timothy was well known to Philemon, and much respected by him, so he puts Timothy's name that there might be two to plead with him. Then, notice the loving titles with which Paul addresses Philemon: "our dearly beloved, and fellow labourer." Probably the person whom Paul called "beloved Apphia" was Philemon's wife, so he writes to her also. Perhaps the wife was the more tender-hearted of the two, and might put in a good word for Onesimus, and her husband would all the more readily grant Paul's request. He also mentions Archippus, who was either the pastor of the church at Colosse, or an evangelist who stayed occasionally at the house of Philemon. So he mentions him with all the rest of the household who met there for worship, and so made up the church in the house.

[Philemon 1:3-7](#). *Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers, hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints; that the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus. For we have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother.*

Paul recalls how much Philemon had done in the comforting of persecuted and poor saints. And when you are about to ask a favor of anyone, it is well to show your gratitude for what you or others have already received from him.

[Philemon 1:8-9](#). *Therefore, though I might be much bold in Christ to enjoin thee that which is convenient, yet for love's sake I rather beseech thee, being such an one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ.*

He says in effect, "I am an apostle, and I am your spiritual father, so I might have spoken with authority to you, and have said, 'It is your duty to do this;' but I am not going to do anything of the kind. I am going to plead

with you, and beseech it of you as a kindness and a favor. Pay a loving tribute to my old age; and beside that, I am a prisoner shut up in the dungeon for Christ's sake; hear the clanking of my chains, and grant my request for love's sake."

[Philemon 1:10](#). *I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds:*

"He came to hear me preach in the prison. He has been listening to me while I am still a captive, and he has been given to me, as another son in the gospel, to be a comfort to me in my bonds. I beseech you for him."

[Philemon 1:11-12](#). *Which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me: whom I have sent again:*

"He was thy slave, and therefore I have sent him back to thee."

[Philemon 1:12](#). *Thou therefore receive him, that is, mine own bowels:*

"Look upon him as though he were my very heart, and receive him as you would receive me if I could go to you."

[Philemon 1:13-14](#). *Whom I would have retained with me, that in thy stead he might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the gospel: but without thy mind would I do nothing; that thy benefit should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly.*

"I would have kept him," says Paul, "for I need someone to be my companion, to comfort me in my distress; but I would not do it without asking your leave, lest I should seem to take advantage of you. Though I know that you would willingly consent to it, yet, nevertheless, that it might be perfectly voluntary on your part, I have sent him back to you, that you may do as you will with him."

[Philemon 1:15-17](#). *For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever; not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord? If thou count me therefore a partner,--*

"If thou hast true fellowship and communion with me," —

[Philemon 1:17](#). *Receive him as myself.*

How beautifully this is put all through! It very much reminds me of our Lord Jesus Christ, who seems to say to the Divine Father, "This poor child is in fellowship with me. Receive him, therefore, as myself;" and this is just what God does in the case of repenting and believing sinners; he receives them just as if he could see Christ in them.

[Philemon 1:18](#). *If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account;*

How generously this is put by this poor prisoner at Rome, and how gloriously, in this, he is like our Master, who stands as Surety for us!

[Philemon 1:19](#). *I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it: albeit I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me even thine own self besides.*

Paul had been the means of Philemon's conversion, so he was immeasurably in debt to the apostle; but Paul only gently reminds him of the fact as a reason why he should deal kindly with Onesimus for his sake.

[Philemon 1:20](#). *Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord: refresh my bowels in the Lord.*

“You have refreshed others, then, surely, you will not let me be without refreshment now You have been very kind to all sorts of saints; then you cannot be unkind to the man who is your own spiritual father.”

[Philemon 1:21](#). *Having confidence in thy obedience I wrote unto thee, knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say.*

This is delicately yet forcibly put, and we feel certain that Philemon must have done as Paul wished, even though we have no record of the fact.

[Philemon 1:22-25](#). *But withal prepare me also a lodging: for I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you. There salute thee Epaphras, my fellowprisoner in Christ Jesus; Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellowlabourers. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.*

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CHAPTER FIFTY-SEVEN

Hebrews

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CHAPTER 1

Verses 1-14

Hebrews 1. In this chapter our Saviour's glorious person is very plainly set before us, and it is made the ground of our faith, and a reason why we should give the more earnest heed to his words, lest at any time we should let them slip.

[Hebrews 1:1-2](#). *God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son,*

The best last is ever God's rule. "Thou hast kept the best wine until now." Prophets are a very blessed means of communication, but how much more sure, how much more condescending is it for God to speak to us by his Son!

[Hebrews 1:2-3](#). *Whom he hath appointed heir of all thing, by whom also he made the worlds; who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;*

You see, dear friends, how glorious was his original — the "express image" of his Father's person. How lowly did he become to purge away our sins and that by himself, too, using his own body to be the means, by his sufferings, of taking away our guilt. Not by proxy did he serve us, but by himself. Oh, this is wondrous love! And then see the glory which followed after the shame. He has now ascended up on high, and sits down at the right hand of God's great Majesty. Follow him, believer, follow him with the eye of thy faith; let thy soul lovingly track him in his upward march, and as thou seest him, say — "He is my Lord and my God," and know that all that he did and all that he is, he is, and he did for thee.

[Hebrews 1:4-5](#). *Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?*

They are servants, but they are not sons, they are created, but they are not begotten. You see what he says to the Son — "I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son.

[Hebrews 1:6-8](#). *And again, when he bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him. And of the*

angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.

So you perceive that Christ is no created angel. He is sometimes compared to an angel. He is sometimes called the angel of the covenant, but he is not a created angel. He is higher in nature, higher in rank, higher in intellect, and higher in power than they. He is nothing less than very God of very God. The very man who suffered on Calvary.

“This is the man, the exalted man,
Whom we unseen adore.”

[Hebrews 1:9](#). *Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.*

As man Christ claims all men as his fellows, but as God he counts it no robbery to be thought equal to God. As man he is most truly man, and only superior to man by reason of the purity of his birth and the perfection of his nature, and the exaltation of his manhood by God; as God he is nothing less than God, though he took upon himself the nature of men.

[Hebrews 1:10-12](#). *And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: they shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.*

Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today, and for ever.

[Hebrews 1:13-14](#). *But to which of the angels, said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool? Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?*

This exposition consisted of readings from [John 10:1-30](#) and [Hebrews 1:1-14](#).

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CHAPTER 2

Verses 1-15

[Hebrews 2:1](#). *Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.*

We have heard them; do not let us forget them. Let them not be like the driftwood which goes floating down the stream. Let us make a desperate effort to retain them in our memories; and, above all, to ponder them in our hearts.

[Hebrews 2:2-3](#). *For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; —*

They could not trifle with the angels' message without receiving just punishment from God. Much less, then, can we trifle with Christ's gospel. We have not an angelic saviour; but God himself, in the person of his Son, has deigned to be the Mediator of the new covenant. Therefore, let us see to it that we do not trifle with these things. You see, dear friends, that we need not be great open sinners in order to perish; it is merely a matter of neglect. See how it is put here: "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" You need not go to the trouble of despising it, or resisting it, or opposing it; you can be lost readily enough simply by neglecting it. In fact, the great mass of those who perish are those who neglect the great salvation, —

[Hebrews 2:3](#). *Which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him;*

The apostles and the other followers of our Lord constantly bore witness to his miracles and his resurrection.

[Hebrews 2:4](#). *God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?*

Those who doubt the truth of the gospel, or who say they do, are often found believing historical statements that are not half as well proved. A man sits down, and reads the book of the Gallic wars, and he believes that Julius Caesar wrote it; yet there is not a half or a tenth as much evidence to prove that he did write it as there is to prove that our Lord Jesus lived, and died, and rose again from the dead. The witness to the truth of these great matters of fact has been borne by God himself with signs, and wonders, and miracles. Honest and true men, apostles and others, have witnessed to them; and they have also been certified by Incarnate Deity, even by the Lord who

deigned to speak to us by his Spirit. We cannot, therefore, trifle with this gospel without incurring most serious guilt.

[Hebrews 2:5](#). *For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak.*

We are the preachers of it, — not the angels; and the great Author and Finisher of our faith is the Man Christ Jesus, — not an angel. We have not now the ministry of angels, but the ministry of men, by whom the Lord of the angels sends his messages to their fellows.

[Hebrews 2:6-8](#). *But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet.*

This was the original status of man. God made him to be his vicegerent on earth; and he would still hold that position were it not that, since he has rebelled against his own Sovereign, even the beasts of the field take liberty to be rebellious against him. Man is not now in his original estate, and therefore he rules not now; and we see many men who are very far from being royal beings, for they are mean and groveling. Yet the glory of man is not all lost, as we shall see.

[Hebrews 2:8-9](#). *For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus,—*

Here is the representative Man who is supreme over all: “We see Jesus,”

[Hebrews 2:9](#). *Who was made a little lower than the angels for suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.*

Oh, how glorious it is to realize our position in Christ, and to see how he has lifted us up, not merely to the place from which the first Adam fell, but he has made us stand so securely there that we shall not again descend around the ruins of the Fall! Glory be to his holy name!

[Hebrews 2:10-11](#). *For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren.—*

The Christ and the Christian are one, — the Man Christ Jesus and the men whom he redeemed are one. He has so become partaker of our nature that now we are one family, and he is not ashamed to call us brothers. Am I addressing any who are ashamed of Christ, or who are ashamed of God's poor people, and who would not like to be known to be members of a poor church? Ah! how you ought to despise yourselves for having any such pride in your hearts, for Christ is not ashamed to call his people brethren! Oh, what wondrous condescension! He has done this many times in the Psalms, where he speaks of his brethren;

[Hebrews 2:12](#). *Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will sing praise unto thee.*

That is a quotation from the 22nd Psalm.

[Hebrews 2:13](#). *And again, I will put my trust in him.*

Thus entering into the very faith of his people.

[Hebrews 2:13-14](#). *And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me. Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood,*

As you know to your cost, for perhaps you have aches and pains about you at this very moment. Verily, you are “partakers of flesh and blood.” Perhaps you are suffering from despondency and depression of spirit. If so, that reminds you that, however much you may, in spirit, sometimes soar to heaven, yet you are still “partakers of flesh and blood.”

[Hebrews 2:14-15](#). *He also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.*

He so took upon himself flesh and blood as to die in our nature, that thus he might slay death, and might set us free from all fear of death. Do you not see that, if the representative Man, Christ Jesus, died, he also rose again, and that so also will all who are in him rise, too? If you are in him, you shall rise again. Therefore, fear not to lie down in your last sleep, for the trumpet shall awaken you, and your bodies shall be moulded afresh like unto his glorious body, and your soul and body together shall dwell in infinite bliss for ever. “Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”

Verses 1-18

[Hebrews 2:1](#). *Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.*

It is well to give heed to what you are now hearing, but it is also important to give heed to what you have heard. Oh, how much have we heard, but have forgotten! How much have we heard, which we still remember, but do not practice! Let us therefore listen to the words of the apostle here: “We ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip;” — as it were, slipping through our fingers, and flowing down the stream of time to be carried away into the ocean of oblivion.

[Hebrews 2:2](#). *For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward;*

See, brethren, the punishment for disobeying the word spoken by angels was death; what, then, must be the penalty of neglecting the great salvation wrought by the Divine Redeemer himself? He who does not give earnest heed to the gospel treats with disdain the Lord Jesus Christ, and he will have to answer for that sin when the King shall sit upon the throne of judgment. Trifle not, therefore, with that salvation which cost Christ so much, and which he himself brings to you with bleeding hands. And, oh! if you have hitherto trifled with it, and let it slip, may you now, be brought to a better mind, lest haply, despising Christ, the “just recompence of reward” should come upon you. And what will that be? I know of no punishment that can be too severe for the man who treats with contempt the Son of God, and tramples on his blood; and every individual who hears the gospel, and yet does not receive Christ as his Saviour, is committing that atrocious crime.

[Hebrews 2:3](#). *How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation;*

If we neglect that salvation, is there any other way by which we can be rescued from destruction? Is there any other door of escape if we pass that one by? No, there is none.

[Hebrews 2:3-4](#). *Which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?*

This gospel of ours is stamped with the seal of God; he has set his mark upon it, to attest its genuineness and authority. The miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit were the seal that the gospel was no invention of man, but that it was indeed the message of God. Gifts of healing, gifts of tongues, gifts of

miracles of divers kinds, were God's solemn declaration to man, "This is the gospel; this is my gospel which I send to you; therefore, refuse it not."

[Hebrews 2:5](#). *For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak.*

We have no angelic preachers; we sometimes speak of "the seraphic doctor," but no seraph ever was a preacher of the gospel of the grace of God; that honour has been reserved for a lower order of beings.

[Hebrews 2:6](#). *But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him?*

God speaks to men by men. He has made them to be the choice and chosen instruments of his wondrous works of grace upon earth. Oh, what a solemn thing it is to be a preacher of the everlasting gospel! It is an office so high that an angel might covet it, but one that is so responsible that even an angel might tremble to undertake it. Brethren, pray for us who preach, not merely to a few, but to many of our fellow-creatures, that we may be the means, in the hand of God, of blessing to our hearers.

[Hebrews 2:7-8](#). *Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet.*

It was so with Adam in his measure. Before he fell, through his disobedience, all the animals which God had made were inferior to him, and owned him as their lord and master. It is infinitely more so in that second Adam who has restored to humanity its lost dignity, and, in his own person, has elevated man again to the head of creation: "Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet."

[Hebrews 2:8](#). *For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him.*

Man does not yet rule the world. Wild beasts defy him. Storms vanquish him. There are a thousand things not at present submissive to his control.

[Hebrews 2:9](#). *But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.*

Thus lifting man back into the place where he first stood so far as this matter of dominion is concerned.

[Hebrews 2:10](#). *For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of*

their salvation perfect through sufferings.

Is it not wonderful that the Christ, who is the head over all things, could not be perfected for this work of ruling, or for the work of saving, except by sufferings? He stooped to conquer. Not because there was any sin in him, but that he might be a sympathetic Ruler over his people, he must experience sufferings like those of his subjects; and that he might be a mighty Saviour, he must be himself compassed with infirmity, that he might “have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way.” Brothers and sisters, do you expect to be made perfect without sufferings? It will never be so with you.

The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown.

We shall never be fit for the Heavenly Canaan unless we first pass through the wilderness. There are certain things about us which require this, so thus it must be.

[Hebrews 2:11](#). *For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one:*

One family; one by nature with Christ our glorious Head.

[Hebrews 2:11](#). *For which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren,*

—
Oh, this blessed condescension of Christ! We are often ashamed of ourselves; alas! we are sometimes so base as to be ashamed of him; but he is never ashamed to call us brethren.

[Hebrews 2:12](#). *Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.*

Christ, the center of the celestial chairs, is also the center of all the bands of true singers that are yet here below.

[Hebrews 2:13](#). *And again, I will put my trust in him.*

This is our Lord Jesus Christ putting his trust in the Father, overcoming by faith, even as we do. Oh, what a marvellous oneness there is here between Christ and his people! Well might the apostle say that “both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one.”

[Hebrews 2:13-14](#). *And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me. Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same;*

We know what it is to be partakers of flesh and blood; we often wish that we did not. It is the flesh that drags us down; it is the flesh that brings

us a thousand sorrows. I have a converted soul, but an unconverted body. Christ has healed my soul, but he has left my body still to a large extent in bondage, and therefore it has still to suffer; but the Lord will redeem even that. The redemption of the body is the adoption, and that is to come at the day of the resurrection. But think of Christ, who was a partaker of the Eternal Godhead, condescending to make himself a partaker of flesh and blood; — the Godhead linked with materialism; the Infinite, an infant; the Eternal prepared to die, and actually dying! Oh, wondrous mystery, this union of Deity with humanity in the person of Christ Jesus our Lord! Why did he become a partaker of flesh and blood, and die upon the cross?

Listen:

[Hebrews 2:14](#). *That through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;*

That, through dying, he might overthrow Satan's power for all who trust him.

[Hebrews 2:15-18](#). *And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to Make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.*

Glory be to his holy name for ever and ever! Amen.

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CHAPTER 3

Verse 1

[Hebrews 3:1](#). *Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;*

“Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling.” What wonderful titles! “Holy brethren,” made brethren in holiness and made holy in our brotherhood, -- “partakers of the heavenly calling” — called of God from among the worlds. Our occupation and our calling henceforth is to serve the Lord. Well, if you be holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly

calling, “Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.” Think much of Him. Remember who it is you follow, with whom you are brethren. If you think little of your Leader you will live but poor lives. Consider him, often think of him, try to copy him. With such a Leader what manner of people ought we to be?

[Hebrews 3:2-3](#). *Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house. For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house.*

Moses was but a part of the house after all, a prominent stone in the building, but Christ is the builder, builder of the house, foundation, topstone of it. Think then much of him. Get an high idea of him as faithful unto God in everything. Moses kept the law and was a good example to Israel save in some point of weakness, but Christ perfectly carried out his Father’s commission, and he is worthy of more honour than Moses.

[Hebrews 3:4-6](#). *For every house is builded by some man but he that built all things is God. And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; but Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.*

“But Christ as a Son” — far higher degree -- “Christ as a son over his own house,” of which he is the heir, of which he is even now the sole proprietor -- “whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.” None are truly Christ’s but those who persevere in grace. Men may be nominally Christ’s, but they are not Christ’s house unless they hold fast to the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end. Temporary Christians are not really Christians.

[Hebrews 3:7-8](#). *Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness:*

You are his house, give him rest, do not provoke him. If you belong to him be holy, do not grieve him. If you are his house be not defiled: surely he should dwell in a holy place.

[Hebrews 3:9](#). *When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years.*

Oh, children of God, you have some of you been more than forty years now in the Lord’s service: do not vex him. You have been long called out of

Egypt and brought into the separate place in this wilderness world: be careful to be fit for the Divine indwelling.

[Hebrews 3:10-11](#). *Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart; and they have not known my ways. So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.)*

God grant that none of this congregation may be of that mind, who having named the name of Christ and being known as his people, continue to grieve him one way and another, to put him to the test by their doubts to make him angry by their sins. No, God grant we may be of another sort lest he should lift his hand and swear, “They shall not enter into my rest.”

[Hebrews 3:12](#). *Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.*

Here the charge is not to the outside world but to those whom he had called “holy brethren.” He drops the word “holy” for there are some brethren so called who would not deserve that name, and to them he speaks very pointedly, “Take heed, take heed, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief.” And how will that be shown? By wandering off, one way or another, away from the living God. If your God is not a living God to you in whom you live and move and have your being, if he does not come into your daily life, but if your religion is a dead and formal thing, then you will soon depart.

[Hebrews 3:13-14](#). *But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end;*

Not otherwise. Again I say they who do not hold on and hold out are not really partakers of Christ, but we are made partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end. Those that fly to this doctrine and that, unsettled spirits, wandering stars, mere meteors of the night, these are not Christ’s, but we must hold the beginning of our faith steadfast unto the end.

[Hebrews 3:15](#). *While it is said, today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.*

Twice over we are warned of this, to avoid hardness of heart. God save us from ossification of heart, petrification of heart, till we get a heart of love or a heart of stone-may God save us from this.

[Hebrews 3:16](#). *For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses.*

There were two; it was a slender remnant that were faithful.

[Hebrews 3:17](#). *But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?*

God speaks very lovingly of the bodies of his saints but see how he speaks of the bodies of apostates, “whose carcasses” as if they were no better than so many brute beasts, “whose carcasses fell in the wilderness.”

[Hebrews 3:18](#). *And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?*

Sinning and not believing seem to go together. The 17th verse asks the same question as the 18th, but the answer is different. “With them that had sinned” says the 17th verse, “to them that believed not” says the 18th verse. Want of faith brings want of holiness, and when we abide in the faith we abide in obedience.

[Hebrews 3:19](#). *So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.*

4:1. *Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.*

I left out the “us” because that is inserted by the translators and should not be there. The promise is left to somebody, it does not say to us -- “a promise being left of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.” Not come short of it but even seem to do so. God keep us from the very shadow of sin, from the very appearance of evil. “For unto us was the gospel preached as well as unto them.” In the old time that gospel which was preached to them was preached to us -- “but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.” God send us this holy mixture of the hearing and the believing, to our hour’s salvation, to his glory. Amen.

Verses 1-16

[Hebrews 3:1](#). *Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus: —*

Oh, that he had more consideration at our hands! Consider him; you cannot know all his excellence, all his value to you, except he is the subject of your constant meditation. Consider him; think of his nature, his offices,

his work, his promises, his relation to you: “Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;” —

[Hebrews 3:2](#). *Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house.*

See how our Lord Jesus Christ condescended to be appointed of the Father. In coming as a Mediator, taking upon himself our humanity, he “made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant,” and being found in fashion as a servant, we find that he was faithful; to every jot and tittle, he carried out his charge.

[Hebrews 3:3](#). *For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house.*

And Moses was but one stone in the house. Though in a certain sense he was a servant in it, yet in another, and, for him, a happier sense, he was only a stone in the house which the Lord Jesus Christ had builded. Let us think of our Lord as the Architect and Builder of his own Church, and let our hearts count him worthy of more glory than Moses; let us give him glory in the highest. However highly a Jew may think of Moses, — and he ought to think highly of him, and so ought we, — yet infinitely higher than Moses must ever rise the incarnate Son of God.

[Hebrews 3:4](#). *For every house is builded by some; —*

By someone or other; —

[Hebrews 3:4](#). *But he that built all things is God.*

And Christ is God; and he is the Builder of all things in the spiritual realm, — ay, and in the natural kingdom, too, for “without him was not anything made that was made.” So he is to have eternal honour and glory as the one great Master-builder.

[Hebrews 3:5-6](#). *And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; but Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.*

You see, then, that the apostle had first made a distinction between Christ and Moses on the ground of, the Builder being greater than the house he builds; now, in the second place, he shows Christ’s superiority to Moses on the ground that a son in his own house is greater than a servant in the house of his master. How sweetly he introduces the truth that we are the house of Christ! Do we realize that the Lord Jesus Christ dwells in the

midst of us? How clean we ought to be, how holy, how heavenly! How we should seek to rise above earth, and keep ourselves reserved for the Crucified! In this house, no rival should be permitted ever to dwell; but the great Lord should have every chamber of it entirely to himself. Oh, that he may take his rest within our hearts as his holy habitation; and may there be nothing in our church life that shall grieve the Son of God, and cause him even for a moment to be withdrawn from us: “whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.” Perseverance — final perseverance — is the test of election. He whom God has chosen holds on and holds out even to the end, while temporary professors make only a fair show in the flesh, but, by-and-by, their faith vanishes away.

[Hebrews 3:7](#). *Wherefore* —

Now comes a long parenthesis: —

[Hebrews 3:7-11](#). *(As the Holy Ghost saith, Today if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart; and they have not known my ways. So I swore in my wrath, They shalt not enter into my rest.)*

Oh, that none of us, as professors of the faith of Christ, may be like Israel in the wilderness! I fear there is too much likeness; God grant that it may be carried no further! May we hear the voice of God, as they did not hear it, for their ears were dull of hearing! May we never harden our hear as they did, for they kicked against the command of God, and rebelled against the thunders of Sinai! May God grant that we may never tempt him, as they did, when they were continually proposing to God to do other than he willed to do, — something for their gratification which would not have been right, and which therefore he did not do! Oh, that we might never grieve him as they did, for they grieved him forty years! He bore with them, and yet they bored him. He forgave and overlooked their errors only to be provoked by the repetition of them, for they would not know what God made very plain. His works were such that, the wayfaring men might have read them; but they did not know God’s ways, and at last he banished them from all participation in His rest. Their carcasses fell in the wilderness, and they entered not into the land of promise. “Wherefore” —

[Hebrews 3:12-13](#). *Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.*

Watch over each other as well as over yourselves. Take heed lest sin hardens you before you are aware of it; even while you fancy that you have wiped it out by repentance, petrification will remain upon your heart “through the deceitfulness of sin.”

[Hebrews 3:14-16](#). *For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end; while it is said, Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses.*

Not all, for there were two faithful ones. See how the Spirit of God gathers up the fragments that remain. If there are but two faithful ones out of two million, he knows it, and he records it.

Verses 1-19

[Hebrews 3:1](#). *Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;*

Think of him, think how great he is, think what attention he deserves from all who believe in him.

[Hebrews 3:2-6](#). *Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house. For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house. For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God. And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; but Christ as a son over his own house;*

See the superiority of Christ to Moses; Moses is honoured by being called the servant of God, but Jesus is the Son of God, and as Son, Master over his own house.

[Hebrews 3:6](#). *Whose house are we,*

Christ built the house; he laid us together like stones upon the great foundation, Moses is but a caretaker in the house.

[Hebrews 3:6](#). *If we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope from unto the end.*

Final perseverance is an absolute necessity of a child of God. We do not prove ourselves to be a part of the house if we move about like loose stones.

[Hebrews 3:7-10](#). *Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart; and they have not known my ways.*

Do not provoke your God by your quibbling, or your murmuring, or your idolatry; act not as those unbelievers did who died in the wilderness.

[Hebrews 3:11-12](#). *So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.) Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.*

There was that “evil heart” in the Israelites, is there not a danger that it may be in you also who are partakers of the like nature?

[Hebrews 3:13](#). *But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.*

If sin came to you openly proclaiming itself as sin, you would fight against it; but it is very cunning and deceitful and it gradually petrifies the heart and especially the heart of those who think that they will never provoke God by their sin. Pride has already begun to work in them; and where pride can work, every other sin finds elbow-room. God save us from the deceitfulness of sin!

[Hebrews 3:14](#). *For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end.*

You are to hold fast, to hold on, and to hold out to the end; and the grace you need in order to do this is waiting for you if you will but look for it and daily live under the power of it.

[Hebrews 3:15-16](#). *While it is said, Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts as in the provocation. For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses.*

All but two that came out of Egypt died in the wilderness; only Joshua and Caleb were faithful among the faithless found.

[Hebrews 3:17](#). *But with whom was he grieved forty years? Was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?*

See how the apostle speaks of them; he does not say that their bodies were buried, but that their carcasses fell, in the wilderness. Unbelief

degrades us into beasts whose carcasses fall beneath the poleaxe of judgment. Oh, that we might all be rid of unbelief, that degrading, desecrating, defiling,

destroying thing!

[Hebrews 3:18-19](#). *And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.*

It was not the sons of Anak that kept them out, it was not the waste howling wilderness; it was nothing but their own unbelief.

This exposition consisted of readings from Hebrews 2, 3.

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CHAPTER 4

Verses 1-9

[Hebrews 4:1](#). *Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.*

If you avoid the very seeming of it, you will avoid the thing itself. Oh! that we were careful about this — that there was nothing that should give any reasonable fear to those who observed us, or to ourselves when we search our hearts, lest we should not enter into this rest.

[Hebrews 4:2](#). *For unto us was the Gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.*

It must be mixed with faith. There are many drugs that are of no value till they are mixed with something else; and the Word preached becomes of no value to a soul until it is mixed with faith in them that hear it.

[Hebrews 4:3](#). *For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.*

I leave out the intermediate words for the time being. “There is a rest.”

[Hebrews 4:9](#). *There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.*

This exposition consisted of readings from Hebrews 3; [Hebrews 4:1-9](#).

Verses 1-16

[Hebrews 4:1](#). *Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest any of you should seem to come short of it.*

Not only dread coming short, but dread the very appearance of it. Oh, that we might now enter into that rest, and so clearly enjoy it that there should not even be a seeming to come short of it.

[Hebrews 4:2](#). *For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.*

They were not united to it by faith; consequently, as they did not receive the Word, it was taken away from them.

[Hebrews 4:3](#). *For we which have believed do enter into rest.*

Faith brings us into this rest, even as unbelief shut them out.

[Hebrews 4:3](#). *As he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.*

That is God's rest, the rest of a finished work, and into that rest many never enter. The work by which they might live for ever, the finished work by which they might be saved, they refuse, and so they never enter into God's rest.

[Hebrews 4:4-5](#). *For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works. And in this place again, If they shall enter into my rest.*

There are many professing Christians who do not understand what it is to rest because the work of salvation is done; they do not even seem to know that the work is done. They understand not that dying word of the Lord Jesus, "It is finished." They think there is something still to be added to his work to make it effectual; but it is not so.

[Hebrews 4:6-8](#). *Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief: Again, he limiteth a certain day saying in David, Today after so long a time; as it is said, Today if ye will hear the voice, harden not your hearts. For if Jesus had given them rest then would he not afterward have spoken of another day.*

We read of this in the 95th Psalm, where David was urging those to whom he was writing to hear God's voice, and not be like the unbelievers in the wilderness, so that the rest still remained to be entered upon by somebody. Joshua had not given them rest, or else David would not have spoken of entering into rest.

[Hebrews 4:9-10](#). *There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.*

He says, "It is finished. I am no longer going to do my own works, I am done with them; I now trust the finished work of Christ, and that gives me rest. But as to all that wearied me before, and made life a continual task and toil, it is ended now." God is not a cruel taskmaster to his people; he gives rest to those who trust in him, and some of us have entered into that rest.

[Hebrews 4:11](#). *Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.*

Let us not repeat the story of unbelieving Israel in our own lives, let us not live and die in the wilderness, but let us go in and take possession of the promised land, the promised rest, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

[Hebrews 4:12](#). *For the word of God is quick, and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

This verse may be interpreted with reference to the incarnate Word or to the inspired Word, and they are so closely united and related to one another that we need not attempt to separate them, but see Christ in the Word, and the Word in Christ, and learn that both Christ and the Word do for us all that the apostle here declares.

[Hebrews 4:13](#). *Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.*

However great a revealer the Word may be, however clear a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart, the God who gave the Word is even more so.

[Hebrews 4:14](#). *Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.*

Shall we desert him now that he has gone into heaven to represent us, now that he has fought the fight, and won the victory on our behalf, and gone up to heaven as our Representative? God forbid!

[Hebrews 4:15-16](#). *For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like*

as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Verses 14-16

[Hebrews 4:14](#). *Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.*

Why should we let it go? Jesus has triumphed, he has entered into the glory on our behalf, the victory on our account rests with him; therefore let us follow him as closely as we can. May he help us, just now, if we are in the least dispirited or cast down, to pluck up courage, and press on our way!

[Hebrews 4:15](#). *For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.*

How this ought to draw us to the Saviour, — that he was made like unto ourselves; that he knows our temptations by a practical experience of them; and though he was without sin, yet the same sins which are put before us by Satan were also set before him.

[Hebrews 4:16](#). *Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*

We have a Friend at court; our Bridegroom is on the throne. He who reigns in heaven loves us better than we love ourselves. Come, then, why should we hesitate, wherefore should we delay our approach to his throne of mercy? What is it that we want at this moment? Let us ask for it. If it is a time of need, then we see clearly from this verse that it is a time when we are permitted and encouraged to pray.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Hebrews 4:14-16](#); Hebrews , 5.

HEBREWS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 5

Verses 1-14

[Hebrews 5:1](#). *For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins:*

Notice that the high priests were taken from among men, not from among angels. Hence, our Lord Jesus Christ took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. The Jewish high priests were ordained for men; they acted on behalf of men, and they stood in the place of men. So the Lord Jesus Christ stood in the room, place, and stead of his people, that he might offer to God for them two things, — gifts, — that is, such offerings as the Jew made when he presented the fine flour, and oil, and other bloodless oblations which were only intended for thanksgiving. Christ offered thanksgiving unto his Father, and that offering was a sweet savor unto God. But beside those gifts, the priests offered sacrifices, and our Lord Jesus Christ did the same, for he was made a sin-offering for us, though he himself knew no sin.

[Hebrews 5:2](#). *Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way;*

The marginal reading is, “Who can reasonably bear with the ignorant,” —that is, one who does not lose his temper even when they are very slow to learn what he teaches them. Having taught them nineteen times, and finding that they do not understand or remember the lesson, he is ready to teach them the twentieth time, he is one who will give them line upon line, and precept upon precept, here a little and there a little, because he has compassion on the ignorant. Then there were other who tried the high priest far more even than the ignorant did, they were those who erred from the right path, those who went out of the way, and who continued to do so even after many warnings and much earnest exhortation. The true priest must have patience with people of this sort.

[Hebrews 5:2](#). *For that he himself also is compassed with infirmity.*

So all the high priests under the law were. They had to confess their own ignorance, they had to admit their own errings and wanderings, and therefore they could the more readily have patience with others. Our Lord Jesus Christ had neither ignorance nor sin of his own, but he has become so completely one with his people, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, that he can have compassion upon us, ignorant and out of the way as we may be. Are you distressed, my brethren and sisters, because you feel your own ignorance? Do you mourn because you have gone astray? You have to come to no angry Christ; you have to approach One who will be very gentle toward you. Come boldly to him, then; confess your folly, and expect the pardon that he is waiting to bestow.

[Hebrews 5:3](#). *And by reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins.*

We know that, being compassed with infirmity and imperfection, the high priests first offered sacrifices on their own account, and then afterwards offered them on behalf of the people. Christ, being pure and holy, needed no sacrifice for himself; but he did offer a complete, and acceptable, and sufficient sacrifice for us.

[Hebrews 5:4](#). *And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.*

Men could not constitute themselves high priests; for the appointment was made by God alone.

[Hebrews 5:5-6](#). *So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, today have I begotten thee. As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec.*

Beloved, there is rich comfort for all believers in the fact that Christ is God's appointed and accepted High Priest. God ordained him to do what he has done, and is doing, and will do; and therefore it is impossible but that God should accept him and all his work.

[Hebrews 5:7-8](#). *Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;*

Just as the earthly high priests offered sacrifices for themselves, so Christ, though he needed not to offer sacrifice for himself, did need to pray for himself. You know, beloved, how he gave himself unto prayer upon the cold mountains at midnight, and how Gethsemane's garden witnessed the bloody sweat falling in clots to the ground. "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered." God had one Son without sin, but he never had a son without suffering. We may escape the rod if we are not of the family of God, but the true-born child must not, and would not if he might, avoid that chastisement of which all such are partakers.

[Hebrews 5:9](#). *And being made perfect, —*

That is, perfect in his obedience, perfect as a sacrifice, perfect as the Mediator and Substitute for his people, —

[Hebrews 5:9](#). *He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;*

Brethren, what a grand expression that is, “eternal salvation”! You know that there are some who preach a temporary salvation; they say that you may be in Christ today and out of Christ tomorrow, that you may be saved by grace at one hour, but damned by sin the next. Ah! but the Bible says no such thing. This may be the gospel according to Arminius, but it is not the gospel according to John, nor according to Paul, nor according to our Lord Jesus Christ. That gospel is, —

“Once in Christ, in Christ for ever;
Nothing from his love can sever.”

Christ became the author of “eternal salvation,” and the word “eternal” must mean without end; so that, if we once receive the salvation which Christ has wrought out, we are saved in time, and shall be saved throughout all eternity. Christ is the Author of this eternal salvation; not our good works, though our faith and our works become the evidences of our having received this eternal salvation.

[Hebrews 5:10](#). *Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec.*

Then the apostle appeared to be going on to enlarge upon the Melchisedec priesthood, but he stopped. Perhaps he recollected what his Master said to his disciples on one occasion, “I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot hear them now.” In a similar fashion Paul writes: —

[Hebrews 5:11-14](#). *Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For everyone that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.*

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CHAPTER 6

Verses 1-20

In the previous chapter, Paul was writing to some who ought to have been teachers, but who needed still to be taught the first principles of the gospel; they were such babes in grace that they needed the milk of the Word, — the very simplest elements of gospel truth, — and not the strong meat of solid doctrine. The apostle, however, desires that the Hebrew believers should understand the sublimer doctrines of the gospel, and so be like men of full age who can eat strong meat. In this chapter he exhorts them to seek to attain to this standard.

[Hebrews 6:1](#). *Therefore leaving the principles —*

The rudiments, the elementary truths, —

[Hebrews 6:1](#). *Of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; —*

Let us go from the school to the university, let us have done with our first spelling-books, and advance into the higher classics of the kingdom.

[Hebrews 6:1](#). *Not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God,*

Let us make sure that the foundation is laid, but let us not have continually to lay it again. Let us go on believing and repenting, as we have done; but let us not have to begin believing and begin repenting, let us go on to something beyond that stage of experience.

[Hebrews 6:2](#). *Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.*

Let us take these things for granted, and never dispute about them any more, but go on to still higher matters.

[Hebrews 6:3](#). *And this will we do, if God permit.*

We must keep on going forward; there is no such thing in the Christian life as standing still, and we dare not turn back.

[Hebrews 6:4-6](#). *For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, —*

Note that Paul does not say, “If they shall fall;” but, “If they shall fall away,” — if the religion which they have professed shall cease to have any power over them, — then, it shall be impossible —

[Hebrews 6:6](#). *To renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.*

If all the processes of grace fail in the case of any professors, what is to be done with them? If the grace of God does not enable them to overcome

the world, — if the blood of Christ does not purge them from sin, what more can be done? Upon this supposition, God's utmost has been tried, and has failed. Mark that Paul does not say that all this could ever happen; but that, if it could, the person concerned would be like a piece of ground which brought forth nothing but thorns and briers.

[Hebrews 6:7-8](#). *For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: but that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.*

If, after having ploughed this ground, and sown it, and after it has been watered by the dew and rain of heaven, no good harvest ever comes of it, every wise man would leave off tilling it. He would say, "My labour is all thrown away on such a plot of ground as this, nothing more can be done with it, for after having done my utmost nothing but weeds is produced, so now it must be left to itself." You see, my dear hearers, if it were possible for the work of grace in your souls to be of no avail, nothing more could be done for you. You have had God's utmost effort expended upon your behalf, and there remains no other method of salvation for you. I believe that there have been some professors, such as Judas and Simon Magus, who have come very near to this condition, and others who are said, after a certain sort, to have believed, to have received the Holy Spirit in miraculous gifts, and to have been specially enlightened so as to have been able to teach others; but the work of grace did not affect their hearts, it did not renew their natures, it did not transform their spirits, and so it was impossible to renew them to repentance. How notice what Paul says: —

[Hebrews 6:9](#). *But, beloved, we are persuaded better thing of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.*

Harsh as the apostle's words may seem, they are not meant for you who are really believers in Christ, and in whom the Holy Spirit has wrought a complete change of heart and life; Paul is not speaking of such as you.

[Hebrews 6:10](#). *For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.*

If you have proved by your works that the grace of God is within you, God will not forget you; he will not leave you, he will not cast you away. You know the contrast in the speech between different persons concerning this doctrine. One will wickedly say, "If I am a child of God, I may live as I

like.” That is damnable doctrine. Another will say, “If I am a child of God, I shall not want to live as I like, but as God likes, and I shall be led by the grace of God into the path of holiness, and through divine grace I shall persevere in that way of holiness right to the end.” That is quite another doctrine, and it is the true teaching of the Word of God.

[Hebrews 6:11](#). *And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end:*

Keep it up; be as earnest today as you were twenty years ago, when you were baptized and joined the church: “Show the same diligence unto the end.” Still, “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”

[Hebrews 6:12-15](#). *That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises. For when God made promise to Abraham because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself, saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.*

Wherefore, brethren, you and I also are patiently to endure, to hold on even to the end, and God’s sure promise will never fail us.

[Hebrews 6:16-18](#). *For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:*

It seems a great change in this chapter from the sad tone at the beginning to the joyous note at the end; but, indeed, there is no contradiction between the two. Paul is but giving us two sides of the truth, — both equally true, — the one needful for our warning, the other admirable for our consolation. God will not leave you, my brethren, he has pledged himself by covenant to you, and he has given an oath that his covenant shall stand. Wherefore, be of good courage, and press forward in the divine life, for your work of faith and labour of love are not in vain in the Lord; so let us “lay hold upon the hope set before us:” —

[Hebrews 6:19](#). *Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil;*

Sailors throw their anchors downwards; we throw ours upwards. Their anchor goes within the veil of the waters into the depths of the sea; ours goes within the veil of glory, into the heights of heaven, where Jesus sits at the right hand of God: “within the veil;” —

[Hebrews 6:20](#). *Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.*

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CHAPTER 7

Verses 1-14

[Hebrews 7:1-2](#). *For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace.*

His very names being instructive, Righteousness first, and Peace afterwards, as it is with our divine Lord, who has brought in everlasting righteousness, and speaks peace to guilty men.

[Hebrews 7:3](#). *Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually.*

Melchisedec just passed across the page; he has no predecessor, he has no successor. We see him in Scripture, and we know nothing of his descent we know nothing of his death; we only know that he was a priest of the Most High God; and this very silence about him is highly significant and instructive, far in this he is “like unto the Son of God, who abideth a priest continually.” Now consider who this great man was, unto whom even “the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth part of his spoil.” If Abraham, the father of the faithful, the friend of God, paid tribute to him, how great must he have been, how high his office!

[Hebrews 7:5-7](#). *And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham: But he whose descent is not counted from them*

received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises. And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better.

Therefore, Abraham was less than Melchisedec: he could not bless Melchisedec, but Melchisedec could bless him. How great, then, was he! How far greater still is that Lord of ours of whom Melchisedec was but a type

[Hebrews 7:8-10](#). *And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth. And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham. For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him.*

Thus the old priesthood, the Levitical and Aaronic priesthood, did homage unto the Melchisedec priesthood, which is greater still.

[Hebrews 7:11](#). *If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?*

We read in the psalm just now, “Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec,” which proves that the priests of the order of Levi were not sufficient: there was need of a still greater priesthood.

[Hebrews 7:12](#). *For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.*

The law of the priesthood alters since the person of the priest, the character of the priest, and the very office of the priest had altered too.

[Hebrews 7:13](#). *For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar*

According to the belief of the Jewish people, the Messiah was to come of the tribe of Judah, yet none of the house of David or of the tribe of Judah ever presumed to present themselves as priests of the order of God.

[Hebrews 7:14](#). *For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.*

So there was an entire change of the priesthood, and of the law of priests.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Psalms 110:1-7](#); [Hebrews 7:1-14](#).

Verses 15-28

[Hebrews 7:15-18](#). *And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest, Who is made, not*

after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. For he testifieth, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof.

The old Levitical law is disannulled; it became weak and unprofitable; and now a higher and better dispensation is ushered in with a greater and undying priesthood.

[Hebrews 7:19](#). *For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God.*

That is all it did: it was a stepping-stone towards something better. “by which we draw near unto God.” “The Lord hath sworn and will not repent.”

[Hebrews 7:20-24](#). *And inasmuch as not without an oath he was made priest. (For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, the Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec:) By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better Testament. And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death; But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood.*

I think they reckoned that there were eighty-three high priests in regular succession from Aaron to the death of Phineas, the last high priest at the siege of Jerusalem. One succeeded another, but this one goes on continually, for ever hath an untransferable priesthood. That word “untransferable” is nearer to the meaning than this “unchangeable.” If any of you have old Bibles with the margin, you will see “hath a priesthood which cannot be passed from one hand to another,” and the margin happens in this case to have the true rendering, “This man hath an untransferable priesthood.”

[Hebrews 7:25](#). *Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. For such an high priest became us,*

We want just that high priest who would live on throughout all the ages for ever to sustain his people, and do for them all they should need to have done for them, until time should have been no more.

[Hebrews 7:26-28](#). *For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: For this he did once, when*

he offered up himself. For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.

There is our joy.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Haggai 1:1](#) to [Haggai 2:9](#); [Hebrews 7:15-28](#).

HEBREWS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 8

Verses 7-13

[Hebrews 8:7-13](#). *For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: and they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.*

So the old covenant has vanished away, with all its types, and symbols, and sacrifices. As the morning mists dissolve upon the rising of the sun,- as darkness flies away when the light shines,-so has the covenant of works departed for ever; and, in its place, stands out the everlasting covenant of God's unmerited mercy to the most guilty and vile of the sons and daughters of men. May he graciously grant to us the privilege of having an interest in that covenant, for his dear Son's sake. Amen.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Jeremiah 31:31-34](#); [Ezekiel 36:25-32](#); and [Hebrews 8:7-13](#)

HEBREWS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 9

Verses 1-22

1 *Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary.*

An external sanctuary, a material structure, and therefore belonging to this world.

Hebrews 9:2. *For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the shewbread: which is called the sanctuary.*

Or, “the Holy Place.”

Hebrews 9:3-8. *And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of All; which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron’s rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; and over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercyseat; of which we cannot now speak particularly. Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God. But into the Second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people: the Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing:*

Notice especially those words, “Not without blood.” There could be no approach to God under the old dispensation without the shedding of blood, and there is no access to the Lord now without the precious blood of Christ.

Hebrews 9:9-22. *Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation. But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats,*

and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testators. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth. Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people, saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you. Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry. And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

That is the great gospel truth that was set forth by all the sacrifices under the law: “without shedding of blood is no remission.”

This exposition consisted of readings from Leviticus 16:1-31; And Hebrews 9:1-22.

Verses 1-28

Hebrews 9:1. *Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary.*

That is to say, a material sanctuary, a sanctuary made out of such things as this world contains. Under the old covenant, there were certain outward symbols. Under the new covenant, we have not the symbols, but we have the substance itself. The old law dealt with types and shadows, but the gospel deals with the spiritual realities themselves.

Hebrews 9:2-3. *For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the shewbread; which is called the sanctuary. And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all;*

All this was by divine appointment; the form of the rooms, the style of the furniture, everything was ordained of God; and that not merely for ornament, but for purposes of instruction. As we shall see farther on, the Holy Ghost intended a significance, a teaching, a meaning, about everything

in the old tabernacle, whether it was a candlestick, or a table, or the shewbread.

Hebrews 9:4-5. *Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; and over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercy seat; of which we cannot now speak particularly.*

It would not have been to the point which the apostle had in hand, so he waived the explanation of those things for another time.

Hebrews 9:6-8. *Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God. But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people: the Holy Ghost this signifying,*

It is from this sentence that I am sure that the Holy Ghost had a signification, a meaning, a teaching, for every item of the ancient tabernacle and temple; and we are not spinning fancies out of idle brains when we interpret these types, and learn from them important gospel lessons. "The Holy Ghost this signifying,"-

Hebrews 9:8. *That the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing:*

It was necessary that you should take away the sacred tent, the tabernacle, ay, and take away the temple, too, before you could learn the spiritual meaning of them. You must break the shell to get at the kernel. So God had ordained. Hence, there is now no tabernacle, no temple, no holy court, no inner shrine, the holy of holies. The material worship is done away with, in order that we may render the spiritual worship of which the material was but the type.

Hebrews 9:9. *Which was a figure for the time then present,*

Only a figure, and only meant for "the time then present." It was the childhood of the Lord's people; it was a time when, as yet, the light had not fully broken in upon spiritual eyes, so they must be taught by picture-books. They must have a kind of Kindergarten for the little children, that they might learn the elements of the faith by the symbols, types, and representations of a material worship. When we come into the true gospel light, all that is done away with; it was only "a figure for the time then present."

Hebrews 9:9. *In which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience;*

All these rites could only give a fleshly purity, but they could not touch the conscience. If men saw what was meant by the outward type, then the conscience was appeased; but by the outward sign itself the conscience was never comforted, if it was a living and lowly conscience.

Hebrews 9:10. *Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation.*

These ordinances were only laid upon the Jews-not upon any other people-and only laid upon them until the better and brighter days of reformation and fuller illumination.

Hebrews 9:11. *But Christ-Oh,*

how we seem to rise when we begin to get near to Him, away from the high priests of the Jews! “But Christ”-

Hebrews 9:12. *Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.*

The Jewish high priests went once a year into the Holy of Holies. Each year as it came round demanded that they should go again. Their work was never done; but “He entered in once,” and only once, “into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.” I love that expression, “eternal redemption”-a redemption which really does redeem, and redeems forever and ever. If you are redeemed by it, you cannot be lost; if this redemption be yours, it is not for a time, or for a season, but it is “eternal redemption.” Oh, how you ought to rejoice in the one entrance within the veil by our great High Priest who has obtained eternal redemption for us!

Hebrews 9:13-15. *For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.*

When you come to deal with Christ, you have to do with eternal things. There is nothing temporary about Him, or about His work. It is “eternal

redemption” that He has obtained for us, it is an “eternal inheritance” that He has purchased for us.

Hebrews 9:16-17. *For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead; otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth.*

Or, “Where a covenant is, there must also be the death of him who covenants, or of that by which the covenant is established.” Or read it as we have it in our version, for it seems as if it must be so, although we are loathe to give the meaning of “testament” to the word, since its natural meaning is evidently covenant: “Where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead; otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth”; or, if you will, while the victim that was to confirm the covenant lived, the covenant was not ratified; it must be slain before it could be thus effective.

Hebrews 9:18-22. *Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people, saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you. Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry. And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.*

There is no truth more plain than this in the whole of the Old Testament; and it must have within it a very weighty lesson to our souls. There are some who cannot endure the doctrine of a substitutionary atonement. Let them beware lest they be casting away the very soul and essence of the gospel. It is evident that the sacrifice of Christ was intended to give ease to the conscience, for we read that the blood of bulls and of goats could not do that. I fail to see how any doctrine of atonement except the doctrine of the vicarious sacrifice of Christ can give ease to the guilty conscience. Christ in my stead suffering the penalty of my sin—that pacifies my conscience, but nothing else does: “Without shedding of blood is no remission.”

Hebrews 9:23. *It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these;*

These things down below are only the patterns, the models, the symbols of the heavenly things; they could therefore be ceremonially purified with the blood which is the symbol of the atoning sacrifice of Christ.

Hebrews 9:23-24. *But the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:*

He never went within the veil in the Jewish temple; that was but the symbol of the true holy of holies. He has gone “into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.”

Hebrews 9:25-28. *Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many;*

There is no need that He should die again, His one offering has forever perfected all His people. There remains nothing but His final coming for the judgment of the ungodly, and the acquittal of His redeemed.

Hebrews 9:28. *And unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.*

Christ’s second coming will be “without sin,” and without a sin offering, too, wholly apart from sin, unto the salvation of all His chosen. May we all be amongst those who are looking for Him! Amen.

Verses 18-28

Hebrews 9:18-22. *Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people, saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you. Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry. And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.*

Under the law, some things were purified by fire or by water, but “almost all things” were “purged with blood;” and there was and still is, no remission of sin “without shedding of blood.”

Hebrews 9:23-26. *It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into*

heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

In every respect, our great High Priest was superior to the high priests under the law; though, in some points, they resembled him, and were types of him.

Hebrews 9:27-28. *And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.*

His one offering so fully met all the claims of divine justice on behalf of all his people that there was no need of another offering for sin, and no room for it, so his second coming will be “without a sin offering unto salvation,” as the passage may be rendered.

This exposition consisted of readings from Hebrews 9:18-28; and Hebrews 10:1-25.

Verses 24-28

Hebrews 9:24. *For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:*

He has gone within the veil;-not the veil of “blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen of cunning work;” but within the veil that hides “heaven itself” from our eyes, and there he is “in the presence of God for us.”

Hebrews 9:25-26. *Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.*

The high priest brought the blood of the animals that were slain for a sin-offering, and hence he came often. He could not bring his own blood, or he would only have come once, but our Saviour has come only once, “to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself “

Hebrews 9:27-28. *And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and*

unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

He had to suffer because of sin once, but he will never again have to do that; his sacrifice will never need to be repeated, and never can be repeated.

This exposition consisted of readings from Hebrews 9:24-28; and Hebrews 10.

[HEBREWS CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 10

Verses 1-18

[Hebrews 10:1](#). *For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.*

A man could go to the Levitical sacrifices twenty years running, and yet be no forwarder. He must go again and again as long as he lived. They were only figures and shadows and types; the real sacrifice is Christ.

[Hebrews 10:2](#). *For then-*

If they had been effectual,

[Hebrews 10:2](#). *Would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.*

Once forgiven, the sin would not have come back again. If the sacrifice had really cleansed the conscience of the offerer, he would not have had cause to present it again.

[Hebrews 10:3-5](#). *But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.*

Wherefore when he cometh- he who is the essence of it all, "When he cometh,"

[Hebrews 10:5-7](#). *Into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.*

Types were no longer needed when the great Antitype had come. Christ was no longer pre-figured, for he was there in person. He put away the old

shadows of the blood of bulls and goats when he brought his own real sacrifice, the true atonement for sin.

[Hebrews 10:8-9](#). *Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.*

The old law is gone, the first sacrifice is no longer presented, for the second is come, the real offering of Christ the Lamb of God.

[Hebrews 10:10](#). *By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*

Once, and only once. How Paul loves to recall this fact!

[Hebrews 10:11-12](#). *And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: but this man,*

Note these glorious words, “This Man,”-

[Hebrews 10:12-13](#). *After he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.*

He would not have sat down if his work had not been done. He would not have ceased from his priestly service of presenting sacrifice if his one offering had not been sufficient. This Man’s offering once, once, once, has done all that God demanded, and all that man required.

[Hebrews 10:14](#). *For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.*

This glorious message is for you, beloved, if you believe in Christ. By his one sacrifice he has done all that you need; he has perfected you for ever.

[Hebrews 10:15-17](#). *Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.*

Treasure up these golden words: “Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.”

[Hebrews 10:18](#). *Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.*

The offering for sin is in order that sin may be put away; and if it be put away, so that God himself will remember it no more, what more is wanted? What more could be desired? Wherefore, let us rest in the one great finished work of Christ, and be perfectly happy. Sin is gone, wrath is over, for those for whom Christ died; they are perfected for ever through his one great sacrifice.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Hebrews 9:24-28](#); and [Hebrews 10:1-18](#).

Verses 1-22

[Hebrews 10:1](#). *For the law —*

The old ceremonial law of Moses, —

[Hebrews 10:1](#). *Having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.*

Those that were sprinkled with the blood of the Old Testament sacrifices did not feel that their sin was for ever put away. They went back, after the victim had been offered, with a certain measure of rest and relief, but not with that perfect rest which is the accompaniment of the pardon that Jesus gives to those who come unto God through him.

[Hebrews 10:2](#). *For —*

If the worshippers had thus been made perfect; if they had been completely cleansed and accepted through these sacrifices, —

[Hebrews 10:2](#). *Then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.*

The fact that there was a lamb to be offered every morning and every evening, and that there was a great day of atonement to be observed every year, proved that there was sin still remaining, which had not been put away, sin that the worshippers needed to come again, and again, and yet again, with fresh sacrifices for their fresh sins. The apostle's argument is unanswerable.

[Hebrews 10:3-4](#). *But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.*

Your common sense tells you “it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.” Although rivers of such blood should

continually be flowing, what efficacy could there be in them to put away the moral stain of guilt and transgression against God?

[Hebrews 10:5](#). *Wherefore when he cometh into the world, —*

That great HE, — that Divine HE, — our Saviour and our God. “when he cometh into the world,”-

[Hebrews 10:5-7](#). *He saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.*

That will had not been done, although myriads of sacrifices had been offered. But Christ came really to do that will by offering himself as the one and only acceptable sacrifice.

[Hebrews 10:8-9](#). *Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.*

An end was made of the types and shadows of the ceremonial law, that the real substance might be introduced by Christ. Never imagine, dear friends, that the old Jewish ceremonial law is to drag on its existence, and to be intermingled with the Christian dispensation. Ah, no! As the shadows of the night vanish when the sun arises, as the lamps in yonder street are put out when daylight returns, so was it with all the types and shadows of the ancient law when the great Antitype appeared.

[Hebrews 10:10](#). *By the which will —*

That is, the will of God as done by Christ: “By the which will “ —

[Hebrews 10:10-12](#). *We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: but this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; —*

Oh, what a blessed doctrine this is, — that the one offering of Christ has done what the tens of thousands of offerings under the old law never could accomplish! All the work of man is but the spinning of a righteousness which is undone as quickly as it is spun; but Christ has finished the seamless and spotless robe of his righteousness which is to last for ever. By his one sacrifice he has ended all the fruitless labour of the ages; and, now, as many of us as have believed in him have all the benefits of his perfect

work. Having completed his great task, he “sat down on the right hand of God;” —

[Hebrews 10:13](#). *From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.*

“Expecting.” That was the subject of this morning’s sermon. We are expecting something better than we have yet seen. “We were saved in hope,” We are expecting that which is yet to be revealed; and our covenant Head is expecting, too. This is the age of expectancy. We have not yet come to the fullness of the blessing that is ours in Christ Jesus. The mercy of God is at present; only in the bud; the fully-developed flower has yet to be seen. Christ is expecting; his saints are expecting; the whole creation is expecting.

[Hebrews 10:14-17](#). *For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.*

Oh, what a blessed covenant this is! Christ’s death has established a covenant of grace in which there is no flaw, and no possibility of failure, for the one Condition of the covenant has been fulfilled by Christ, and now it stands as a covenant of “shalls” and “wills” on God’s part from which he will never run back. It is not, “If they do this, and if they do that, I will do the other;” but it is all “I will.” “I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.”

[Hebrews 10:18](#). *Now Where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.*

No more offering for sin is needed, for the work of atonement is fully done, and done for ever. As the sin of all who believe in Jesus is put away, what heed is there of any further sacrifice on account of it? The atonement is complete; let us therefore rejoice in it, and praise God for it.

[Hebrews 10:19-22](#). *Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full*

assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

Verses 1-25

[Hebrews 10:1](#). *For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.*

This refers to the old ceremonial law, under which the Jews lived so long. They always had to go on, year after year, offering the same kind of sacrifices, because the work of atonement was never done perfectly; men were not cleansed or saved by it, so the process had to be constantly repeated.

[Hebrews 10:2](#). *For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.*

There would have been no need to bring another lamb to be offered if the one which was presented had put away sin; there would have been no need of another day of atonement if the sacrifice on the one day had really made atonement for sin.

[Hebrews 10:3-4](#). *But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.*

Their blood was only a picture, an emblem, a type of far more precious blood, — the shadow of the real atonement which was afterwards to be offered.

[Hebrews 10:5](#). *Wherefore when he cometh into the world, —*

That is, the true Messiah, the Son of God, Jesus of Nazareth, our Redeemer: “When he cometh into the world,” —

[Hebrews 10:5](#). *He saith, —*

According to [Psalms 40:6-8](#), —

[Hebrews 10:5-9](#). *Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God. Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; then said he, Lo, I*

come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.

He takes away the type because the great Antitype has come. He abolishes the offering of bullocks, and goats, and lambs, because HE has come whom they all foreshadowed.

[Hebrews 10:10](#). *By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*

Or, “once.” It can never be offered again. The presence of offering up the body and the blood of Christ in the mass is sheer profanity. It has been done once, and there is no need of a repetition. To suppose that it could be repeated, is to imply that it was incomplete on the first occasion; but it was not, for by it we are already sanctified.

[Hebrews 10:11-12](#). *And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: but this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;*

It was done, wholly done, and done for ever; nothing was to be added to it, and, therefore, Jesus “sat down” in the place of honour and power “on the right hand of God”; —

[Hebrews 10:13-14](#). *From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.*

Or, “set apart.” He has fully saved all those for whom he died. His one sacrifice was so effectual that, by it, he has for ever put away the sin of the whole multitude of those that believe in him.

[Hebrews 10:15](#). *Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us:*

And what more veritable witness can we have? That to which the Holy Ghost bears testimony must never be questioned by us.

[Hebrews 10:15-17](#). *For after that he had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.*

What a wonderful covenant that is; — not that he will bless you if you keep the law, but that you shall be enabled to keep it, and that he will lead you to do so by putting his law, not on tables of stone, where your eye can see it, but on the fleshy tablets of your heart, where your soul shall feel its

force and power, so that you shall be obedient to it. Meditate on those glorious words: “Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.”

[Hebrews 10:18](#). *Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.*

If the sins themselves have gone, and God will remember them no more, no further sacrifice is required for them. What need have ye of cleansing if ye are so clean that God himself sees no sin in you? O glorious purification by the atoning sacrifice of Christ! Rejoice in it, and praise the Lord for it for ever and ever.

[Hebrews 10:19-25](#). *Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*

Notice the practical teaching of this great truth. If you have been thus washed, do not defile yourselves again. If, by God’s rich mercy, you have been delivered from the transgressions of the past, let gratitude move you to holy living, and endeavor, not only to grow in grace yourselves, but to help others in the same direction, that so the abounding mercy of God may have from us abundant praise. God grant it for his name’s sake! Amen.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Hebrews 9:18-28](#); and [Hebrews 10:1-25](#).

Verses 1-39

[Hebrews 10:1-2](#). *For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered”*

If the sacrifice had really put away sin, surely it would never have needed to be offered again. If one sacrifice had put away the guilt of Israel, there would have been no need to bring another.

[Hebrews 10:2](#). *Because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.*

Once cleansed from sin, we are cleansed from sin; the great deed is done once for all,

[Hebrews 10:3-5](#). *But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. Wherefore when he cometh into the world,*

You know who that is, there is but one great “HE” to us,-our blessed Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, the true High Priest.

[Hebrews 10:5](#). *He saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me:*

By the work of the Holy Ghost within the Virgin Mary, the blessed body of Christ was “prepared” so that he ought be God and man in one person, and so might bring an offering acceptable unto God.

[Hebrews 10:6-9](#). *In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, God. Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither had pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.*

That he may bring in the real sacrifice of which the others were but types and prefigurations.

[Hebrews 10:10](#). *By the which will-*

The will which Christ fulfilled in life and in death: “By the which will”

—
[Hebrews 10:10](#). *We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once.*

Only one sacrifice was required. The key-word here is that little word “once.” Let it not only sound in your ears, but be written in your hearts. Jesus Christ died once, he brought his sacrifice once, he put away our sins once.

[Hebrews 10:11-12](#). *And every priest stinted daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: but this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;*

Christ stands no longer to minister as a sacrificing priest, he is sitting down on the right hand of God. That is the posture of one whose work is

done, and who is taking his rest: “He sat down on the right hand of God

[Hebrews 10:13-18](#). *From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in the minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, these is no more offering for sin.*

Sin itself being no longer imputed to any believer in Christ, there is neither the occasion nor the need for the offering of another sacrifice for sin. Christ’s one sacrifice has for ever put away the sins of all who believe in him.

[Hebrews 10:19-22](#). *Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.*

The Jew could not personally go up to the mercy-seat; he had to go there through his representative, the high priest, and we have Christ as our “high priest over the house of God,” so we come to God through him. The Israelite could not pass through the veil which hid from public gaze the glory of the Shekinah, and Jesus Christ’s humanity was a veil which somewhat concealed the glory of his Deity; but the flesh of Christ having been crucified, the veil has been rent, and now we may come right up to the throne of God without trembling; nay, we may come even with holy boldness and familiarity, and speak to God without alarm. Having such a privilege as this, let us not neglect it. It was denied to prophets and kings in the olden time; but now that it is vouchsafed to us, let us avail ourselves of it, and constantly “let us draw near” unto God “with a true heart in full assurance of faith.”

[Hebrews 10:23](#). *Let us holdfast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)*

As he is faithful, let us also be faithful, and hold, as with a death grip, the faith which has been revealed to us and wrought within us by the Holy Spirit; ay, and the profession of that faith too, never being ashamed to own

that we are followers of the Nazarene. And let us while we are thus faithful ourselves, endeavor to strengthen others.

[Hebrews 10:24](#). *And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:*

The Greek is, to stir each other up to a paroxysm of love. There is no fear that we shall ever go too far in our love to God; though it should cast us into a state of blessed excitement, yet would it be healthy for us so to live and so to work.

[Hebrews 10:25](#). *Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is;*

For Christian fellowship is helpful to us, and we are helpful to others by it. A Christian is not meant to be a solitary being. Sheep are gregarious, and so are the sheep of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us not be solitary pilgrims along the road to heaven, but join that glorious host of God's elect who march beneath the guidance of our great Master.

[Hebrews 10:25](#). *But exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*

Does not every day bring us nearer to the coming of the Lord? Are there not many signs that these are the last days? Well then, so much the more let us stir each other up to love and to good works.

[Hebrews 10:26-27](#). *For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.*

Here the truth taught is that, if a Christian apostatizes, if he renounces his faith, and goes back to the world, it is impossible to reclaim him. A backslider may be restored, but anyone who should wilfully, after receiving the truth, reject it, has rejected the only Saviour; he has rejected the only regeneration; and, consequently, he is without the pale of the possibilities of restoration. The question is, "Will any true child of God so apostatize?" That question is answered in this very chapter; but the truth here taught is that, if he does, he goes into a state of absolute hopelessness.

[Hebrews 10:28-29](#). *He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment,-*

Can there be any sorer punishment than to die without mercy? Yes, there is, for there is eternal punishment: "of how much sorer punishment," —

[Hebrews 10:29-31](#). *Suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

With what terrible sentences does Paul hedge up the way of the believer! Leave that way, and there is nothing for you but destruction. Reject your Saviour, give up your hope in him, and there cannot be another name by which you can be saved, or another glorified by which you can be cleansed from sin.

[Hebrews 10:32-33](#). *But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions;-*

Made a spectacle to be mocked at in the theater of the world; —

[Hebrews 10:33-35](#). *And partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used. For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance. Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.*

You must push on; you have already defied the foe, to turn back is certain destruction, for you have no armor for your back.

[Hebrews 10:36](#). *For ye have need of patience,-*

Or, endurance, —

[Hebrews 10:36](#). *That, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.*

To hold on, to continue to do God's will,-this is the task. To start, and to make a spurt now and then, is easy enough; but to keep on, is trying to every spiritual muscle; and only God can enable you to do so.

[Hebrews 10:37-38](#). *For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.*

If there be a drawing back from faith, God can have no pleasure in us; but shall we draw back? That is the question, and here is the answer: —

[Hebrews 10:39](#). *But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition;-*

We who have believed in Jesus, we who have sincerely committed ourselves to his care, we who have been born again of the Holy Spirit, we in whom there is the real work of grace which God has pledged to carry on, — “we are not of them who draw back unto perdition:” —

[Hebrews 10:39](#). *But of them that believe to the saving of the soul.*

What a blessed truth is this! O Christian, as you see the danger that lies before you if you did prove to be an apostate, bless that sovereign grace which will not suffer you so to do, even as Paul wrote to the Philippians, “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”

This exposition consisted of readings from [Hebrews 9:24-28](#); and Hebrews 10.

Verses 19-39

[Hebrews 10:19-22](#). *Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.*

The place of the Christian is that of the nearest conceivable access to God for “the holiest” is “the holy of holies,”-that innermost part of the tabernacle to reach which the high priest had to pass through the outer court, and through the court of the priests, and then through the beautiful veil which concealed the mercy-seat. At the death of Christ, that veil was rent from the top to the bottom, so now there is nothing to keep us back from the mercy-seat. We, therefore, have boldness and liberty in that way “to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus;” where the high priest himself could only go once in the year, we may go at all times. The veil has not been merely lifted up for a while, and then dropped down again; it is not rolled up ready for future use; it is rent in twain, destroyed. Since Jesus has died, there is no separation now between the believer and his God except by means of such a veil as our base unbelief may please to hang up. The crimson way of Christ’s shed blood lies open to all believers therefore, “let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water,”

[Hebrews 10:23](#). *Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering;*

Not only hold it, but hold it fast without wavering. Let us never have a question about it. God grant that we may have an unquestioning, unstaggering faith! To hold fast the profession of our faith, seems enough; but to hold it fast without wavering, is better still; and so we ought to do.

[Hebrews 10:23](#). *(For he is faithful that promised;)*

God gives us no cause for wavering, for he never wavers. If he were an unfaithful God, we might naturally be an unbelieving people; but “he is faithful that promised.” Therefore, “let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering.”

[Hebrews 10:24](#). *And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:*

I am afraid there are some who consider one another to provoke in quite a different spirit from this,-who watch to find out a tender spot where a wound will be most felt. They observe the weakness of a brother's constitution, and then play upon it, or make jests about it. All this is evil, so let us avoid it; let us all seek out the good points of our brethren, and consider them, that we may afterwards be the means of guiding them to those peculiar good works for which they are best adapted. “Provoke unto love and to good works.” I do not know how we can do that better than by being very loving and very full of good works ourselves, for then will others be likely to say, “If these people are helped by God's grace to love like this, and to labour like this, why should not we do the same” A good example is often better than a very proper precept.

[Hebrews 10:25](#). *Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is;-*

Yes; there are some who even make a bad use of what ought to be a great blessing, namely, the printing-press, and the printed sermon, by staying at home to read a sermon because, they say, it is better than going out to hear one. Well, dear friend, if I could not hear profitably, I would still make one of the assembly gathered together for the worship of God. It is a bad example for a professing Christian to absent himself from the assembly of the friends of Christ. There was a dear sister, whom many of you knew, who used to attend here with great regularity, although she could not hear a word that was said; but she said it did her good to join in the hymns, and to know that she was worshipping God with the rest of his people. I wish that some, who stay away for the most frivolous excuses, would think of this

verse: “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is;”-

[Hebrews 10:25](#). *But exhorting one another and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*

It is not the work of the minister alone to exhort, but the brethren, and the sisters, too, should exhort one another, and seek to stir each other up in the faith and fear of God.

[Hebrews 10:26-27](#). *For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.*

This is a solemn text, containing a very terrible truth. If, after having been regenerated, and made children of God, we were willfully and deliberately to let the Saviour go, and apostatize altogether to the world, there would be no hope for us. What, then, is our hope? Why, that we shall never be permitted to do so,-that the grace of God will keep us so that, although we may fall like Peter, we shall not fall away like Judas,-that, though we may sin, there shall not be that degree of studied willfulness about it that would make it to be the sin unto death, a deliberate act of spiritual suicide. The doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints derives great glory from this other truth that, if they did not persevere, there is no second means of grace, no other plan of salvation. No man was ever born again twice; no man was ever washed twice in the precious blood of Jesus. The one washing makes us so clean that “he that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet,” for which Jesus provides by daily cleansing; but the one grand atoning act never fails. If it did fail, there would remain “no more sacrifice for sins.

[Hebrews 10:28-29](#). *He that despised Moses law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace*

For apostasy from Christ would amount to all this; and if that were possible, what grace would remain?

[Hebrews 10:30](#). *For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people.*

O professors, take this message home to your hearts! Let every one of us take it home: “The Lord shall judge his people.” God’s fire is in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem. If a man tries nothing else, he will test his gold; and if no others shall be judged, yet certainly those will be who say that they are the Lord’s people. In that dread day, he will separate the goats from the sheep, the tares from the wheat, and the dross from the gold; his fan will be in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor; he will sit as a refiner of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi; he shall be like a refiner’s fire, and like fuller’s soap. Woe to those, in that day, who are a defilement to his Church, and an adulteration to the purity of his people!

[Hebrews 10:31](#). *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

What a terrible verse is that! It is a text that ought to be preached from by those who are always saying that the punishment of the wicked will be less than, according to our minds, the Word of God leads us to expect it to be:

“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

[Hebrews 10:32](#). *But call to remembrance the former days,-*

The apostle is not expecting that any of them will ever go back to where they were before; he is persuaded that they will persevere even to the end. The very warning that he gives is a powerful preventive against apostasy. Now comes the exhortation: “Call to remembrance the former days.” Some of you can “call to remembrance” the time when you joined the church, when you had to run the gauntlet for Christ’s sake. Then, in your early Christian life, you feared nothing and nobody so long as you could glorify God. Then, you had great enjoyment, sweet seasons of communion with your Lord: “Call to remembrance the former days.”

[Hebrews 10:32-33](#). *In which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; partly, whilst ye were made a gazing stock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used.*

In your early Christian days, you were pointed at, and regarded as quite singular for being servants of Christ; or, possibly, it was not yourselves so much as your pastors, your leaders, your friends who were prominent in the church, at whom the arrows of the adversaries were aimed. They shot at you through them; and, sometimes, that pained you much more than when they

distinctly attacked you. Altogether, it was “a great fight of afflictions” that you had to endure.

[Hebrews 10:34](#). *For ye had compassion of me in my bonds,*

In those early days, the Jewish believers clung as the unbelieving Jews persecuted him, to Paul just as ardently

[Hebrews 10:34-35](#). *And took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance. Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.*

Be like the brave Spartan who would never lose his shield, but would come home either with it or on it. “Cast not away your confidence.” You trusted in God in those early days, and nothing seemed to daunt you then. “Cast not away your confidence.” Rather, get more to add to it. Let there be no thought of going back, but may there rather be a distinct advance!

[Hebrews 10:36](#). *For ye have need of patience,-*

Our supply of that virtue is often very short; it is an article of which there is very little in the market, and all of us have need of more of it: “Ye have need of patience,”-

[Hebrews 10:36](#). *That, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.*

There must first be the doing of the will of God, and then the reward will come afterwards. God will not give to his people their full reward yet. Patience, then, brother; patience, sister. Saturday night will come one of these days; your week’s work will then be over, and you will be more than repaid for anything you have done for your Lord.

[Hebrews 10:37-38](#). *For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.*

The drawers back-the mere professors-those who say they have been illuminated, and who have tasted, in a measure, the sweetness of religion, yet who never received Christ in their inmost heart,-these are the people in whom God hath no pleasure.

[Hebrews 10:39](#). *But we-What a consoling end this is to the chapter!*

It ought to comfort every believer in Christ who has been distressed by the earlier verses: “we”-

[Hebrews 10:39](#). *Are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.*

May that be true of every one of us, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake!
Amen.

HEBREWS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 11

Verses 1-13

Hebrews 11:1-2. *Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elder obtained a good report.*

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

Hebrews 11:3. *Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.*

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

Hebrews 11:4. *By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.*

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

Hebrews 11:5. *By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death, and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.*

It is faith that muzzles the mouth of death, and takes away the power of the sepulcher. If any man, who had not been a believer, had been translated

as Enoch was, we should have been able to point to a great feat accomplished apart from faith. It has never been so; for this, which was one of the greatest things that was ever done, — to leap from this life into another, and to overleap the grave altogether, — was only achieved “by faith.”

[Hebrews 11:6-7](#). *But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet,*

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

[Hebrews 11:7](#). *Moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.*

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

[Hebrews 11:8](#). *By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.*

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

[Hebrews 11:9](#). *By faith he adjourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:*

It is one of the great evidences of true faith for her to keep on, to continue, to abide, without any visible signs or tokens of what she knows is hers. The life of faith is wonderful, but so also is the walk of faith. Her walk has much about it that is mysterious; she knows that the land she treads on

belongs to her; and yet, in another sense, she cannot claim a solitary foot of it. She knows that she is at home, even as Abraham was in his own land; yet like him, she knows herself to be a sojourner in a strange land, and is quite content to be so.

[Hebrews 11:10](#). *For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.*

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

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

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

[Hebrews 11:13](#). *These all died in faith,*

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

[Hebrews 11:13](#). *Not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.*

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

This exposition consisted of readings from [Hebrews 11:1-13](#); and [Hebrews 11:32-40](#).

Verses 1-21

This is the triumphal arch of faith. Here we find the names of many of the heroes of faith, and a brief record of some of the battles in which they fought and conquered. May you and I possess “like precious faith” at; that of which we have here the story! We cannot enter heaven without it; we cannot fight our way through the world without it.

[Hebrews 11:1](#). *Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, It gets a grip of what it hopes for, and holds it in its hand.*

[Hebrews 11:1](#). *The evidence of things not seen.*

We do see by faith. We see by faith what cannot be seen by our eyes; we grasp by faith what cannot be grasped with our hands. A strange mystery is the simple act of faith.

[Hebrews 11:2](#). *For by it the elders obtained a good report.*

All the godly of the olden time had a good report of God and of holy men as the result of their faith.

[Hebrews 11:3](#). *Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.*

They were not evolved out of something else that existed before; evolution is a rank lie against revelation. The worlds were not made, not one of them was made, out of something pre-existent; but they were framed by the Word of God, and the things which are seen were not made of things which are seen.

[Hebrews 11:4](#). *By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain,*

He was a better man than Cain, and his offering was a better offering than Cain’s was; but at bottom here was the difference between the two brothers, Abel had faith, and Cain had none. It was “by faith” that Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain presented.

[Hebrews 11:4](#). *By which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.*

What wondrous faith this is! Here is a dead man speaking. Here is a man who is slain by his brother; yet the one who is killed receives the approbation of God.

[Hebrews 11:5](#). *By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death;*

Faith has conquered death itself, or else avoided it. There is scarcely anything which faith cannot do, for faith ranks itself on the side of the

omnipotent God, and becomes all but omnipotent. By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death.

[Hebrews 11:5-6](#). *And was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is,*

He cannot come to a God who to his own mind is non-existent; he must believe that he is.

[Hebrews 11:6](#). *And that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*

You must believe that God hears prayer. You must believe that he will punish the guilty, and that he will reward the righteous. Without this sure faith, you cannot come to him.

[Hebrews 11:7](#). *By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house;*

You see, faith and fear can live in the same heart; and they can work together to build the same ark. Faith and fear are very sweet companions, when the fear is filial fear, a holy dread of disobeying, God. When we are moved with that fear, our faith becomes practical.

[Hebrews 11:7-8](#). *By the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith. By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed;*

He did not hesitate to leave his family, to leave his property, to leave his country; but he obeyed, “when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance.”

[Hebrews 11:8](#). *And he went out, not knowing whither he went.*

Faith puts her hand into God’s hand, and follows where he leads, with sweet contentment, knowing that, if she cannot see, God can, and he will not lead us wrong. Do you not remember that hymn that our Brother Chamberlain sings so sweetly?

“So on I go — not knowing, I would not if I might;
I’d rather walk in the dark with God, than go alone in the light;
I’d rather walk by faith with him, than go alone by sight.
Where he may lead, I’ll follow, My trust in him repose:
And every hour in perfect peace I’ll sing, ‘He knows! he knows!’”

[Hebrews 11:9-10](#). *By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.*

There have been many here in this house of prayer who have looked for this city, and they have gone to it. Others of us sit waiting here till our Lord's dear hand shall beckon us, and his voice shall say, "Come up higher." We are looking for the city. Keep looking, beloved, there is nothing here worth looking for; but look for "a city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God."

[Hebrews 11:11](#). *Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.*

And this holy woman is enrolled among these saintly ones. Her faith was not all it ought to have been; but God saw that it was true faith, and he loved it, and he wrote the record of it.

[Hebrews 11:12](#). *Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable.*

This is true, literally, of Abraham's seed according to the flesh. It is also true in a spiritual sense, for he is "the father of all them that believe", and they are a multitude whom no man can number.

[Hebrews 11:13](#). *These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them,*

What long arms faith has! The promises are afar off, and yet faith embraces them tonight. Embrace the promises, dear friends, and stretch out your hands by faith to hands that have gone before.

"E'en now by faith we join our hands
With those that went before;
And greet the blood-besprinkled bands
On the eternal shore."

[Hebrews 11:13](#). *And confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.*

They not only were strangers and pilgrims, but they confessed it. Confessed faith is requisite. Oh, you who, like Nicodemus, come to Christ by night, be ashamed that you are ashamed, and come out, and boldly confess what you are!

[Hebrews 11:14](#). *For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.*

They were strangers and pilgrims here, and they sought a country elsewhere. Every man wants a country; and if we have not one beneath the stars, we seek it somewhere else.

[Hebrews 11:15](#). *And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.*

Ah, but God's people are not mindful of that country from whence they came out! They have opportunity to return; but they have no wish to return. May God's grace always keep any of you from turning back; for it is to turn back unto perdition! Your faces are heavenward today; keep them so. Remember the doom of any that apostatize. It is impossible, "if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance." "If the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men." Lord, keep thy servants! Hold us up, and we shall be safe.

[Hebrews 11:16](#). *But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.*

They are not ashamed to be called God's people, and he is not ashamed to be called their God. They are looking for a city, and he has prepared a city for them. Evidently he and they are well agreed. They want a heaven, and he is preparing heaven for them, and preparing them for heaven.

[Hebrews 11:17-19](#). *By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son. Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.*

This was one of the grandest achievements of faith. It was also a figure or type of God's offering up his well-beloved Son almost on the same spot.

[Hebrews 11:20-21](#). *By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff.*

The staff which had helped him so often in his early pilgrimage, the staff on which he leaned when he came back from the place of his wrestling, halting on his thigh. He leaned on it as he sat upright on his death-couch, and pronounced the parting blessing. So, you see, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob,

all lived by faith, and did their works by faith, and distributed blessings to their children by faith. Friend, hast thou this faith, or hast thou not? If thou hast it, thou art blessed among men, blessed among women. If thou hast it not, what hope is there for thee either in this life or in eternity?

Verses 1-26

[Hebrews 11:1-2](#). *Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report.*

The names of those who lived in old time are handed down with commendation because of their faith. If they had had no faith, we should have had no report of them.

[Hebrews 11:3](#). *Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.*

The world was not made out of the world. There was nothing to make it out of. It was created simply by the word of God, and our faith knows that. I question whether we should ever get in the matter of the creation beyond what is revealed to our faith. Reason is all very well, but faith mounts upon the shoulders of reason, and sees much farther than reason with her best telescope will ever be able to see. It is enough for us who have faith that God has told us how he made the world, and we believe it.

[Hebrews 11:4](#). *By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.*

He spoke by faith when he lived. Faith makes him speak now that he is dead. What wonders faith can work. The first saint who entered heaven entered there, it is certain, by faith. It was faith that enabled him to present an acceptable sacrifice, and it was faith that presented him to heaven. If the first who entered heaven entered there by faith, rest assured that will be true to the last; and none will enter there but those who believe.

[Hebrews 11:5](#). *By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.*

Beloved, if we cannot get a translation as Enoch did, let us not be content without getting God's good pleasure as he did. Oh! that it may be said of us that we pleased God. Then we shall, one way or another, conquer death; for if we do, we shall triumph over the grave; and if Christ shall

come before we die, we shall triumph in the coming of Christ. Anyhow, faith shall be more than a match for the last enemy.

[Hebrews 11:6](#). *But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*

Do we not sometimes fail in this matter? We try to come to God without believing that he is. We seem to pray to nothing, or to nobody, to a spectre, to a phantom. But that prayer which is accepted is prayer to a real God, of whom we are assured that he is. Do we not also fail in our belief as to the success of prayer? We do not fully recognize that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. He that prays, believing that God will be found by him, shall not pray in vain. Tonight we may well say, "Lord, increase our faith."

[Hebrews 11:7](#). *By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear,*

For there is a fear which comes of faith — a fear which is the strength of faith's arms, by which it moves us into action. It is not slavish fear. It is a fit, and proper, and reasonable fear, such as any man must have that believes God's threatenings. "Moved with fear."

[Hebrews 11:7](#). *Prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.*

Every act of faith condemns the world. Men who did not believe in God were, some of them, made to feel condemned, and others were condemned, even if they did not feel it, when they saw this holy man building a great ship upon dry land — a ship which he never would launch, but to which God would bring the sea, so that he should float over the waters deep, absolutely secure, whilst others perished. If you want to judge the wickedness of men, you need not set yourself to do it in the first place. Live a holy life, and you will judge the ungodly. I have heard it said that if there is a crooked stick, and you want to show how crooked it is, you need not waste words in description. Place a straight one by the side of it, and the thing is done directly. Noah condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

[Hebrews 11:8](#). *By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.*

Very easy to read about that, but not so easy to do it — to tear yourself from home and friends — to go into a totally unknown country, swarming with enemies, solely on the promise that one day that country should belong to his seed. It might be hundreds of years afterwards: but God had called him, and Abraham raised no question, but away he went.

[Hebrews 11:9](#). *By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country,*

Not building a house there — not becoming a citizen of it, but always dwelling there in gypsy fashion.

[Hebrews 11:9](#). *Dwelling in tabernacles*

That is, in tents.

[Hebrews 11:9-10](#). *With Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.*

He did not build a city. He did not try to do so, “for he looked for a city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God.”

[Hebrews 11:11](#). *Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.*

And that was good judgment, was it not? There is no mistake about that. Whatever difficulties may lie in the way, we may always know that he is faithful who hath promised. You are not past age, my brother. God will bless you in seeking to do good. You are not past age, my sister. Have but faith in God, and then in your old age you may bring many to the Saviour’s feet. He is faithful that has promised.

[Hebrews 11:12](#). *Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead,*

For he was ordered to be sacrificed. There sprung from one, and him as good as dead.

[Hebrews 11:12](#). *So many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable.*

Or if this text means Abraham, then his body was dead; and yet there sprang of him a seed “so many as the sand which is by the seashore innumerable.”

[Hebrews 11:13](#). *These all died in faith, not having received the promises,*

By which is meant, not that they did not receive the promises, but they did not receive the things promised.

[Hebrews 11:13-14](#). *But having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.*

They have not come to it yet; nor will they as long as they are here below. They are still seeking a country.

[Hebrews 11:15](#). *And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.*

Abraham, if he wanted to settle down, might have crossed once more the river, and gone back to Ur of Chaldees. But he did not look for a city upon earth. He was evidently looking for one somewhere else. The country that he sought was not beyond the Euphrates, but beyond the narrow stream of death.

[Hebrews 11:16](#). *But now they desire a better country,*

Do you feel those desires within your heart? If not, surely you have no faith, for they that have faith in the better country desire it.

[Hebrews 11:16](#). *That is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.*

He might be ashamed to be called their God if he had unsettled them, and made them long for another city, and yet had never prepared one for them. The longings of the saints are but prophecies of the benediction of God. That which he makes us hunger for, is prepared. The bread of life shall be given us, and that country which he makes us seek, exists, and will be found of us. Wherefore keep your face that way, and let every longing and pining for the home country reassure you that this is not any dreamland, but that there is such a place.

[Hebrews 11:17-19](#). *By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son. Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.*

Faith does not always account. She is satisfied with God's word. But when she does account, then she is great at accounts, for here is a man who had not heard of the resurrection from the dead, yet believing in it. Christ had not risen from the dead. There had been no such chapter for Abraham

to read as that wonderful one, the fifteenth chapter of the first Epistle to Corinthians; and yet his faith seemed to have a revelation within itself. God must keep his promise. Therefore, if I, in obedience to him, put the promised seed to death, God can raise him up, for he must keep his promise. He cannot lie.

[Hebrews 11:20](#). *By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.*

Blind as he was, he could see more than many that have good eyes, for he had the eyes of faith. There is no end to the blessing that faith can bestow upon others. A believing man can bless his children. I believe in the blessings of good men. Why should I not? If they are believers, they have power with God. Their wishes are prayers. Their prayers are heard. Their blessings then are realities.

[Hebrews 11:21](#). *By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff.*

That wonderful staff on which he leaned when he came out of Jabbok — that wonderful staff with which he crossed this Jordan in his poverty, but after which he became two bands.

[Hebrews 11:22](#). *By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.*

Faith touches all sense of things — even a funeral and bones, too, for faith is good at everything. She can sweep the house and seek diligently. She can enter heaven. She can go to the gates of death. Oh! for more of it!

[Hebrews 11:23](#). *By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.*

Their faith made them hide him, for that faith laid hold of God, and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.

[Hebrews 11:24-26](#). *By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.*

Verses 1-40

First, a definition of faith.

[Hebrews 11:1-3](#). *Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report. Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.*

There was no pre-existent matter, the world was made by God's word, so that prior to the things which are seen, there existed that which is not seen. We, dear friends, when we are trusting in the unseen God, are going back to first principles, we are getting to that which is the essence and the source of all. The next verse illustrates the worship of faith.

[Hebrews 11:4](#). *By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.*

There is no worshipping God aright, except by faith. The most gorgeous ceremonies are as nothing in his sight; it is the faith of the heart which he accepts. Next we read of the reward of faith.

[Hebrews 11:5-6](#). *By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*

See this reward then; it pleases God, and that is reward enough for anyone of us. Next see faith's safety.

[Hebrews 11:7](#). *By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.*

Faith can outlive a deluge which drowns the whole world. She hath an Ark even when God's wrath sweeps all the rest away. Next we learn the obedience of faith.

[Hebrews 11:8-10](#). *By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed: and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.*

Here you have the expectation of faith. Faith does not live on things seen; she lives on something yet to come. That which is to come she regards as eternal, not like a mere tent in which she dwells here, but a city that hath foundations, fixed and firm. Next we see the strength of faith, that strength seen in the deadness of nature.

[Hebrews 11:11-13](#). *Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised. Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable. These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.*

That is a rich word, they “embraced them.” They were far off, and yet faith brought them so near that they seemed to receive them to their hearts and feel the comfort of them. Here is the confession of faith.

[Hebrews 11:14-19](#). *For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city. By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.*

Here you have the triumph of faith, one of the greatest victories that was ever achieved by faith, when a man was willing, at God’s command, to offer up his son, his only son, his son according to promise, his son in whom all the covenant was to be fulfilled. In the 20th verse you get the discernment of faith, faith foreseeing: —

[Hebrews 11:20-21](#). *By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff.*

You remember ‘his discernment, how he crossed his hands willingly that he might lay the right hand upon the younger son. Faith is always giving

blessings to others, and she knows which way to give them, for God maketh her wondrously quick of heart and quick of eye.

[Hebrews 11:22-23](#). *By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel: and gave commandment concerning his bones. By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.*

Here is the courage of faith: —

[Hebrews 11:24-25](#). *By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son. of Pharaoh's daughter: Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season:*

Here is the choice of faith: —

[Hebrews 11:26](#). *Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward*

Here is the judgment of faith, by which she judges wisely, choosing rather to be reproached for Christ than to reign with the world.

[Hebrews 11:27-28](#). *By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible. Through faith he kept the Passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them.*

Here, again, you have the obedience of faith, taking God's precepts and carrying them out.

[Hebrews 11:29](#). *By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned.*

There you have the difference between faith and presumption: faith goes through the sea, presumption is drowned in the sea.

[Hebrews 11:30](#). *By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.*

Here are the weapons of faith, the warfare of faith, with nothing but her ram's horn trumpet she encompasses the giant walls of the city, and down they fall.

[Hebrews 11:31](#). *By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.*

Here you have faith uniting itself with the people of God: she perished not with them that believed not, for she had come out from among them and allied herself with the people of God by receiving the spies.

[Hebrews 11:32-35](#). *And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae: of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance: that they might obtain a better resurrection:*

O the victories of faith.! When faith takes to working, how mightily she works.

[Hebrews 11:36-37](#). *And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented:*

You have seen the works of faith and the sufferings of faith; now you see God's estimate of faith. He counts the believing man to be far beyond the rest of mankind.

[Hebrews 11:38-39](#). *(Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:*

It lay in the future to them far more than it does to us, for Christ has now come, and we look back to that glorious appearing of our Lord and Saviour, but they had altogether to look forward.

[Hebrews 11:40](#). *God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.*

For it never was God's intention that any part of his church should be able to do without the rest of it, so that those who lived before the time of Christ cannot do without us; neither can we do without them.

Verses 32-40

[Hebrews 11:32](#). *And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets:*

There are some names, in this chapter, which we should hardly have expected to see there, the characters mentioned having been so disfigured by serious faults, and flaws, and failings; but the distinguishing feature of

faith was there in every instance, and especially in the case of Samson. Perhaps there was no more childlike faith, in any man, than there was in him; who but a man full of faith would have hurled himself upon a thousand men with no weapon in his hand but the jawbone of an ass? There was a wondrous confidence in God in that weak, strong man, which though it does not excuse his faults, yet nevertheless puts him in the ranks of the believers. Happy is the man or woman who believeth in God. There were multitudes of others, beside those whom the apostle named, —

[Hebrews 11:33](#). *Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness,*

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

[Hebrews 11:33-34](#). *Obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong,*

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

[Hebrews 11:34-35](#). *Waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection:*

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

[Hebrews 11:36-39](#). *And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:*

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

[Hebrews 11:40](#). *God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.*

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

This exposition consisted of readings from [Hebrews 11:1-13](#); and [Hebrews 11:32-40](#).

[HEBREWS CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 12

Verses 1-6

[Hebrews 12:1](#). *Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us,*

Or "entangle us."

[Hebrews 12:1-3](#). *And let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.*

The Lord does not wish his people's hands to hang down, and their knees to become weak, so in this passage, as in many others, he administers gracious remedies. Among the rest, he bids us consider his own dear Son. Shall we faint under our small afflictions when he endured so well under his heavy burdens? Come, be strengthened, my weak heart.

“HIS way was much rougher and darker than thine;
Did Christ thy Lord suffer, and wilt thou repine?”

[Hebrews 12:4](#). *Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.*

It has hardly come to blows and bruises yet — certainly not to bloody strokes. Ye have not lost blood yet for Christ.

[Hebrews 12:5](#). *And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him:*

Neither think too little of it, nor too much of it — too little of it by despising it and not listening to the voice of the rod, nor too much of it by fainting when thou art rebuked of him.

[Hebrews 12:6](#). *For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.*

Oh! what comfort there is here! Whenever we are under the scourging hand of God, how we ought to be cheered with the thought that this is a part of the heritage of the children. There are Elis who spoil their children. God is not one of them. He spares not the rod, and the more he loves, often the more he corrects. A tree of common fruit may be let alone so long as there is some little fruit on it, but the very best fruit gets the sharpest pruning; and I have noticed that in those countries where the best wine is made, the vine-dressers cut the shoots right close in, and in the winter you cannot tell that there is a vine there at all unless you watch very carefully. They must cut them back sharp to get sweet clusters. The Lord does thus with his beloved. It is not anger. Afflictions are not always anger. There are often tokens of great love.

This exposition consisted of readings from Isaiah 35. [Hebrews 12:1-6](#).

Verses 1-17

[Hebrews 12:1-2](#). *Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for*

the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

We can have no doubt about the great truths which we believe, for we are compassed about with a cloud of witnesses. The former chapter gives us the names of many of these glorious bearers of testimony, who all by faith achieved great wonders and so bore witness to the truth of God. Having therefore no room for doubt let us throw our whole strength into our high calling, and run with patience having our eyes always fixed upon him, the beginner and finisher of our faith, who has run the race himself and won the prize, and now sits down on the right hand of the throne of God.

[Hebrews 12:3-4](#). *For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.*

It has never come to a bloody sweat with you as with him, nor to death upon a cross, as in his case. Shall the disciple be above his master or the servant above his lord?

[Hebrews 12:5-6](#). *And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.*

With doting parents it is not so: often him whom his mother loveth is allowed to do as he pleases and to escape chastening, but this is folly. The love of God is higher and wiser than the partialities of parents. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth;" it is a token of his favour to us that he takes the trouble to remove our love of sin by sharp and bitter pain.

[Hebrews 12:7-10](#). *If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.*

What a bright light this sheds upon all affliction, that it is for our profit, that it is thereby we are made partakers of the holiness of God. Oh, blessed result from a little smart and bitter.

[Hebrews 12:11-13](#). *Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.*

Look at chastisement then in the divine light, and be comforted, be strengthened, be healed of the infirmity of your weakness, be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.

[Hebrews 12:14](#). *Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:*

“Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.” A man’s god is like himself, and until we become like God we cannot see God; we misunderstand God until we have been trained to imitate him.

[Hebrews 12:15-17](#). *Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled; lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.*

It was done and could not be undone. Does it not seem strange that after speaking to us about being God’s sons and favoured with his love, yet even then, in that clear blaze of light, there comes in this caution against fornication and profanity. Ah me! how near a foul spot may be to lily-like whiteness. How Judas may sit side by side with favoured and true-hearted apostles, aye, and may be near the Master, too. “Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” And, oh, friends, if at any time the pottage should seem very sweet and we should be very hungry, if the world’s gain should be almost necessary to our livelihood, and we are tempted to do an unrighteous thing to get it, let us take care, for Esau could not undo the terrible act of selling his birthright, neither could we if we were permitted to do so. God grant we may be spared from such a dreadful crime!

Verses 1-29

1, 2. *Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us. Looking unto Jesus*

The Apostle seems to say, since so many look on from heaven, and earth, and hell, and we are runners in the great life race, let us strip to it: let us throw aside everything that would make our running difficult; every weight, however golden; every garment, however richly embroidered, lest it should entangle us in our course. And then when we have set out, let us not conclude that we have won the victory, but “run with patience,” on, on, on, till at last we reach the goal.

[Hebrews 12:2-3](#). *The author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.*

What a runner in the race was he! and what a race he ran! While we see him at the end of the course, holding out the crown, let us remember that he knows all the trials of the way, knows what pressure must be put upon ourselves ere we can reach the mark.

[Hebrews 12:4](#). *Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.*

Your battles have been nothing yet; ye think yourselves martyrs. What have you done? What have you suffered? What have ye endured, compared with your Lord, compared with the saints of old?

[Hebrews 12:5-6](#). *And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.*

Here is another noble reason for patience. That same trial which, on the one hand, comes from man, viewed in another way comes from, God, and is a chastening. Let us accept it at his hands, regarding it as a token of sonship.

[Hebrews 12:7-8](#). *If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.*

You have not your Father’s love; you are not recognized as an honourable member of his family.

[Hebrews 12:9-13](#). *Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few*

days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

The Apostle cheers up those who are tried, with the reflection that the good which will come out of their trouble will abundantly recompense them. They are not to expect to see that good at once. It will come afterwards — not yet. No reasonable man expects the harvest at the same time that he sows. You must wait a while — bear with patience — have confidence in God — and all your trials will end well.

[Hebrews 12:14](#). *Follow peace with all men,*

You will not always get it, but follow it — run after it.

[Hebrews 12:14-17](#). *And holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled; Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.*

He sold his birthright. He could not have the pottage and the birthright too; therefore, he chose the pottage. He must stand to it. And if here, today, we deliberately choose the pleasures of this world, we must not marvel if we have to stand to them for ever.

[Hebrews 12:18-24](#). *For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: (For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart: And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:.) But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men*

made perfect, And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.

The center around which we gather in these days is not Sinai with its thunder and its fire; it is the cross; nay it is heaven; it is the enthroned Saviour; it is the great Mediator of a better covenant than that of which Moses came to speak. We gather there, and we make no a part of that vast throng that now surrounds that center. Oh! that we while we hear the sweet voice of the gospel, may lend it a willing ear, and may we not be among the number of those who reject the voice that speaks from heaven to us in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

[Hebrews 12:25-28](#). *See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven, Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:*

For let us not think that we are not to be reverent because we gather at the gospel's call. Let us not dream that God who is a consuming fire on the top of Sinai, is less terrible under the gospel than under the law, for it is not so.

[Hebrews 12:29](#). *For our God is a consuming fire.*

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CHAPTER 13

Verses 1-21

This is a practical chapter at the close of this most instructive Epistle.

[Hebrews 13:1](#). *Let brotherly love continue.*

The word "continue" implies that the "brotherly love" exists, there are many things which might put an end to it, so see to it that, as far as you are concerned, it continues. Under all provocations, and under all disappointments, "let brotherly love continue."

[Hebrews 13:2-3](#). *Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.*

And being likely therefore to take your own turn of suffering, and to need the sympathy of your fellow-Christians. Show sympathy to others while they need it, and they will gratefully remember you when you are in bonds or in adversity.

[Hebrews 13:4](#). *Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.*

And terrible will be their doom when God does judge them. They may think that, because they sin in secret, therefore they shall escape punishment; but it shall not be so. Whether men judge them or not, God will judge them.

[Hebrews 13:5](#). *Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*

You have a grand reserve, therefore. What you have in possession is only a little spending money to use on the road to heaven, but “he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” You may confidently fall back upon the providence of God in all times of straitness and need.

[Hebrews 13:6-8](#). *So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me. Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation. Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever.*

It is for your own benefit to remember in your prayers those who preach the Word of God to you, for what can they do without divine assistance and how can you be profited by them unless they are first blessed of God? Remember them, therefore.

[Hebrews 13:9](#). *Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines.*

Do not put yourself into every man’s hand to let him play with you as he pleases. The fish that never nibbles at the bait is not likely to be caught by the hook, and he who will not give heed to “divers and strange doctrines” is not likely to be carried away in the net of heresy.

[Hebrews 13:9](#). *For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been*

occupied therein.

Some in the apostle's day made religion to consist almost entirely in observing certain rules as to what they ate and what they drank. "Be not so foolish," says Paul, "there is something better than that; seek to have your heart established with grace."

[Hebrews 13:10](#). *We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle.*

Those who cling to the external and ceremonial observances of religion have no right to the privileges which belong to those who come to the spiritual altar; they cannot share that secret.

[Hebrews 13:11-14](#). *For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach. For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.*

Then, my brother or sister, do not look for a continuing city here. Do not build your nest on any one of the trees of earth, for they are all marked for the axe, and they will all have to come down, and your nest too, if you have built upon them.

[Hebrews 13:15](#). *By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.*

If you are believers in Christ, you are God's priests, and this is the sacrifice that you are continually to offer, — the fruit of your lips, giving thanks to God's name.

[Hebrews 13:16](#). *But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.*

We are to do good to others, to communicate of our own good things to those who need them, and to do this at some sacrifice to ourselves, "for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."

[Hebrews 13:17-19](#). *Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you. Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly. But I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.*

You must have noted how often the apostle asks for the prayers of those to whom he is writing, so we are following a good example when we ask you to pray for us.

[Hebrews 13:20-21](#). *Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

Verses 1-25

[Hebrews 13:1](#). *Let brotherly love continue.*

It is supposed to be there already; let it continue, not only love of a common kind, such as we are to have to all men, but that special “brotherly love” which Christians bear to one another as members of one family. “Let brotherly love continue.”

[Hebrews 13:2](#). *Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.*

Abraham did so, and Lot did so; they thought they were entertaining ordinary strangers, and they washed their feet; and prepared their food but it turned out that they had entertained angels. Some people will never entertain angels unawares, for they never entertain anybody. May we be given to hospitality, for that should be part of the character of saints.

[Hebrews 13:3](#). *Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them;*

Christian people who have got into trouble through being Christian persons who have been shut up in prison for righteousness’ sake; there were many such in Paul’s day. Sympathize with them, says the apostle, “as bound with them.”

[Hebrews 13:3](#). *And them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.*

So that, if you are not now in adversity, you may be before long. Therefore, have a fellow feeling for those who are in trouble. If you are not yourself distressed, you are not out of the reach of such a thing; therefore be tender towards your afflicted brethren.

[Hebrews 13:4-5](#). *Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge. Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*

There is a fortune for you, that is a pension to fall back upon. You may very well be content to leave your temporal concerns in the hands of God, for he hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Why, if you believe that one promise of God, he will be better to you than ten thousand friends who promise to provide for you! The Provider in heaven is better than any provider on earth. A beautiful motto is that of the old house of Chester, "God's providence is my inheritance."

[Hebrews 13:6-7](#). *So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me. Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.*

It seems that there were special persons, who were leaders in the Church of God, who were to be remembered, and thought upon, and considered. They were set apart for this world: "them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God." They were leaders among the saints, and Paul would have the rank and file imitate them in their confident trust in the Lord Jesus Christ: "whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation:" —

[Hebrews 13:8-9](#). *Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever. Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines.*

Do not believe one thing today, and another thing tomorrow; be not carried about, like the thistle-down in the wind. Have a faith of your own, know what you believe, and stand to it firmly.

[Hebrews 13:9-10](#). *For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein. We have an altar,*

Yes, true religion cannot exist without an altar, but what kind of altar is it? Is it a material altar? Far from it; but "we have an altar," —

[Hebrews 13:10](#). *Whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle.*

They have nothing to do with it, for they are still under the old ceremonial law; and those whose religion consists in outward rites and ceremonies can never eat of the spiritual altar whereat spiritual men eat, for they do not understand the scripture, and they still serve the Mosaic tabernacle.

[Hebrews 13:11-13](#). *For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the*

camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.

Outside the gate, was the place of Christ's atoning death. "Without the camp," is the place where his servants will find themselves most at home.

[Hebrews 13:14](#). *For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.*

We cannot stop in the condemned city; we must be outside its walls. Our Lord went out of the city to die, and we must go without the camp to live.

[Hebrews 13:15-16](#). *By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name. But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.*

Christian people should be always doing good. As God is ever doing good, so we can never say we have done all we ought to do and will do no more: "To do good and to communicate," that is, to communicate of your substance, and of your charitable help, "forget not."

[Hebrews 13:17-19](#). *Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you. Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly. But I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.*

The movements of God's servants may be controlled by prayer. You cannot tell how much of blessing will come to your own souls, through the ministry, if you are in the habit of praying about it. The man who comes up to God's house, having prayed for God to bless the preacher, is not likely to go away unprofitable.

[Hebrews 13:20-25](#). *Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. And I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation: for I have written a letter unto you in few words. Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you. Salute all them that have the rule*

over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you. Grace be with you all. Amen.

Does not that blessing seem to come across the centuries as fresh as if we heard the apostle speak it with his living lips? Oh, to feel it true tonight! “Grace be with you all. Amen.”

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CHAPTER FIFTY-EIGHT

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CHAPTER 1

Verses 1-26

[James 1:1](#). *James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.*

James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was an apostle, and he was the Lord's brother, yet he mentions not these greater things, but he takes the lowly title, in which, no doubt, he felt the highest honour, and calls himself "a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ." Happy is that

man who serves the Lord, whose whole life is not that of an independent master of himself, but of one who is fully submissive to the divine command. Where is the fiction of the ten lost tribes? He writes to the twelve tribes that were scattered abroad, and gives them greeting, so that this Epistle is first directed to the seed of Israel, and then, as in all things, to all the Church of God, seeing all the saints of God are the true seed of believing Abraham, the father of believers.

[James 1:2](#). *My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;*

Do not sorrow over your trials, do not look upon them as misfortunes and calamities, they are black vessels, but they are loaded with gold. Your choicest mercies come to you disguised as your sharpest trials. Welcome them; do not sorrow over them, but rejoice in them.

[James 1:3-4](#). *Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.*

Endure everything; suffer everything that God sends you. Bathe yourself in this rough sea, till, by God's blessing, it hath strengthened you and cleansed you, for to that end he sends it, and that it may perfect you by discipline, educating all your spiritual faculties, and bringing out all your powers for his glory. Shrink not then, seek not to escape by any wrong means from trial, but go through with it, have perfect endurance of it, that ye may be perfect and whole, wanting nothing. "If any of you lack wisdom," and that is the point where you are most likely not to be perfect and entire.

[James 1:5](#). *If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.*

We are so apt, when we give anything, to diminish the value of it by some unkind remarks, but God doeth not so; he giveth, as he bids us give, with simplicity. There is the gift, and he will not detract from it by upbraiding us. Why, some will upbraid the poor while they help them: "How came you to be in such a condition?" But God saith not so to us; the gift is given in pure liberality, without any upbraiding. Wisdom is a gift. The best wisdom is not that which we acquire by study, but that which is the distinct gift of God in answer to prayer.

[James 1:6](#). *But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.*

Now on the shore, now sinking back, now driving fearlessly ahead, then sinking down. This is not the kind of man that prevails with God in prayer, it is not the kind of faith we ought to have in God a faith that is very brilliant on the Sunday, and very dull on the Monday: a faith that is triumphant after a sermon, but which seems to be defeated when we get into actual trouble.

[James 1:7-8](#). *For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.*

Unstable in everything. Till you get a single heart, till your whole soul is bound up in confidence in God, you cannot expect to be stable in your ways. "Unite my heart to fear thy name," and then I shall not be a double-minded man.

[James 1:9](#). *Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted:*

The lowness of his estate is an exaltation. He shall find in his troubles a double blessing; he shall be made greater by being so little. "But let the rich rejoice in that he is made low," so that what would have been foolish pomp and pride is taken away from him, and, by the grace of God, he is kept low. "Because as the flower of the grass, he shall pass away."

[James 1:10-11](#). *But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away. For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways.*

Oh! to be delivered from all glorying in such uncertain riches. Whatever God gives you, he may soon take away from you; if he takes it not away, he may take away your power to enjoy it: it is poor, slippery stuff at the very best. Rejoice that you have something better, something lasting.

[James 1:12](#). *Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.*

It is promised to love, but it is given to endurance. It is the love of God which spies out our love and rewards it, but rewards it partly by trying it, and then ultimately by bringing forth the stephanos, the crown. Men ran for a crown in the Greek games, and could not win the crown without the running. So doth God give to them that run a crown, but not without the running. He giveth to them, first, the privilege of suffering for his name's sake, and then of being rewarded for it.

[James 1:13](#). *Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:*

God tries men, but the motive of a trial is that which differences it from a temptation. In a temptation we try a man with a view of inducing him to do wrong; but God tries men to best them, that they may, by finding out their weakness, be saved from doing wrong. He never inclines a heart to evil. While he doeth all things, and is in all things, yet not so that he himself doeth evil, or can be charged therewith.

[James 1:14](#). *But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.*

This is the wanton harlot that deceives the heart of man: his own desire grown strong and hot till it cometh to be a lusting: this draws a man away; it baits the hook, and man swallows it and is thus entrapped and enticed.

[James 1:15](#). *Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.*

There is the history and pedigree of sin. God save us from having any connection with the desire to sin, lest from that we be led into sin, and then from sin descend into death.

[James 1:16-17](#). *Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above,*

All good from God, all evil from ourselves.

[James 1:17](#). *And cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.*

There is variableness and there is the shadow of turning in the sun, but in that greater Father of lights there is neither parallax nor tropic; he is evermore the same, and we may go to him with unwavering confidence because he is the same. Oh! what a blessing to such changing creatures as we are to have an unchanging God! “Of his own will.” If you want to know the power of God’s will, it never goes towards evil.

[James 1:18](#). *Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.*

The best and noblest part of his creation, the twice begotten, the immortals that shall be the bodyguard of his Son, that shall stand about his bed, which is Solomon’s, each man with his sword upon his thigh, because of fear in the night. What a privilege it is to be begotten of God, to be the “firstfruits” of his creatures!

[James 1:19](#). *Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear,*

Because it is by the Word that we are begotten: let us be swift to hear it. “Slow to speak,” because there is so much sin in us that the less we speak the better. In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin. Great talkativeness is seldom dissociated from great sinfulness. “Slow to wrath.”

[James 1:20](#). *Slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.*

There is a tendency to grow angry with those who do not see the truth; but is it not a foolish thing to be angry with blind men because they do not see? What if you see yourself? Who opened your eyes? Give God the promise for what you see, and never think that your anger, your indignation, your hot temper, can ever work the righteousness of God. It is contrary thereto, and cannot work towards it.

[James 1:21-23](#). *Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass:*

It is a good thing for him to do that, to see himself as others see him. “Beholding his natural face,” even as men in looking into the Word of God, behold the face of their nature; they see what they are like as they look into the glass.

[James 1:24-26](#). *For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man’s religion is vain.*

Verses 1-27

[James 1:1](#). *James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.*

According to the teaching of some in the present day, the apostle should have said, “To the two tribes, and the ten that are lost,” but he does not say so, nor does Scripture say so. “To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.”

[James 1:2](#). *My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into diverse temptations;*

Or, “trials.” This is a strange thing to say, is it not? Should we not count it great joy when we escape from trial? Perhaps so; but we are expressly told to count, or reckon, it all joy when we fall into divers trials. Have you never known what it is, in times of peace and quietness, to feel as if you missed the grandeur of the presence of God? I have looked back to times of trial with a kind of longing, not to have them return, but to feel the strength of God as I have felt it then, to feel the power of faith, as I have felt it then, to hang upon God’s powerful arm as I hung upon it then, and to see God at work as I saw him then. I think the mariner at home must sometimes feel a kind of longing once more to enjoy a storm on the ocean, and to see how the good ship rides on the billows’ crest. Life gets flat sometimes while all goes smoothly, and we need even the variety of a trial to bring us to close dealing with our God. It is so much for our good to be tried, it is so much for the glory of God that we should be tried, that we will read the verse again, and note what the apostle says: “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers trials.” Be like the soldier who is not afraid of the shot and shell, and the turmoil and strife of the battle.

[James 1:3](#). *Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.*

That is a gem of the first water, well worth finding even if you have to dig in the mines of trial for it.

[James 1:4](#). *But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.*

This is true Christian perfection, when every gracious quality is present, and present in perfection. If you have a child, it is a great joy to you to find the child perfect as a child, — with no sense deficient, no limb wanting, and every part rightly formed. Oh, that we may all be such Christians, “perfect and entire, wanting nothing”!

[James 1:5](#). *If any of you lack wisdom,*

That is the point in which we are all deficient; and if we are to be wanting in nothing, we must not be lacking in wisdom. How, then, are we to obtain it?

[James 1:5](#). *Let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.*

Young beginner, you who have but lately put on Christ, you certainly do lack wisdom; you cannot have attained that boon in all its fullness yet, then

go to God for it. He can give it to you, and he will give it to you if you ask him for it.

[James 1:6-7](#). *But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.*

It ensures failure in prayer when there is not a decided faith in the one who prays, and it ensures failure of the whole life if there is not a decided determination to serve the Lord.

[James 1:8-11](#). *A double minded man is unstable in all his ways. Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted: but the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away. For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace —*

Or,” beauty “ —

[James 1:11](#). *Of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways.*

No matter how luxurious may be his mode of living, no matter how admirable may be his taste, he shall certainly fade, and all that he has will fade, too; and if this be all that can be said of him, that he is a rich man, he is a very poor creature indeed.

[James 1:12](#). *Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.*

For that is the purpose of our trials, that we should be made to love him more, and love him better. This is that grace which shall win “the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.”

[James 1:13](#). *Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God : for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:*

That is to say, if God permits or sends temptation to any man, it is not an inducement to sin. In that sense, God tempts no man. Those temptations which are said to come from God are trials or tests. In that sense, God does tempt all his people, even as it is written, “God did tempt (or, prove) Abraham.” He tries and tests them, that they may see, and that he may see, whether their faith and their profession be genuine or not, even as the Angel of the Lord said to Abraham, after the trial of his faith, “Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.”

[James 1:14](#). *But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.*

This is the essence of an evil temptation, a man's own lust.

[James 1:15](#). *Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin: when it is finished, bringeth forth death.*

There you see the egg, and the larva, and the full-grown fly of sin: "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."

[James 1:16](#). *Do not err, my beloved brethren.*

Do not err about anything; but, especially, do not err about this matter of temptation, where you may so easily make a blunder: "Do not err, my beloved brethren."

[James 1:17](#). *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.*

Ascribe all evil to yourself, to the world, or to Satan; but ascribe all good unto God. "Every good gift and every perfect gift" — every grain of goodness, every trace of excellence that there is in the world, comes from him; but no evil ever comes from him.

[James 1:18](#). *Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.*

It is a very delightful idea that we are presented to God as "a kind of firstfruits of his creatures." There is a whole harvest behind us, as Paul also reminds us in [Romans 8:19-21](#) : "For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God."

[James 1:19-20](#). *Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.*

Therefore, when we are tempted, let us not be in a hurry to pronounce a verdict on the temptation. If we are slandered and evil spoken of, let us not be quick to reply, or to grow angry. Let us be slow — very slow — to wrath; it will be our wisdom, for no good comes of human wrath: "The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God."

[James 1:21](#). *Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to*

save your souls.

Receive it as a graft. As the tree is prepared by the knife to receive the new shoot that is to be put into it, and does so receive it as to make it its own, and to use it for its own fruit-bearing purposes, even in that way “receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.”

[James 1:22-24](#). *But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.*

The best thing to do when you look into a glass, and spy a spot on your face, is to wash it off directly. The true use of hearing the Word, or reading it, is to amend one’s self at once in those points in which the Word discovers us to be faulty. To look in the glass, and not to wash off the spots, is but a piece of vanity; and to hear a sermon, or read a chapter, and not to put into practice what we are taught, is a sad waste of time.

[James 1:25](#). *But whose looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.*

There are many who complain of their short memories when they are hearing sermons. Well, then, let them be quick about doing what the sermon bids them, and then they will not be forgetful hearers. You have heard how one good woman described the effect of the sermon she has heard. She was one who washed wool, and when her minister went round to ask her what she had learned on the previous Sabbath, she did not even recollect the text. “Oh, Janet!” said he, “I am afraid you are a forgetful hearer; I cannot see what good the sermon has done to you.” So she took him to the back of her house, where she had a pump; and she worked at the handle while she held underneath the spout a sieve full of wool that was dirty and foul. The water ran through the wool, and through the sieve, and all ran away. “There,” she said, “this sieve is like my memory; but, sir, though the water does not stop in the sieve, it washes the wool; and what you preach, though it does not stop in my memory, it has washed my heart and cleansed my life and conversation.” Never mind about keeping the water in the sieve so long as it washes the wool. No man can be said to be a forgetful hearer who is a doer of the work that he is bidden to perform.

[James 1:26](#). *If any man among you seem to be religious, —*

You know what that means; and there are some who do seem to be wonderfully religious. Butter would not melt in their mouths, as we say; they are so solemn: “If any man among you seem to be religious,” —

[James 1:26](#). *And bridleth not his tongue, —*

That little noisy troublesome member: “and bridleth not his tongue,” —

[James 1:26](#). *But deceiveth his own heart, this man’s religion is vain.*

If religion does not salt your tongue, and keep it sweet, it has done nothing for you. If the doctor wants to know the state of your health, he says, “Let me see your tongue;” and there is no better test of the health of the mind than to see what is on the tongue. When it gets furred up with unkind words, when it turns black with blasphemy, when it is spotted with lasciviousness, there is something very bad inside the heart, you may be quite sure of that.

[James 1:27](#). *Pure religion —*

It might be rendered, “Pure ritualism “ —

[James 1:27](#). *And undefiled before God and the Father is this, —*

What is pure ritualism according to the inspired apostle? To wear a white surplice, and to change it for a black gown? I do not see that in the Scriptures. To have little boys in white to sing for you? I do not see that; but what I do see is this, —

[James 1:27](#). *To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.*

I should like to have such a choir as this, a company of Christian men and women robed in unspotted holiness. We shall have such a choir as that around the eternal throne, so they who wish to be there had better begin to practice the music here. The Lord help you to do so, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

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SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

James Chapter 3

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CHAPTER 4

Verses 1-17

[James 4:1](#). *From whence come wars and fightings among you?*

Whether between nations, or parties or individuals,-if there be wars and fightings, whence do they come?

[James 4:1](#). *Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?*

Do they not arise from one desiring something, and another desiring the same thing? Is there not a competition or emulation of an evil kind, in which each one prefers himself, and seeks not the good of his neighbor?

[James 4:2](#). *Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not,-*

This is nature's way of trying to get by contention what it desires to possess,-fighting, and warring, and killing, yet the result of all this is nil. After all is done, "yet ye have not." There is a simpler and a surer way which men forget; they leave that divine path untrodden: "Ye have not,"

[James 4:2](#). *Because ye ask not.*

With all your efforts you do not succeed, because you omit to pray to God. Prayer would have brought you every blessing that you need; but, instead of going to God, and asking at his hands, you rush upon your neighbor, and seek to take what you desire as spoil from him.

Perhaps some say, "But we do ask." "Well, then," saith the apostle,--

[James 4:3](#). *Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.*

The lusts of the flesh come in, and put us upon the wrong track; or if we take the right road, yet, if the lusts be there, God will not bless us because, in doing so, he would be helping us to gratify our lusts.

[James 4:4](#). *Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?*

The apostle uses this strong language not concerning the actual sin of adultery as the term is commonly understood, but in relation to our not loving God with true chastity of heart, but lusting after something else. This

is the very essence of spiritual adultery. We ought to give God the whole affection of our being; but, instead of doing so, we allow at least some of it to wander to other objects, and therefore we are called, by the Holy Ghost himself, “adulterers and adulteresses.” These may seem to be hard words, but they are true ones. May they bring us to our spiritual senses, and cause us to love our God with all our heart, and mind, and soul, and strength!

[James 4:4](#). *Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.*

In one sense, Christians are the greatest friends of the world, for they desire the good of all men, and seek their salvation. But, in another sense, viewing the world as a great conglomerate of evil, we are no friends of the world. There is a certain form of theology, popular nowadays, which teaches us that we ought to remove the line of demarcation between the Church and the world. This kind of teaching may be called theology, but it cometh not of God; it is a gross falsehood which we ought to abhor in the very depth of our spirit.

[James 4:5-6](#). *Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy? But he giveth more grace.*

There is a spirit, resident in the natural man, the human nature of man, which is always inclined toward hate and envy, always wanting to get somewhat from other men, and always grieved if other men seem to be or to have more than the person himself has. How is this spirit to be met? This verse supplies the answer, “He giveth more grace.” “More grace,” -this is the great remedy for hate and envy. “More grace,”-this is the balm for sorrow. “More grace,”-this is our greatest help out of all difficulties. “More grace,”-this is the universal recipe for all that we need: “He giveth more grace.”

[James 4:6-7](#). *Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God.*

Lay aside that fighting spirit,-that effort to pull others down so as to raise yourself up,-and bow before God, yield yourself wholly to his blessed will. This is the way of peace, and the way of joy, too.

[James 4:7](#). *Resist the devil,-*

Who will seek to stir you up to rebellion; give no place to him: “Resist the devil,”-

[James 4:7-8](#). *And he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.*

Hear this command, and practice it; get near to God in Christ Jesus, and you shall soon find him come to your help in every hour of need.

[James 4:8](#). *Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.*

For, if you are double-minded, your hands and your hearts must both need to be cleansed. The apostle does not say, “Concentrate your thoughts,” but he does say, “Cleanse your hearts;” for, to have two objects in life, is a kind of spiritual adultery, from which we need to be purged, so the command is, “Purify your hearts, ye double-minded.”

[James 4:9](#). *Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness.*

If the previous verses have rightly accused you of sin, confess your guilt with shame and sorrow, and so come to Christ imploring pardon.

[James 4:10](#). *Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.*

If you exalt yourself, he will pull you down. If you lie down in the dust before him, he will lift you up. It is according to God’s usual way of acting to practice these reversals. Mary truly sang, “He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.”

[James 4:11](#). *Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge.*

If you cease to think that which is evil, you will also cease to speak evil. If I speak evil of my brother, I have condemned the law which bids me love him as I love myself; I have practically said that it is an absurd law, and an unrighteous law; and this is a great evil in God’s sight.

[James 4:12-15](#). *There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another? Go to now, ye that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.*

We are all too apt to say what we will do, and where we will go, forgetting to add, “If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.”

[James 4:16-17](#). *But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil. Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.*

There are sins of omission as well as sins of commission; may the Lord graciously keep us from both forms of the evil, for his dear Son's sake!
Amen

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CHAPTER 1

Verses 1-12

[1 Peter 1:1-2](#). *Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.*

How sweetly the apostle is obeying his Master's command, "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." This is the same Peter who once began to sink beneath the waves, yet now he is helping others to stand. This is the very Peter who denied his master, but he begins his Epistle by owning himself to be "an apostle of Jesus Christ." What wonders the Lord Jesus had wrought for Peter by his grace! It is no marvel, therefore, that he should say to others, "Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied."

[1 Peter 1:3](#). *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,—*

And, truly, this is a blessing, beyond all comparison or imagination, that we have been begotten again by the Divine Father unto a "living" hope, for that is a better rendering than "lively." Our first birth brought us into sin and sorrow, but our second birth brings us into purity and joy. We were born to die; now are we born never to die, "begotten again" unto a life that shall remain in us for evermore, a life which shall even penetrate these mortal bodies, and make them immortal, "by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

[1 Peter 1:4-5](#). *To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

Joy, my brethren, in the glorious inheritance which is prepared for you, unstained, uncorrupted, perfectly pure, and therefore to last for ever, because the elements which produce decay are not in it. It is without sin, and therefore it shall be without end. What a mercy it is to be "kept by the power of God"! See, heaven is kept for us, and we are kept for heaven; heaven is prepared for us, and we are prepared for heaven. There is a double action of God's grace thus working in us, and working for us, unto bliss eternal.

[1 Peter 1:6](#). *Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations:*

Or, "trials." Some people cannot comprehend how a man can greatly rejoice, and yet be in heaviness at the same time; but there are many things, in a Christian's experience, that cannot be understood except by those who experience them; and even they God many a mystery which can only be expressed by a paradox. There are some who think that God's people should never be heavy in spirit; but the apostle says, "Now for a season, if need be,

ye are in heaviness.” He does not say, “If need be, ye are in manifold trials;” but, “If need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold trials,” for the “needs be” is as much for the depressed spirit as for the trials themselves.

[1 Peter 1:7-8](#). *That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:*

And does not the joy agree well with the object of it? Paul said, “Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift;” and Peter, speaking of the same Saviour, says, “In whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

[1 Peter 1:9-11](#). *Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.*

Do you wonder if, sometimes, you find in the Bible a truth which you cannot quite comprehend? You ought not to marvel, for even the prophets, who prophesied of the grace which has come to us, did not always fully understand their own messages. I am sure that their inspiration was verbal, because the inspired men frequently did not themselves know the meaning of what they were moved to write.

[1 Peter 1:12](#). *Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.*

See the kind of preaching that we should all desire to hear, and that all God’s ministers should aim at: “them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.” Nothing but a gospel full of the energy of the Holy Ghost, and set on fire by him, can effect the eternal purposes of God; but this is the kind of preaching that will live, and that will also make men live. God send it to every church and congregation throughout the world! Amen.

Verses 1-16

[1 Peter 1:1-2](#). *Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.*

The first Christians were not so afraid of the doctrine of election as some are now-a-days. Peter was not ashamed to address the saints as the elect of God, for so, indeed, they are, if they be saints at all. It is he that chose them, not because they were sanctified, but that they might be sanctified — chose them to eternal life through sanctification. Oh! happy are they who by grace have made their calling and election sure, and now ascribe all the glory of their salvation to the sovereign choice of God. “Grace unto you, and peace be multiplied.”

[1 Peter 1:3-5](#). *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed at the last time.*

How full of grace every sentence is. He blesses God because God has so freely blest us; and he abounds in thanksgiving because he sees that abundant mercy, by which believers have been begotten again — born again — made, therefore, children after a new sort, and so made heirs of an inheritance very different from that upon which we enter by nature “an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.” Brethren and sisters, if you have, indeed, been born by divine grace, to what estates are you born — to what high dignities and saved privileges! Rejoice and bless the Lord. But, perhaps, the dark fear crossed your mind that, perhaps, after all, you may perish and miss the inheritance. Now, notice the double consolation of a double keeping. The inheritance is kept. It is reserved in heaven for you, and you are kept, too. It is kept for you, and you are kept for it, “For you, who are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation.”

[1 Peter 1:6](#). *Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations.*

This is your life. This is like a rainbow made up of the drops of earth’s sorrow in the beams of heaven’s love a happy combination, after all.

[1 Peter 1:7](#). *That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:*

Gilt looks very much like gold but it will not stand the fire. It curls and disappears. Oh! to be solid gold through and through. If so, you need not mind the trials of today, since they will only prepare you for the glories eternal at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

[1 Peter 1:8-10](#). *Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you:*

Prophets knew about you. They did not taste of the grace you know, but through the vista of the future they foresaw it, and they almost envied you in this gospel dispensation that you should live in so clear a light, and should be fed upon such rare mercies. Oh! what prophets and kings longed for, do not let us despise, and we shall despise these mercies if we do not make the most of them by entering into the fullness of the joy which they are meant to bring to us. These prophets searched diligently.

[1 Peter 1:11-12](#). *Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.*

See you not your privilege, then? You have what prophets had not. You enjoy what angels desire to see. They cannot enjoy what you do. Rightly does our hymn put it: — “Never did angels taste above Redeeming grace and dying love.” And you have, this very day.

[1 Peter 1:13](#). *Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind,*

Be ready to depart to your inheritance. Do not let your garments flow carelessly and loosely, as though you had no journey before you, but “gird up the loins of your mind.”

[1 Peter 1:13](#). *Be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

That is a very blessed subject. There is a grace that was brought to you when Christ first came. There is another grace and a higher grace that is to be brought to you when Christ shall come the second time. Until that second coming of Christ, the church on earth and in heaven cannot be perfected. The bodies of the saints wait in the grave till he comes to give them resurrection.

“O long expected day, begin!

Dawn on these realms of woe and sin.”

For we wait for thy appearing, O Christ.

[1 Peter 1:14-16](#). *As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.*

See your model. See the copy to which you are to write. You are far short of it. Try again. May the power of Jesus rest upon you, and may he that hath wrought us to the self-same thing to which we have attained continue to work in us till we are like our Lord himself!

This exposition consisted of readings from [1 Peter 1:1-16](#) and [Matthew 10:37-40](#).

Verses 1-25

[1 Peter 1:1](#). *Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, —*

It must have been very pleasant to his heart to write those words, — not “Peter, who denied his Master,” not Peter, “full of imperfections and infirmities, the impetuous and changeable one of the twelve;” but “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,” as truly sent of God as any of the other apostles, and with as much of the Spirit of his Master resting upon him: “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,” —

[1 Peter 1:1-2](#). *To the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father,-*

You might go for fifty years to some places of worship, and never hear the word “elect” even mentioned. Modern ministers seem to be ashamed of the grand old doctrine of election; but it was not so with the apostles and the early Christians, they were accustomed to speak of one another as the elect of God. The doctrine of election was most precious to their hearts, and therefore Peter writes: “elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father,” —

1 Peter 1:2. *Through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.*

We not only need grace, but we need much grace, and also peace, and we need a greatly increased measure of both those blessings. Do not be satisfied, dear brethren and sisters in Christ, with the grace that you already have. Be thankful for it, but ask for the divine multiplication of it; regard the grace which you have already received as being like the boy's loaves and fishes, and expect that Christ will continue to multiply it for you and for thousands of others round about you: "Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied."

1 Peter 1:3-5. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

What a vast mass of meaning is packed away in these words! Men's books, even when they are good, are like gold-leaf; a little precious metal is very thinly hammered out so as to cover a wide surface, but almost every word in the Bible seems to contain a whole mine of heavenly wealth.

Note, beloved, what Peter says concerning your new birth; you are begotten by the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. At your first birth, you were born in sin; but now you have been born again, through grace, by the almighty power of God. Notice, also, unto what you are born, — unto a hope that is full of life, a lively hope, a hope of immortality a hope whose root is in the grave of Christ, the empty grave from which he has risen, and which is the assurance that because he has risen, you also shall rise. See, further, to what you have been born: "to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away." See, also, how that inheritance is entailed upon you, for it is "reserved in heaven for you;" and see, too, how you are kept for it, for you "are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

1 Peter 1:6. *Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations:*

What! can there be rejoicing and heaviness in the same heart at the same time? Oh, yes! our experience has taught us that we can be at the same

moment, in heaviness of heart and yet rejoicing in the Lord.

[1 Peter 1:7-9](#). *That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.*

You have that already if you have believed in Jesus, you have received; a present, immediate salvation. There are some who do not understand or realize this, they miss the whole joy of our holy religion. They are always hoping to be saved by-and-by; but those who are in Christ Jesus by a living personal faith receive here and now the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls.

[1 Peter 1:10-12](#). *Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.*

Observe, dear brethren, that the prophets did not speak without due consideration, but they “enquired and searched diligently” into the meaning of that salvation of which they “testified beforehand.” Holy Scripture must not be read by us carelessly. We ought to peer, and pry, and search into it to get at its hidden meaning, and the prophecies as well as the rest of the Word are to be searched into by us upon whom the ends of the earth have come. Observe, also, that this divine revelation is of great interest to the holy angels before the throne of God; they stand gazing down as if they were trying to understand the wondrous mystery of redemption, and the great and glorious gospel of the grace of God.

[1 Peter 1:13-16](#). *Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.*

Be not only moral, upright, truthful, and so forth; but “be ye holy.” That is a very high attainment: “Be ye holy;” and observe the reason for obedience to the command: “for I am holy.” Children should be like their fathers, there are many children who bear, in their very faces, evidence, of their sonship; you know who their fathers were by the image that the children bear. Oh, that it were always so with all the children of God: “Be ye holy; for I am holy.”

[1 Peter 1:17](#). *And if ye call on the father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man’s work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear: —*

You are only here for a while, you are sojourners, foreigners, pilgrims passing through a country where you have no abiding place; be therefore careful and even fearful lest you should become like the people among whom you dwell, have a holy dread of the contaminations of sin: “Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear:” —

[1 Peter 1:18-21](#). *Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.*

Jesus Christ, from the dead, and this is our joy today. This is one of the facts, which are proved beyond all question, that Jesus Christ, who died upon the cross, and was buried in Joseph’s tomb, did actually rise again. This is the corner-stone of the Christian faith; one of the great facts upon which we found our confidence as to salvation by Jesus Christ.

[1 Peter 1:22-23](#). *Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.*

God’s Word never dies, God’s Word never changes. There are some who think we ought to get a new gospel every few years or even every few weeks, but that was not Peter’s notion. He wrote, and he was divinely inspired to write, concerning “the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.”

[1 Peter 1:24-25](#). *For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.*

Verses 13-25

[1 Peter 1:13](#). *Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;*

This is Peter's practical application of the great truths of which he had been writing. "Look ahead, and expect great things. Live in the future. Project your thoughts beyond the centuries that are passing away into the ages which will never die."

[1 Peter 1:14-15](#). *As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;*

Remember that you can never be really whole till you are holy, for holiness is spiritual sanity; it is the curing of the mind and heart from the disease which sin brought upon them.

[1 Peter 1:16](#). *Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.*

Children of God, be like your Father; prove that you are his true children by manifesting his character. Let his lineaments be seen in your countenance: "Be ye holy; for I am holy." The Revised Version is, "Ye shall be holy; for I am holy."

[1 Peter 1:17](#). *And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear:*

Be not presumptuous. Ever remember that, as there is a God who is to judge every man, you are to be judged; and oh, that you might, through his grace, be in such a condition of heart that you shall stand the last test, and be found to be full weight when you are put into the balances of the sanctuary which God shall hold with steadfast hand!

[1 Peter 1:18-19](#). *Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:*

You have seen the character of your Father who is in heaven; this should urge and help you to be like him, holy. Now you see the character of your Redeemer, “a lamb without blemish and without spot.” Let this influence you to be holy, too.

[1 Peter 1:20-21](#). *Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.*

It is no use to place them anywhere else. All other vessels are too frail to bear such a heavy burden; but, if your faith and hope are in God, then you have a security which none can destroy.

[1 Peter 1:22-25](#). *Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.*

Blessed be God for an everlasting gospel, founded on the everlasting covenant, which bringeth with it everlasting life to all those who believe in Christ Jesus the Lord.

Verses 17-25

[1 Peter 1:17](#). *And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man’s work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear:*

Not in unbelieving fear, but in that holy carefulness which watches against sin of every kind lest in any way you should spoil your holy work for God.

[1 Peter 1:18-19](#). *Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:*

As your redemption cost so much, prize it highly, and do not go back to the sin from which you have been so dearly redeemed. Fear lest you should do so. Remember that heredity has a great power over you; the traditions of your fathers will imperceptibly draw you back unless you watch against

them. But you have been so gloriously redeemed with the very blood of Christ's heart that you must not draw back.

[1 Peter 1:20-21](#). *Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.*

Whenever you think of the glory of your risen Lord, remember what your redemption cost him, and quit all dead works, lay aside the grave-clothes of care and anxiety, and live in newness of life as those who have been redeemed by the risen Saviour.

[1 Peter 1:22-23](#). *Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, -*

See how this love of the brethren is linked on to regeneration. The first time we are born, we are born in sin, and that tends to hate, but when we are born again, born unto God, our life tends to love. "Being born again,"-

[1 Peter 1:23](#). *Not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.*

Peter reminds us, in the 18th verse, that we were not redeemed with corruptible things, but with incorruptible; and he here reminds us that we are "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible." Everything about a Christian means his deliverance from corruption, and the bringing of him into a state of immortality and incorruption.

[1 Peter 1:24-25](#). *For all flesh is as grass; and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever.*

Everything earthly is corruptible; that which is merely natural has its season of decay, but the children of God have the Word of the Lord abiding in them, and that never dies; it has no autumn or winter.

[1 Peter 1:25](#). *And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.*

This exposition consisted of readings from [1 Peter 1:17-25](#); and [1 Peter 2:1-12](#).

[1 PETER CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 2

Verses 1-12

[1 Peter 2:1](#). *Wherefore laying aside all malice,*

This is one of the old corruptible things, so put it away from you

[1 Peter 2:1](#). *And all guile,*

All crafty tricks, all falsehood, exaggeration, double meanings to your words, and the like,-

[1](#). *And hypocrisies, and envies,*

All hatred of those who are either better or better off than you are,-

[1 Peter 2:1](#). *And all evil speaking,*

Thus the tongue expresses what the heart feels. Laying all these evil things aside, you will prove that you have been born again, born of the incorruptible seed which liveth and abideth for ever.

[1 Peter 2:2](#). *As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:*

You are in the family of God, but you are only babes in it yet; you have to grow to the stature of men in Christ Jesus, so “desire the sincere (unadulterated) milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.” There is no other way of growing.

[1 Peter 2:3-4](#). *If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. To whom coming, as unto a living stone,-*

So that “the Lord” here meant is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is truly “a living stone,”-

[1 Peter 2:4](#). *Disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious,-*

When men disallow Christ, it is a matter of small account to us, as for what they have to say, it is less than nothing and vanity. Like the wild bluster of the winds, let it bluster until it has blown itself out. Christ is “disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious,”-

[1 Peter 2:5](#). *Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priest-hood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.*

See what Jesus Christ has made of you who believe in him; by the incorruptible blood and the incorruptible seed, he has brought you into a heavenly priesthood, and you are today to stand at the spiritual altar, and “to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.” Will you

not pray, will you not praise, will you not love? These are sacrifices with which God is well pleased.

[1 Peter 2:6-7](#). *Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious.*

Is he not? Then, enjoy his preciousness all of you who truly believe in him. Precious Christ, precious to all his people, precious to me!

[1 Peter 2:7-8](#). *But unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.*

When Peter wrote these verses, he must have thought of his own name. He was called a stone or a rock; and once he was to his Master “a rock of offence” when he stumbled at Christ’s word, and began even to rebuke his Lord, but he was forgiven and saved, so now he gives a warning to others lest they should still more grievously sin by making Christ himself to be to them “a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence.”

[1 Peter 2:9](#). *But ye are a chosen generation,-*

Hear this, ye believers, drink in this precious truth. See God’s election, making you to be a people born of the Holy Ghost: “a chosen generation,”-

[1 Peter 2:9](#). *A royal priesthood,-*

This is a wonderful combination, kings and priests at the same time; all honours meet on you through divine grace: “a royal priesthood,”-

[1 Peter 2:9](#). *An holy nation, a peculiar people;-*

You have national privileges. God reckons you not as a mob or a herd of men, but as a nation, and a nation with this peculiar hall-mark upon you, that you are “a holy nation.” This is the true token of your nationality that you are “holiness unto the Lord,” “a peculiar people” belonging to God alone, marked off from the rest of mankind as peculiarly his. You are not, and you are not to be as other men are, you are “a peculiar people.” Your road is not the broad one where the many go, it is the narrow one which the few find, your happiness is not worldly pleasure, but pleasures at the right hand of God which are for evermore, You are “a peculiar people”;-

[1 Peter 2:9](#). *That ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light:-*

You are to be advertisers of the praises or virtues of Christ, not only to know them, and to be glad to know them, but to make them known to others. Beloved, how far are you doing this? I put the question personally to each one of you, for you were chosen by God on purpose that you “should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light”:-

[1 Peter 2:10](#). *Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God:-*

In time long past, who ever heard of the Britons, or of the Anglo-Saxons? We were not a people, but we “are now the people of God”:-

[1 Peter 2:10](#). *Which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.*

We may well leap for joy, we who once had not obtained mercy. We sinned against the Lord, but he was long-suffering, and now we have obtained mercy.

[1 Peter 2:11](#). *Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims,-*

For you belong not to the corruptible world, you are of an incorruptible race: “I beseech you as strangers and pilgrim,”-

[1 Peter 2:11-12](#). *Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul: having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers,-*

Which they are sure to do. The better you are, the more will they censure you. This is the only homage that evil can pay to good, to fall foul of it, and misrepresent it: “that whereas they speak against you as evildoers,”-

[1 Peter 2:12](#). *They may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation. through the efficacy of his great atoning sacrifice. God grant it, for Jesus' sake! Amen.*

This exposition consisted of readings from [1 Peter 1:17-25](#); and [1 Peter 2:1-12](#).

Verses 1-25

[1 Peter 2:1-2](#). *Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: Have we not constantly declared that our faith, if true, is always practical?*

Here, again, we have the precepts of God's Word. Here we are told that there is much for us to lay aside, as if it were natural to us in every case,

and must, therefore, be carefully laid aside. “Malice” — we are all inclined to return evil for evil: the Christian must not do so. “All guile” — everything like craft and cunning — this is unbecoming in a Christian. “Hypocrisy” — seeming to be what we are not; all sorts of mere seeming we must lay aside. “And envy” — how easy it is for us to envy one man his wealth, or another his health, or another his talents; but “all envy” the Christian must have done with. “And evil speaking” — it is painful to reflect how much of evil speaking there is among persons who we still hope are good people. They are very fond of repeating stories to the disadvantage of their fellow-Christians. Now, whether you are the author of it or not, do not be the retailer of it, for we are told here to lay aside all evil speaking. But then the religion of Jesus Christ does not consist in negatives: it is not merely what we are to lay aside; there is something to be taken up. We are told that as we are born again we are to consider ourselves as new-born babes, and are to desire the unadulterated milk of God’s Word, that we may grow thereby. It is not enough to be alive: we should desire to grow. To be saved is a great blessing; we ought not, however, to be contented with being barely saved: we should seek after the graces of the Spirit and the excellent work of God within us.

[1 Peter 2:3](#). *If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.*

Have you tasted this? Oh! search yourselves and see, and, if ye have, then prove it by the laying aside of the evil, and the thirsting after the good.

[1 Peter 2:4-5](#). *To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, And precious. Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.*

The priesthood, among believers, does not belong to here and there one, but to the whole company of believers. As many as love the Saviour are priests and kings unto God, and they should regard their whole life as the exercise of this priesthood. When we assert that no platt is holy above another, we do not thereby desecrate any place, but rather consecrate all places. We believe every day to be holy, every hour to be holy, every place and occupation to be holy to holy men, and we should so live as evermore to exercise this consecrated priesthood.

[1 Peter 2:6-8](#). *Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is*

precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner. And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.

of which we can only say, with Augustine, “Oh! the depth,” and leave that mystery to be explained to us hereafter.

[1 Peter 2:9-10](#). *But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.*

How good it is to look back to the hole of the pit whence we were digged!

What if today the sovereign grace of God has made us royal priests, yet let us remember that in past times we were not a people, “But are now the people of God.” “Which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.” Yes, I think no exercise will be more profitable by way of expressing our gratitude than the remembering what we used to be before the hand of God was laid upon us in love; for if all of us did not run to an excess of riot in our outward lives, yet some of us did; and others who were kept from gross outward sins had, nevertheless, a very sink of corruption within our nature. We felt that when the Spirit of God convinced us of sin we could truly say: —

“Depths of mercy, could there be,
Mercy yet reserved for me?”

And having obtained mercy, we will never cease to bless the name of God.

[1 Peter 2:11-14](#). *Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation. Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake: whether it be to the king as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well.*

Christians should be good citizens. Though in one respect they are not citizens of this world, yet as they find themselves in it they should seek the

good of those among whom they dwell, and be patterns of order.

[1 Peter 2:15-17](#). *For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.*

Even if they are beggars, they are men: honour them. There is God's image, though marred and defiled, in every man; and because he is a man, honour him — pity him. Look down upon him never with contempt, but always feel that there is an immortal spark, even within that mass of filth. If the man be cast into all manner of beggary and wickedness, "Honour all men Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the King." The same verse that says, "Honour the King," however, says, "Honour all men," and while we, therefore, have due respect to rank, yet a man is a man, and we "Honour all men."

[1 Peter 2:18-20](#). *Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the forward. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.*

I have known some that could not do that, however. If they were only spoken to very gently, they were in a tiff directly. "But if, when ye do well, ye bear it patiently, this is acceptable with God." Here is something more than human nature can bear. Now grace comes in to help. "This is acceptable with God."

[1 Peter 2:21](#). *For even hereunto were ye called:*

Called, you see, to be buffeted when you don't, deserve it.

[1 Peter 2:21-23](#). *Because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:*

Herein is he a pattern of patience to all his people.

[1 Peter 2:24-25](#). *Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed, For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.*

Verses 18-25

Peter is very practical in his Epistles. In the early days of the faith, Christians occupied a far more difficult and dangerous position than they do today. They were few in number, and greatly despised. All manner of crimes were falsely alleged against them; they were accused of things too vile for me to mention. The apostle, in writing to these Christians, begs them so to behave that they should commend the gospel of Christ. Very many of them were servants or slaves; so the apostle says to these lowly followers of Christ, “Here are your duties”: —

[1 Peter 2:18-20](#). *Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.*

A sense of injustice stings a man; he does not like to lose his rights, or to be buffeted when he has done no ill; but the Spirit of Christ teaches us to “endure grief, suffering wrongfully,” — to bear still, and still to bear. We are to be like the anvil; let others strike us if they will, but we shall wear out the hammers if we only know how to stand still and bear all that is put upon us.

[1 Peter 2:21-23](#). *For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:*

There was no reason why he should be made to suffer, for he had done no wrong. He was buffeted for no fault of his own, yet how patiently he endured it all! He did not even open his mouth to murmur or complain; but he handed the whole matter over to the Supreme Court of Appeal: “to him that judgeth righteously.” It will be wise for us also to feel that we can afford to wait, knowing that our Avenger liveth, and that, in his own good time, he will rectify all wrongs, and justify his people against all their accusers. It is sweet, for the dear love of Jesus, to put up with a thousand things which, otherwise, we should resent. “But,” says one, “if you tread on a worm, it will turn.” Perhaps it will, but a Christian is not a worm; he is a

being of a nobler order than that, and he does not go for his example to reptiles; he looks up to Christ, and follows his steps.

[1 Peter 2:24-25](#). *Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.*

Wherefore, since you have been brought back by the rich grace of God, continue to bear and forbear, that you may be the means of bringing others back. That is Peter's counsel to servants, or slaves, as most of them were.

This exposition consisted of readings from [1 Peter 2:18-25](#); and [1 Peter 3:1-17](#).

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CHAPTER 3

Verses 1-17

[1 Peter 3:1-2](#). *Likewise, ye wives be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear.*

Could any men be won to Christ without the Word? Yes, it was even so in the apostle's day. When they refused to attend the little Christian meetings that were being held, and so could not hear what was there said, yet, at home, they saw the change that the gospel of Christ had wrought in their wives, and they said, "She is quite different from what she used to be. Certainly, she is a far better wife than any heathen woman is; there must be something in the religion which can make such a change as that." In this way, without the Word, many of them were won to Christ by the godly conversation of their wives.

[1 Peter 3:3-4](#). *Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.*

There is no ornament like that. No taste can ever conceive anything so lovely as a holy character. No expensive materials, and no ingenious

fashioning of them, can ever produce such true beauty as “a meek and quiet spirit.” You must have known some godly matrons, venerable Christian women, whose gentle piety has blessed the whole household of which they formed a part. They attained supreme authority over all simply by yielding; they gained a queenly position in the house by gentleness and quietness. Nobody dared to offend them; — not because they would have been in a passion, but because they were themselves so inoffensive, so kind, so gentle.

[1 Peter 3:5-7](#). *For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: even as Sara, obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement. Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.*

It has been one of the most beautiful results of the spread of the Christian religion that it has uplifted womanhood; so that now, instead of women being, as they were, and still are where the gospel is not received, the slaves of their husbands, Christianity has taught that honour should be given to the wife. If there are any husbands who do not so, they err from the gospel way.

[1 Peter 3:8](#). *Finally, be ye all of one mind, —*

Be unanimous; do not hold church-meetings to talk about nothing, and so quarrel for the want of something to do. Be united with the resolve that you will glorify God, and that there shall be no dissension, no division among you: “Be ye all of one mind,” —

[1 Peter 3:8](#). *Having compassion one of another, —*

Have true fellow-feeling towards each other.

[1 Peter 3:8](#). *Love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous:*

The Christian should be the highest type of gentleman, in every respect the most gentle man, kind, self-forgetful, seeking the comfort and well-being of others to the utmost of his power.

[1 Peter 3:9](#). *Not rendering evil for evil, —*

That, is beastlike; it is certainly not the rule for a Christian. Good for evil is Godlike; and ye, who are the children of God, should seek to act as he does: “not rendering evil for evil,” — .

[1 Peter 3:9](#). *Or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.*

Every man should give away according to what he has. He who gives curses probably gives them because he has so much cursing in him. You can always tell what a man is like by noticing what comes from him. If he curses, it is because curses abound in him. But you are to give blessing to others because you have inherited so much blessing from Christ; your whole tone, temper, spirit, language, action should be the means of blessing to others.

[1 Peter 3:10](#). *For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile:*

Not only no lies, but no guile, no deceit, no shuffling. Say to a man's face all that you say behind his back. You will soon be in trouble if you have two tales to tell, one in his presence, and the other in his absence; but if you are free from "policy" — from "knowing how to play your cards," as the world says, then shall it be seen that you have one of the attributes of a true Christian. If you refrain your lips, that they speak no guile, people will know where to find you, and they will want to find you, for such men are always in demand.

[1 Peter 3:11-12](#), *Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.*

He "sets his face against them," as we say that we set our face against certain company which we do not approve. But "the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous," — that is, those who seek to do good to others, for Christ's sake, are under the special protection of God; and they have the high privilege of being permitted to pray with the certainty that "his ears are open unto their prayers."

[1 Peter 3:13-15](#). *And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:*

Have your doctrinal views, and all your knowledge of Christ, packed away in a handy form, so that, when people want to know what you believe,

you can tell them. If they wish to know why you believe that you are saved, have your answer all ready in a few plain, simple sentences; and in the gentlest and most modest spirit make your confession of faith to the praise and glory of God. Who knows but what such good seed will bring forth an abundant harvest?

[1 Peter 3:16-17](#). *Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer, for well doing, than for evil doing.*

Who can doubt the truth of that clear declaration?

This exposition consisted of readings from [1 Peter 2:18-25](#); and [1 Peter 3:1-17](#).

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CHAPTER 4

Verses 1-13

[1 Peter 4:1](#). *Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin: —*

Brethren, we have a Saviour who suffered for us. As the Head was, such must the members expect to be. Let us, then, be resolutely determined that, suffer as we may, we will never turn aside from our Lord; for, inasmuch as we suffered in him, yea, and died in him, we ought to reckon that we are henceforth dead to sin, and that we have ceased from it, and can no longer be drawn into it. “He that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin:” —

[1 Peter 4:2](#). *That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.*

The doctrine of substitution is the strongest possible argument for holiness. You lived in sin once, but Christ died for your sin, so you must reckon that, in him, you died to sin, seeing that he died in your stead. And the argument is that, henceforth, your life is to be a life in him, a life of holiness, to the praise and glory of God.

[1 Peter 4:3](#). *For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, —*

Suffice? O brethren, let it do much more than that! Let it make us cry, “Would God that we had never wrought the will of the Gentiles at all!” Some young people foolishly say that they must have a little space in which they can “see life.” Ah, those of you who have been converted in after years regret that ever you saw what men call “life”, which is but the alias for corruption and death! “For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles,” —

[1 Peter 4:3-4](#). *When we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excesses of wine, revellings banquetings, and abominable idolatries. Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you:*

What a strange world this world is! It speaks evil of men because they will not do evil. Yet it has ever been so; the men, “of whom the world was not worthy,” have been the very people of whom worldliness have said, “Away with such fellows from the earth! It is not fit that they should live.” The world’s verdict concerning Christians is of little value.

[1 Peter 4:5-6](#). *Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead. For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men is the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.*

This is a very difficult passage to expound, but I suppose the meaning is that the gospel was preached to those departed saints who had been called to die for Christ’s sake, and that it was preached to them for this very reason, that, while they were judged by wicked men, and were by them condemned to die, they still live a far more glorious life than they lived here, because they were thus enabled, by their martyr death, to consummate their consecration to God.

[1 Peter 4:7-8](#). *But the end of all things is at hand; be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer. And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.*

It covers them sometimes by not seeing them; for, where there is much love, we are blind to many faults which, otherwise, we might see; we do not exercise the sharpness of criticism which malice would be sure to exercise. Besides that, when love applies herself to prayer, and when, in addition to prayer, she kindly gives admonition to a beloved friend, it often happens that true Christian love does really prevent a multitude of sins.

The apostle does not mean that, by loving another person, I shall cover my own sin; nor does he mean that the exercise of charity, in the common acceptation of that word, can cover my sin. But if I have much love to others, I may be the instrument, in the hand of God, for covering many of their sins in one or other of the senses I have mentioned.

[1 Peter 4:9-10](#). *Use hospitality one to another without grudging. As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.*

Whatever “the gift” is, whether it be money, or talent, or grace, “even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” God gives much to you that you may give it to others; it is only meant to run through you as through a pipe. You are a steward and if a steward should receive his lord’s goods, and keep them for himself he would be an unfaithful steward. Child of God, see to it that you faithfully discharge your responsibility as one of the “good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”

[1 Peter 4:11-13](#). *If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you. But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.*

If you do not share in Christ’s humiliation, how can you expect to share in his exaltation? But if worldlings begin to rebuke and reproach you, take it for granted that they can discern something of Christ in you. Dogs do not usually bark at those who live in the same village with them; it is only at strangers that they bark. And when ribald tongues are lifted up against you, you have reason to hope that you are a stranger and a foreigner to the citizens of this world, for they love their own, as our Saviour reminded his disciples, “If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you”

This exposition consisted of readings from [Psalms 88:10-18](#); and [1 Peter 4:1-13](#).

Verses 1-19

1 Peter 4:1. *Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind:*

Accepting this great truth, that it is well that the flesh should die that the spirit may triumph, even as it was with Christ.

1 Peter 4:1. *For he that bath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin;*

If he has indeed died with Christ, and the power of Christ's sufferings has made him dead to sin, he has ceased from it.

1 Peter 4:2-4. *That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God for the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you:*

For the very thing in which they ought to speak well of you, men will speak evil of you. If you will not drink as they do, if you will not follow after sinful pleasures as they do, if you will not sing their songs, or use their language, then straightway they will hate you, and call you a hypocrite. It is a pity that, if we are not willing to go into sin as they do, they should for that reason speak ill of us; yet this is what we must expect.

1 Peter 4:5. *Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.*

There will be a day, when those who are alive at the coming of Christ will be judged; and those who were dead long before that time will not escape the judgment, for they shall be raised from their graves to appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

1 Peter 4:6. *for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.*

Men who heard the gospel, and believed it, are now dead; they have undergone the sentence of death like other men; but, still, they are living "according to God in the spirit."

1 Peter 4:7. *But the end of all things is at hand:*

We are never told the exact date of the times or seasons which are yet to come; it is the evident aim of the Holy Spirit to keep us on the tip-toe of expectation. We are always to be as men whose Lord may come at any minute of the day or night: "the end of all things is at hand: " —

1 Peter 4:7. *Be ye therefore sober,*

Do not get intoxicated with anything, neither with pride, nor with covetousness, nor with the cares of this world. Maintain your equilibrium; stand steadfast and firm: “Be ye therefore sober,” —

[1 Peter 4:7-8](#). *And watch unto prayer. And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves:*

For, when Christ comes, he will know you as his disciples if you love one another; but if there be an absence of Christian affection when he comes, he will say at once that you have missed the main mark of discipleship.

[1 Peter 4:8](#). *for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.*

Not your own sins, but the sins of your friends, so that you will not see them. Where love is thin, there faults are always thick. Wherever there is true love in the heart, we make many apologies and allowances for the weaknesses and infirmities of our friends. Often, we cannot see the faults in them; and when we know they are there, we go backward, like the godly sons of Noah, and cover the nakedness upon which we will not think of looking, “for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.”

[1 Peter 4:9](#). *Use hospitality one to another without grudging.*

Whenever saints of God traveled in those days, there were few public inns available for their accommodation, so they stayed with brethren in Christ as they went on their way.

[1 Peter 4:10](#). *As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.*

God’s grace takes many shapes, it is manifold; and he gives to one brother one form of grace, and to another quite a different form; and, to a third, yet another form of his blessing. now, as nations increase their wealth by mutual commerce, so do Christian men increase their grace by a sweet fellowship in the good things with which God has entrusted them.

[1 Peter 4:11](#). *If any man speak —*

Let him speak thoroughly well; but, in order that he may do so, what shall be his model?

[1 Peter 4:11](#). *Let him speak as the oracles of God!*

As truthfully, carefully, solemnly, as the Book itself speaks: “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God.”

[1 Peter 4:11](#). *If any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth.*

“If any man minister,” or serve, — if he is called to serve the church in any capacity, — “let him do it as of the ability which God giveth.”

[1 Peter 4:11](#). *that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*

Note how Peter has the same spirit in him as that which burned in the breast of Paul, for he stops in the middle of a letter, lays down his pen, and lifts up his heart to God in an adoring strain of thanksgiving: “to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”

[1 Peter 4:12](#). *Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:*

In Peter’s day, the Christians were called, not only to what might be metaphorically termed, “the fiery trial,” but they had literally to suffer thus for Christ’s sake. Nero had multitudes of Christians brought to his gardens, and tied to stakes, that he might light up his midnight revelries by the burning of these godly men and women smeared with pitch. they had to bear even that fiery trial for the name of Christ. Many periods of martyrdom have passed since then, in which the saints of God have willingly died rather than deny their Lord. We have fallen upon comparatively silken times; a jest, a slander, a calumnious observation, — these are the only weapons with which our enemies can smite most of us.

[1 Peter 4:13-14](#). *But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; did not your Saviour say, “Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man’s sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets.”*

So, be glad about it.

[1 Peter 4:14](#). *For the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.*

Whenever they speak against you that which is not true, they think that they shall slander the name of God by slandering you; but they do no such thing. As far as they are concerned, God is evil spoken of; but, then, that is all you could have expected from such people. “But on your part” — and that is the thing you have to look to, — “on your part he is glorified.”

[1 Peter 4:15](#). *But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters.*

A curious mixture that, — is it not? A murderer is classed with “a busybody in other men's matters.” But, really, people of this latter sort are very obnoxious. there are some who seem as if they cannot mind their own business; I have heard that it is for two reasons; first, because they have not any business to mind, and, secondly, they have no mind at all with which to mind their business. But these very people think they can mind other people's business; and the more is the pity. See how strongly Peter condemns them, and asks that none of those to whom he writes may have to suffer because of such wrongdoing.

[1 Peter 4:16-17](#). *Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf for the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God :-*

Trial and testing must begin there; we must not expect to have our religion taken for granted, and ourselves to be saved simply upon our own warranty. We must be tried: “the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed? “the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God:” —

[1 Peter 4:17](#). *And if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?*

If the wheat is winnowed, what is to become of the chaff? If God casts even the gold into the fire, what is to become of the dross? If that which is really valuable yet has to be tested, what is to be done with the mire and the clay? Oh, that all who have no part or lot with Christ would consider this solemn truth:

[1 Peter 4:18](#). *And if the righteous scarcely be saved, —*

If they be saved with difficulty, —

[1 Peter 4:18](#). *Where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?*

If even men who live godly lives are often hard put to it to know whether they shall be saved or not, — if they raise the question again and again with a terrible seriousness, “where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?”

[1 Peter 4:19](#). *Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.*

The whole run of the chapter is that we are to prefer any suffering of the flesh to the sin of the spirit; and we are to be prepared to endure whatever trial or pain may come upon us for Christ's sake, and to hear it joyfully, rather than to seek the pleasures of sin, and to be plunged under the waves of the wrath of God. May he give us the grace thus to glorify him, for Christ's sake! Amen.

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CHAPTER 5

Verses 1-9

[1 Peter 5:1](#). *The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:*

Here again, as in the first chapter, Peter links the sufferings of Christ with his glory.

[1 Peter 5:2-9](#). *Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility; for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.*

This exposition consisted of readings from 1 Peter 1, and [1 Peter 5:1-9](#).

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CHAPTER 1

Verses 1-8

[2 Peter 1:1](#). *Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, Peter was pleased to be able to write those words.*

There was a time when he had thrice denied his Master, but now he is glad to call himself “a servant of Jesus Christ.” Once he had said, “I know not the man,” but now he claims that he has been sent out by that glorious Lord to be his apostle,-a sent one,-“a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ.” Probably he had ringing in his ears, at that moment, those blessed

words, “Feed my sheep; feed my lambs;” and he was going to do that work again in this his second general Epistle.

[2 Peter 1:1](#). *To them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.*

These Epistles are not written to everybody. Some readers do not seem to remember this fact. This one is written, says the apostle, “to them that have obtained like precious faith with us.” The faith of the weakest believer in Jesus is the same kind of faith as that which was found in Simon Peter, who stands among the very first of the worthies in the College of Apostles.” Like precious faith with us.” Only think of it, you whose faith is of a very trembling sort, which might be well described as “little faith.” Yet yours is “like precious faith” with that of Peter and the rest of the apostles.

The tiniest diamond is as truly a diamond as the Kohinoor, and the smallest faith, if it be really the work of the Spirit of God, is “like precious faith” with that of the apostles.

[2 Peter 1:2](#). *Grace and peace be multiplied unto you-*

You have some measure of these choice blessings; may you have a great many times as much! When we go to the multiplication table, we not only multiply by two and by three, but we can multiply by a hundred, we can multiply by ten thousand. Oh, that God would thus multiply to us the grace and the peace that he has already given to us! “Grace and peace be multiplied unto you”-

[2 Peter 1:2](#). *Through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord,*

The more we know of God, the more grounds and reasons shall we have for enjoying grace and peace, and the more we know of God and of Jesus our Lord, the more will our enjoyment of grace and peace be multiplied.

[2 Peter 1:3](#). *According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:*

It is through knowing God that we realize that “his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness,” for all these things are in him; and as we know him, trust him, love him, and become like him, we also come to possess all these precious things in him.

[2 Peter 1:4](#). *Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.*

See what is God's great object in giving us these "exceeding great and precious promises." It is that we may become morally and spiritually like himself,-just and true and holy and righteous, even as God himself is. O brothers and sisters, we fall far short of the high example that we find set before us in our gracious God, nevertheless, we press forward towards the goal, strengthened by God himself, who, having begun to make us like himself, will never cease that blessed work until he has fully accomplished it.

[2 Peter 1:5](#). *And beside this, giving all diligence,-*

For we cannot expect to go to heaven asleep. We are not taken there against our wills. It is not our will that accomplishes our salvation; but still, it is not accomplished without our will. "Giving diligence," yes, but more than that, "giving all diligence,"-

[2 Peter 1:5-6](#). *Add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance;*

It is ignorance that is intemperate and rash.

[2 Peter 1:6-8](#). *And to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness' brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

What Christian ever wishes to be barren or unfruitful? Is it not the aspiration of every branch in the true vine to bring forth much fruit?

Verses 1-21

[2 Peter 1:1](#). *Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ:*

Peter here uses both his names,-Simon or Simeon, which was his first name, and signifies "hearing with acceptance," and happy are they who have the hearing ear and the receptive heart; and then there is what I may call his Christian name, the name which Christ gave him, Petros, or Cephas, a rock or stone. Those who learn to hear well, since faith cometh by hearing, may hope to obtain even greater stability of character than Peter had. Observe that Peter calls himself "a servant of Christ." There is no higher honour than to be a servant of God. "To serve God is to reign." An ancient philosopher was the author of that maxim, and Christianity fully endorses it. He is a true king who is a servant of God. In this respect, all believers are on a level with Peter, but here is his distinguishing title, "an

apostle of Jesus Christ,” a sent one, one who had seen the Lord, and who could bear personal testimony to the fact of his existence, his death, and his resurrection. Hence the apostleship has ceased, since there are no longer any who lived in our Lord’s days upon the earth.

Mark the reason why this Epistle, like the first, is called “the general Epistle of Peter,” since it is addressed, not to any one church, as Paul’s Epistle to the Ephesians but to all saints, not to the Hebrews alone, but to the Gentiles as well. It is a general Epistle, addressed to all those who have

“obtained like precious faith.” These words were written by the apostle Peter many centuries ago, yet they come to us as fresh as if he had written them but yesterday, and may God grant us grace to profit from them as they are read by us today! After the apostle’s titles comes the salutation of his Epistle,

[2 Peter 1:2-5](#). *Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, according as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this,-*

“Since it is God who, by his divine energy, has made you partakers of the divine nature, see that you use your grace-given energy; rest not idly upon your oars because the tide of grace carries your ship onward.”

[2 Peter 1:5](#). *Giving all diligence,-*

It is not man’s effort that saves him; but, on the other hand, grace saves no man to make him like a log of wood or a block of stone; grace makes man active. God has been diligently at work with you; now you must diligently work together with him.

[2 Peter 1:5-7](#). *Add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.*

As you have seen the mason take up first one stone, and then another, and then gradually build the house, so are you Christians to take first one virtue, and then another, and then another, and to pile up these stones of grace one upon the other until you have built a palace for the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. Faith, of course, comes first, because faith is the foundation

of all the graces, and there can be no true grace where there is no true faith. Then “add to your faith virtue,” which should have been translated “courage.” True courage is a very great blessing to the Christian, indeed, without it how will he be able to face his foes? “And to courage knowledge,” for courage without knowledge would be foolish rashness, which would lead you to the cannon’s mouth when there was nothing to be gained by flinging away your life. “And to knowledge temperance;” for there are some who no sooner get knowledge than they are carried away with the new doctrine which they have learned, and become like men intoxicated, for it is possible to be intoxicated even with truth. Happy is that Christian who has temperance with his knowledge who, while holding one doctrine, does not push that to the extreme, but learns to hold other doctrines in due conformity with it. “And to temperance patience,” or endurance, so that we are able to endure the “trial of cruel mockings” or sharp pains, or fierce persecutions, or the usual afflictions of this life. He is a poor Christian who has no power of endurance, a true Christian must “endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.” “And to endurance godliness:” having a constant respect to God in all our ways, living to God, and living like God so far as the finite can be like the Infinite. “And to godliness brotherly kindness.” O dear friends, let us be very kind to those who are our brothers in Christ Jesus; let the ties of Christian kinship unite us in true brotherhood to each other. “And to brotherly kindness charity;” let us have love to all men, though specially to the household of faith.

[2 Peter 1:8](#). *For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

I am sure you do not wish to be barren; I cannot imagine that any of you will be content to be unfruitful; so seek after all these virtues, and may God help you to give diligence to the attainment of them.

[2 Peter 1:9-10](#). *But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:*

He who is diligent in seeking these graces is kept from falling. Every Christian is safe from a final fall, but he is not safe from a foul fall unless he is kept by grace.

[2 Peter 1:11](#). *For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*

In this life you can enjoy all the privileges of the inheritors of the kingdom of heaven; and in the life to come you shall go into the harbour of eternal peace like a ship with all her sails full, speeding before a favorable wind, and not as one that struggles into harbour, — “Tempest-tossed, and half a wreck.”

[2 Peter 1:12](#). *Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of the things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth.*

We are not merely to preach new truths which people do not know, but we are also to preach the old truths with which they are familiar. The doctrines in which they are well established are still to be proclaimed to them. Every wise preacher brings forth from the treasury of truth things both new and old; --new, that the hearers may learn more than they knew before; old, that they may know and practice better that which they do already know in part.

[2 Peter 1:13-14](#). *Yea, I think it meet, As long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me.*

In the last chapter of the gospel according to John, it is recorded how Christ prophesied concerning the death of Peter, that when he was old, he should stretch forth his hands, and another should gird him, and carry him whither he would not. The evangelist adds, “This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God.” The prospect of crucifixion was thus always before Peter’s mind; and knowing what was to happen to him, he was not alarmed, but was rather quickened to greater diligence in stirring up the saints to make their calling and election sure. Hear thou behind thee, O Christian, the chariot wheels of thy Lord; hear thou behind thee the whizzing of the arrow of death, and let this quicken thy pace! Work while it is called today, for the sun even now touches the horizon, and the night cometh when no man can work. If we knew how short a time we have to live, how much more earnest, how much more diligent should we be! Let us be up and doing. “Let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober,” working diligently until the Lord comes, or calls us home to himself.

[2 Peter 1:15-18](#). *Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance. For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.*

For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. Peter and James and John were with Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration, and Peter here bears his witness that they were not deceived when they bowed down before Christ, and worshipped him as Lord, nor were they deluded in expecting his coming and believing in his power.

[2 Peter 1:19-20](#). *We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation.*

Even the prophets themselves did not always know the full meaning of their own prophecies. Many prophecies have never been completely understood until they have been fulfilled. This passage also appears to me to mean that no prophecy is to be restricted to any one event, so as to say, "This prophecy has been entirely fulfilled."

[2 Peter 1:21](#). *For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*

So that they sometimes spoke what they did not themselves understand; the prophecy carried its own key within itself, and the key could not be found until the prophecy was fulfilled. I believe that the prophesies in the Revelation, and in the books of Daniel and Ezekiel are very much of this character, and that, while it is quite right to watch for and expect the coming of the Lord, we shall spend our time more profitably in preaching the doctrines of the gospel than in meditating upon the mysterious prophecies of the Word. They will be understood when they are fulfilled, but we do not think they will be fully understood before that time.

Verses 9-21

[2 Peter 1:9](#). *But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off,*

He is short-sighted; he has some light, and some physical sight, but he cannot see to a distance; spiritually, he is blind.

[2 Peter 1:9](#). *And hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.*

It is a great mercy not merely to see men as trees walking, but to have clear spiritual vision. There is a great deal of dust that gets into our eyes, and there is no way of clearing out that dust, and becoming long-sighted, getting a sight that can see to heaven, except by getting that spiritual life which manifests itself in faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love.

[2 Peter 1:10](#). *Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things ye shall never fall:*

This is the second time that Peter writes about giving diligence. We are told not to be slothful in business, and this matter of which Peter writes is the most important of all business. To prosper in this world may bring some advantages, but to prosper in heavenly things is infinitely better.” “Give diligence to make your calling and election sure,”-that you may be sure of it, and that others may be sure of it too. Let it not continue a subject of question with you, “Am I the Lord’s, or am I not? Am I called by grace, am I chosen by God, or am I not?” Make these things sure beyond all doubt.

[2 Peter 1:11](#). *For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*

You shall get far into the kingdom, you shall know the innermost joys of it. You shall get near the King, and you shall become like the King; and when you come to die, you shall not be tugged into the harbor like a dismasted, water-logged vessel, but you shall go in like a full-rigged ship with all sails set, and so you shall have an abundant entrance into the fair haven of eternal felicity. May God grant us this unspeakable blessedness, so that we shall not “be saved, yet so as by fire” but that we shall find our heaven begun below, and go from heaven below to heaven above scarcely knowing any change at all! There have been saints who have found the steam of Christ’s love running so strongly, and carrying them down to the great ocean of eternal life, that they have scarcely known where the river and the ocean have met.

[2 Peter 1:12](#). *Therefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things,-*

He who exhorts others to be diligent must not himself be negligent, and Peter most appropriately writes, “Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things,”-

[2 Peter 1:12](#). *Though ye know them, and be established in the present truth.*

We need to preach the truth continually, for even those who know it need to be reminded of it again and again. Truth unpublished is like seed laid up in a florist’s shop, it does not produce any result. We need to have the truth constantly sown in our hearts, and watered by the Holy Spirit that it may grow, and bring forth fruit.

[2 Peter 1:13](#). *Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance;*

When people are as they should be, it is worth while to stir them up. You do not want to stir up dirty water, but you may stir that which is pure and sweet as much as ever you like. And a good fire sometimes becomes a better one by a little stirring up.

[2 Peter 1:14](#). *Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me.*

The Lord had told Peter how he was to die. He had told him that he would die by crucifixion: “When thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.” He knew that the day of his martyrdom was approaching, and so, being divinely warned, he was the more earnest to preach as a dying man to dying men. I have sometimes heard, as a criticism of that expression of Baxter’s about a dying man preaching to dying men, the remark that it would be better, as living men, to preach to living men. It is quite true that we must throw all our life into our preaching; but, as a rule, living men are never more truly alive than when they are under a due sense that they are also dying men. When we realize that eternity is very near us, and we are consciously drawing near to the great judgment-seat of Christ, than all our faculties are fully aroused, and our whole being is bent on doing the Master’s work with the utmost vigor and earnestness.

[2 Peter 1:15](#). *Moreover I will endeavor that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance.*

When we are gone from the earth, we want the truth that we have spoken to live on after us, we want even from our graves to continue to speak for Christ. Therefore it was that Peter kept on repeating the same

truth over and over again. He hit this nail on the head many times, and sought to clinch it, so that, when he was gone, it would not start from its place, but would remain firmly fixed.

[2 Peter 1:16](#). *For we have not followed cunningly devised fables,-*

He had no retractions to make as he came towards the close of his ministry. He did not have to say that, after all, he had been greatly mistaken; there had been an advance in theology since Jesus Christ had died, and he was sorry to say that he had preached a good deal when he was young which he would like to unsay now that he was old. Oh, no! Peter held fast to what he had previously preached because he knew that it was the very truth of God, and the other apostles had done the same, so that Peter could write, *We have not followed cunningly devised fables,-*

[2 Peter 1:16](#). *When we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.*

Peter was one of the three who saw the Lord Jesus Christ in his glory upon the Mount of transfiguration, and he recalls this.

[2 Peter 1:17-18](#). *For he received from God the Father honour and glory when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.*

Peter was not deceived about that matter; at the time, he and his fellow-apostles had been overcome by the too-transporting sight, but they all knew that it was no vision, or dream, or delusion, so Peter here speaks very positively concerning it. Why can we not receive the testimony of true witnesses such as Peter and the other apostles who sealed with their life's blood the witness which they bore to their Lord and his truth?

[2 Peter 1:19](#). *We have also a more sure word of prophecy;*

Can anything be more sure than that which an eye-witness sees? Well Peter says that this prophetic Book, in which Holy Scripture is stored up is better to us than if we had even seen Christ himself. If any one thing be more sure than another, it is this blessed book-revelation of the Christ of God.

[2 Peter 1:19-20](#). *Whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.*

It is not to be kept by any man to himself. God spoke to Jacob at Bethel, and we read concerning it, in [Hosea 12:4](#), “there he spake with us.” With regard to the children of Israel rejoicing at the Red Sea, we read, in the sixty-sixth Psalm, “There did we rejoice in him.” The promises God made to this believing man or that he makes to all believing men. You remember that text, “He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” That promise was first of all spoken to Joshua, yet Paul quoted it, in writing the Epistle to the Hebrews, as if it was spoken to every believer, and so indeed it is. No apostle, no prophet, could hedge up a promise, and say, “This was mine and nobody else’s.” It is a common heritage of all the saints. Every promise is within the boundary of the covenant of grace, and all who are in that covenant are heirs of all the promises, to whomsoever they were made.

[2 Peter 1:21](#). *For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*

This is the foundation of our faith,-that this Book is divinely inspired. Suffer nobody to make you doubt concerning this matter; for you must give up Christianity itself if you give up the inspiration of this Book. You have nothing else to fall back upon but this Book and your own personal verification of it by the work of the Holy Ghost in your own soul. To tamper with inspiration is to tamper with the heart of true religion. The least doubt upon that matter is fatal. I mean what I say, and I know how desperately this mischief is working in these days in which we live. Men used to say, with the famous Chillingworth, “The Bible and the Bible alone is the religion of Protestants;” and so it was once. Yet now it seems to me that anything but the Bible is coming to be their religion but, as for us, we accept as authoritative nothing that contradicts these truths which are written in this Book. We mean to stand fast by these truths, God helping us; we can do no other, come what may in this evil age. “Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”

Verses 16-21

[2 Peter 1:16](#). *For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.*

There is need in these perilous times to come back to such an elementary truth as this. The truths taught us in God’s Word are not fables, myths, or merely parables, but they are matters of actual fact. The apostles were eye-witnesses of “the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ”-“

eyewitnesses of his majesty.” We receive these truths without the slightest question, and base our faith upon them. We should be troubled indeed if we had any doubts whatsoever about these great foundation facts of our holy religion.

[2 Peter 1:17-18](#). *For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.*

They were not deceived,-neither Peter, nor James, nor John. There was “such a voice” from God himself, which they literally heard; it was the Father bearing approving witness to the person and work of his only-begotten and well-beloved Son.

[2 Peter 1:19](#). *We have also a more sure word of prophecy;*

Surely, nothing could be more sure than the evidence presented to the apostles in the holy mount. Yet Peter thus writes to express his utmost confidence in the Word of God. Surer than the light he saw, which dazzled him; surer than the voice he heard, which he never failed to remember, and to which he ever bore unfaltering witness; surer even than these things is that divine Book which is still preserved to us: “We have also a more sure word of prophecy.”

[2 Peter 1:19](#). *Whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:*

You have already the assurance of the Word itself; you must build upon that, and upon that alone; but you shall have added to that a “day dawn” and a “day star” in your own hearts. We have the witness within us now: “The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God;” and those things which we have received by faith we now have proved to be true by their effect upon our own souls. We know the light now because we walk in it; we know it to be light, for it has enlightened us.

[2 Peter 1:20-21](#). *Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*

How we do rejoice in this fact! We shall never give it up. It is a disbelief of inspiration, which lies at the bottom of all the modern theories; but with this disbelief we have not the slightest fellowship. In our inmost souls we

believe that “holy men of God spake as they were moved (or, “borne along”) by the Holy Ghost.” They spoke not for their own age alone, neither were the prophecies given to a few persons so as to belong privately to them; but the whole inspired Scripture stands fast for all the faithful, and is the truth to us today, even as it was to those to whom it was first spoken.

This exposition consisted of readings from [2 Peter 1:16-21](#); [2 Peter 2:1-10](#).

[2 PETER CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 2

Verses 1-10

[2 Peter 2:1](#). *But there were false prophets also among the people,*

How true that is still! Be not startled, brethren, as though some strange thing had happened to us in this generation. It always was so, and so it will continue. If there are true prophets, there will also be false prophets; and if there be the Spirit of God, there will be the spirit of evil; and often, in proportion as the everlasting truth is full of power, the everlasting lie will be full of power, too, and will strive mightily against it. That same sun and shower, which shall make yonder wheat to grow, will at the same time cause the thorns also to spring up; and perhaps for a time they may threaten to choke the wheat, until at last the wheat will choke the thistles.

“There were false prophets also among the people,”-

[2 Peter 2:1](#). *Even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies,*

They always try to do their hateful work privily; and then they ask, “What is all this fuss about? We have not departed from the truth, we are as sound in the faith as any of you are,” when they know, traitors that they are, that they are undermining the foundations, and trying to take away the very corner stone of the faith. These “false teachers” will deceive the very elect of God if it be possible; but they are not easily deceived, for God has given them a discerning mind by which they “try the spirits whether they are of God.” The Lord Jesus said of his sheep, “A stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.” Sheep though they be, they have discernment enough to know their Shepherd; and

the godly soon detect false teachers who privily “bring in damnable heresies,”-

2 Peter 2:1-2. *Even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.*

They say, “It is narrow; it is old-fashioned; it is not in accordance with the spirit of the age.” I know not what else they say; but for all that they say, it still remains “the way of truth.”

2 Peter 2:3-4. *And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not. For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment;*

“If God spared not the angels that sinned,” he will not spare any who sin, however high their position may be; even though they be the angels of the churches, he will “cast them down to hell.”

2 Peter 2:5. *And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly;*

Which some in these days say could not be consistent with the acts of a God of love. Their imaginary deity, from whom they have taken away every glorious attribute of holiness and justice, would not have done this; but the God that judgeth righteously must and will punish sin, as he ever has done; and “this God is our God for ever and ever,” even the God who is “a consuming fire.”

2 Peter 2:6-8. *And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly; and delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (for that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;)*

I love to see in God’s people a holy horror of the sin which surrounds them. In several of the prayers in which we joined before we came upstairs to this service, there were many tears and cries over the wickedness of our streets,-the impurity and the drunkenness which defile so many all around us. Alas! alas! Men seem bent on horrible iniquity; and it looks as if

London, this great modern Babylon, will repeat the story of the cities of the plain. Well may we pray, "O Lord, have mercy upon the people!"

[2 Peter 2:9](#). *The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations,*

As he delivered Lot,-

[2 Peter 2:9-10](#). *And to reserve the unjust unto the Day of Judgment to be punished: but chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government.*

We have far too many, nowadays, of both these sorts of sinners, and of the two sorts joined in one: "them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government."

[2 Peter 2:10](#). *Presumptuous are they, self willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.*

There let us cease our reading, and turn to another holy song, in which we will praise our God, whose grace hath made us to differ from the ungodly by whom we are surrounded.

This exposition consisted of readings from [2 Peter 1:16-21](#); [2 Peter 2:1-10](#).

[2 PETER CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 3

Verses 1-18

[2 Peter 3:1](#). *This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance:*

The purest minds need stirring up at times. It would be a great pity to stir up impure minds. That would only be to do mischief; but pure minds may be stirred as much as you please, and the more the better. There are hallowed memories in the minds of all Christians; but those memories are apt to lie asleep, and it is well to ring the alarm bell, and wake up all the memories within the believer's heart, even as Peter did when he wrote, "I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance."

[2 Peter 3:2](#). *That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour :*

Peter believed in the inspiration of the very “words” of Scripture; he was not one of those precious “advanced thinkers” who would, if they could, tear the very soul out of the Book, and leave us nothing at all; but he wrote, “That ye may be mindful of the words” — the very words — “which were spoken before by the holy prophets.” “Oh!” says one, “but words do not signify; it is the inward sense that is really important.” Exactly so; that is just what the fool said about egg-shells. He said that they did not signify; it was only the inward life-germ of the chick within that was important; so he broke all the shells, and thereby destroyed the life that was within. We contend for every word of the Bible, and believe in the verbal and plenary inspiration of Holy Scripture, believing indeed that there can be no other inspiration but that. If the words could be taken from us, the sense itself would be gone.

2 Peter 3:3. *Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, —*

A prophecy which has been abundantly fulfilled. You need not go far to find them; they come in the form of living men, and they swarm in the form of their books. They are to be met with almost everywhere; like the locusts, they fill the air, and hide the light of the sun: “There shall come in the last days scoffers,” —

2 Peter 3:3. *Walking after their own lusts, —*

Errors of doctrine are almost always attended with errors of practice, and certainly they legitimately lead that way. Those who scoff according to the lusts of their intellect are very likely to live according to the lusts of their flesh. The two things are congruous; they are born from the same cause, they flourish for the same reasons, and they tend to the same ends: “Walking after their own lusts,” —

2 Peter 3:4. *And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.*

Only the modern scoffers have tried to improve upon their predecessors, for they say, “All things have developed by evolution from the beginning, which never had a beginning, but which somehow or other has always existed.” Thus the scoffers change their strain, but they never alter their spirit; it is always an attack upon revealed truth. Indeed, they scarcely seem to believe that there is any revealed truth, and they will only accept that which they might themselves have invented. Notwithstanding what these

men say, all things have not continued as they were since the beginning of the creation, for there have been great interposition's of divine power in the past, as Peter goes on to show.

2 Peter 3:5-7. *For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: but the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.*

Admire the power of God's Word. It was by the Word of God that the heavens were made, by the Word of God that the earth was drowned, by the Word of God that it has been preserved ever since, and will be preserved until, by that same Word, fire shall come to devour all the works of men. As surely as Noah's flood came, so surely shall there be a burning up at the appointed season: "The heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire?"

2 Peter 3:8. *But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.*

You are in a hurry; you do not understand the infinite leisure of the Eternal One. The wondrous system of divine grace seems to have hardly room and scope enough in the few years that men give to it by their prophetic calculations; but God's prophecies are being fulfilled to the very letter. It may be that the length of time for their accomplishment will be far greater than any have imagined, yet to God it shall still be a very little while. "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." We cry, "How long? how long?" Yet, according to God's reckoning, it is but the day before yesterday that Christ died, and only about a week ago that Adam was expelled from Eden. A thousand years is, after all, a very brief space of time. If it be measured by our life, it seems long; but what is the life of a man? Measured other ways, — and there are many other modes of measurement, — it grows even longer; but measured by the eternity of God, it is a vanishing point altogether, there seems to be nothing left of it.

2 Peter 3:9. *The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*

So he hurries not. He gives the sinner space and time and verge enough in which to repent. Oh, that man would turn to God, moved by that gracious long-suffering of his!

2 Peter 3:10. *But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; —*

It is impossible to tell when it will come, but the day of the Lord will come, and, to the great mass of mankind, it will come as a thief in the night. Though often warned, they will not expect it. The Lord's saints will watch for him, for they are not in ignorance that that day should overtake them as a thief; but, to the ungodly, the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; “ —

2 Peter 3:10. *In the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.*

Men make great boasts concerning what they build, and there are many wonderful works of men upon the face of the globe; but the day will come when there will be no trace of them left, for they will have utterly disappeared. Why, then, should you and I live for these things, — for the things which are seen, which are temporal? O beloved, live for the things which are not seen, which are eternal!

2 Peter 3:11. *Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, —*

These are garments which we should wear in prospect of eternity; these are things which no fire can touch, for holiness and godliness will outlive even the flames of the last great day.

2 Peter 3:12-13. *Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.*

We believe that God will, in the end, have a complete victory over sin, and that even this poor world of ours, purified by the fire, shall be lifted up, in a sevenfold splendor, to be a part of the great kingdom of our God: “New heavens, and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.”

2 Peter 3:14. *Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.*

Be diligent to get rid of all those spots which sin has made. In one sense, you are cleansed from them already; but in another sense, the purifying work must constantly go on. You are to overcome your besetting sin, yea

are to vanquish all your tendencies to evil, every thought is to be brought into captivity to the mind of the Lord.

2 Peter 3:15-16. *And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.*

If Peter here alluded to the doctrine of election, and the great doctrines that spring out of predestination, that is no argument why they should not be preached; for if they are not to be preached because men wrest them, then nothing is to be preached, seeing that we are here told that they also wrest other Scriptures unto their own destruction. Any rope will do for a man to hang himself with; and any doctrine will suffice for a man to ruin himself with if he wishes to do so. The doctrine of divine mercy has been twisted into a reason why we should live in sin. The doctrine of human capability has been wrested into this falsehood, "I can repent when I like, or believe when I like; and therefore I may leave it to the very last." There is no form of opinion which cannot be rendered mischievous. Our business is to study the Word, and preach it as we find it; and if men will wrest it, we cannot help that. Is it not so that the truth will always be a savor of life unto life to those who believe; and a savor of death unto death to those who perish?

2 Peter 3:17-18. *Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, —*

The only way to prevent falling is to grow; the tree that grows will not fall over.

2 Peter 3:18. *And in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.*

An ascription of praise to Christ is never out of place at the beginning or at the end of an Epistle, or in the middle of it. You may praise the Lord Jesus Christ anywhere at any time; it shall never be a waste of time to sing unto his name: "To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen."

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CHAPTER SIXTY-ONE

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CHAPTER 1

Verses 1-3

[1 John 1:1](#). *That which was from, the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the Word of life;*

The fact that Christ was really in the flesh, that he was no phantom, no shadow mocking the eyes that looked upon him, is exceedingly important, and hence John (whose style, by the way, in this Epistle is precisely like the

style which he uses in his Gospel) — John begins by declaring that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who in his eternity was from the beginning, was really a substantial man, for he says, “We have heard him” — hearing is good evidence; “Which we have seen with our eyes” — eyesight is good, clear evidence certainly; “Which we have looked upon” — this is better still, for this imports a deliberate, careful, circumspect gaze; but better still, “Which our hands have handled” — for John had leaned his head on Jesus Christ’s bosom, and his hands had often met the real flesh and blood of the living Saviour. We need have no doubt about the reality of Christ’s incarnation when we have these open eyes and hands to give us evidence.

[1 John 1:2](#). *For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you, that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;*

That same eternal Being who is Very God of Very God, and is worthy to be called essentially Life, was made flesh and, dwelt among us, and the apostles could say, “We beheld his glory.”

[1 John 1:3](#). *That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you,*

See how he does hammer this nail as if he will drive it fast! How he rings this bell that it may toll the death-knell of every doubt!

[1 John 1:3](#). *That ye also may have fellowship with us:*

But John, what is the value of fellowship with you, you and your brethren, a parcel of poor fishermen; who wants fellows with you — hooted, despised, mocked, and persecuted in every city — who wants fellowship with you?

[1 John 1:3](#). *And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.*

What a leap from the fisherman to the Father’s throne, from the poor, despised son of Zebedee up to the King of Kings! Oh! John, we would have fellowship with thee now T We will have fellowship with thy scorn and spitting, that we may have fellowship with thee, and with the Father, and his Son, Jesus Christ.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Genesis 24:1-16](#); [1 Samuel 30:1-13](#); [1 John 1:1-3](#).

Verses 1-10

[1 John 1:1](#). *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life;*

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[1 John 1:4](#). *And these things write I unto you that your joy may be full.*

Some Christians have joy, but there are only a few drops in the bottom of their cup; but the Scriptures were written, and more especially the doctrine of an Incarnate God is revealed to us, that our joy may be full. Why, if you have nothing else to make you glad the fact that Jesus has become brother to you, arrayed in your flesh, should make your joy full.

[1 John 1:5](#). *This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.*

Not a light, nor the light, though he is both, but that he is light. Scripture uses the term light for knowledge, for purity, for prosperity, for happiness, and for truth. God is light, and then in his usual style, John, who not only tells you a truth but always guards it, adds-“ in whom is no darkness at all.”

[1 John 1:6](#). *If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.*

Mark here, this does not mean walking in the darkness of sorrow, for there are many of God’s people that walk in the darkness of doubts and fears, and yet they have fellowship with God; nay, they sometimes have fellowship with Christ all the better for the darkness of the path along which they walk, but the darkness here meant is the darkness of sin, the darkness of untruthfulness. If I walk in a lie, or walk in sin, and then profess to have fellowship with God, I have lied, and do not the truth.

[1 John 1:7](#). *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light,-*

Not to the same degree, but in the same manner-

7. We have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

So you see that when we walk the best, when we walk in the light, as he is in the light, when our fellowship is of the highest order, yet still we want daily cleansing. It does not say-mark this O my soul-it does not say “ The blood of Jesus Christ cleansed “ but “ cleanseth.” If guilt return, his power may be proved again and again, there is no fear that all my daily slips and shortcomings shall be graciously removed by this precious blood. But there are some who think they are perfectly sanctified and have no sin.

[1 John 1:8-9](#). *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

Oh, those words, and more especially that glorious word “ all! “ This must include the vilest sin that ever stained human nature, the blackest grime that ever came from the black heart of man. And now John is very

careful when he strikes a blow to hit completely. He has already smitten those who say they have no sin, and now he smites those who say they did not at one time have any.

[1 John 1:10](#). *If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.*

This exposition consisted of readings from [Psalms 130:1-8](#); [1 John 1:1-10](#); [1 John 2:1-2](#).

Verses 4-7

[1 John 1:4](#). *And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.*

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This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 130; [1 John 1:4-7](#).

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CHAPTER 2

Verse 1

[1 John 2:1](#). *My little children, these things I write unto you, that ye sin not.*

This is one of the great objects of all that is written by inspiration, — that we may be kept from sin. O child of God, as thou wouldst fear to drink poison, as thou wouldst flee from a serpent, dread sin!

[1 John 2:1](#). *And if any man sin, —*

Is it a hopeless case then? Far from it: “If any man sin,” —

[1 John 2:1-3](#). *We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for our’s only, but also for the sins of the whole world. And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.*

Holiness of life is the best proof that we know God. It matters not how readily we can speak about God, nor how much we suppose that we love him, the great test is, do we keep his commandments? What a heart-searching test this is! How it should humble us before the mercy-seat!

[1 John 2:4-6](#). *He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandment, is a liar and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.*

When we try to be, in every respect, what God’s Word tells us we ought to be, then may we know that we are in God; but if we walk carelessly, if we take no account of our actions, but do, after a random fashion, whatever comes into our foolish hearts, then have we no evidence at all that we are in God.

[1 John 2:7](#). *Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning.*

The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning. “From the time when Christ first began to preach, or when the gospel was first preached in your ears.”

[1 John 2:8](#). *Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.*

That which is new in the gospel, in one sense, is not new in another; for, though John was about to write what he called a new commandment, yet, at the same time, he was writing something which was not novel, something which was not grafted upon the gospel, but which grows naturally out of it, namely, the law of love.

[1 John 2:9](#). *He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness, even until now.*

God is love, and God is light therefore, love is light, and the light of God is love. Where enmity and hatred are “till in the heart, it is proof positive that the grace of God is not there.

[1 John 2:10-15](#). *He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes. I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake. I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father. I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one. Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*

For this sinful world is directly opposed to the Father. You cannot send your heart at the same time in two opposite ways, — towards evil and towards good; you must make a choice between the two.

[1 John 2:16-17](#). *For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will*

of God abideth for ever. It ought not, then, to be difficult to make a choice between these fleeting shadows and the everlasting substance.

[1 John 2:18](#). *Little children, it is the last time: —*

You may read the passage, “It is the last hour,” as if John wanted to show how late it was, and how soon Christ would come: “It is the last hour:” —

[1 John 2:18](#). *And as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.*

How much more emphatically John might write this verse if he were writing today!

[1 John 2:19](#). *They went out from us, —*

For, alas! many of the antichrists came out of the church; they sprang up from among the followers of Christ: “They went out from us,” —

[1 John 2:19-20](#). *But they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.*

“You who know God — and even the little children, the babes in Christ, know the Father, — know all “things; and you will not be led astray and deceived by these antichrists who have gone out into the world”

[1 John 2:21](#). *I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth.*

The truth is all of a piece, and a lie cannot be a part of the truth. Christ does not teach us a Jesuitical system in which error and falsehood are mixed up with truth; the gospel is all truth, and to those who believe it we may say, “Ye know the truth, and ye also know that no lie is of the truth.”

[1 John 2:22-23](#). *Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: —*

They who deny the Deity of Christ practically deny the Divine Fatherhood of God. It is not possible for us to understand the rest of truth if we do not believe in Christ, who is the Truth. As the poet says, — “You cannot be right in the rest Unless you think rightly of him.”

[1 John 2:23-28](#). *[But] he that acknowledgeth the son hath the Father also. Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father. And that is the*

promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life. These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and in truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, we shall abide in him. And now, little children, abide in him; —

That which is the subject of promise is also the subject of precept; and the precepts of the gospel are given to Christians because, in this way, God keeps his own promise, and so leads me to obey his precepts.

[1 John 2:28-29](#). *That, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming. If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.*

[1 John 3:1-2](#). Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

Verse 1-2

[1 John 2:1](#). *My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not.*

He is anxious that they should not sin, he knows they do, and that if they say they do not, they lie. Still the Christian's object is sinless perfection, and though he will never have it till he gets to heaven, that is all the better because he will always then be pressing forward, and never reckoning that he has attained.

[1 John 2:1-2](#). *And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.*

By which is meant, not only that Jesus Christ died for Gentiles as well as Jews, and for some of all nations, but that there is that in the atonement of Christ which might be sufficient for every creature under heaven if God had so chosen every creature, the limitation lying, not in the value of the atonement itself, but in the design and intention of the Eternal God. God sent his Son to lay down his life for his sheep. We know that Christ redeemed us from among men, so that the redemption is particularly and specially for the elect; yet at the same time the price offered was so precious the blood was so infinite in value, that if every man that ever lived had to be

redeemed Christ could have done it. It is this that make us bold to preach the Gospel to every creature, since we know there is no limit in the value of the atonement, though still we know that the design of it is for the chosen people of God alone.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Psalms 130:1-8](#); [1 John 1:1-10](#); [1 John 2:1-2](#).

Verses 1-6

[1 John 2:1](#). *My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not.*

That you may abstain from it, and abhor it, and not indulge in anything that would lead you towards it.

[1 John 2:1](#). *And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:*

We are to seek to live a perfectly holy life, but inasmuch as we constantly fall short of that ideal, here is our comfort; we still have an Advocate, we still have One who undertakes our cause, and pleads for us before his Father's throne.

[1 John 2:2](#). *And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for our's only, but also for the sins of the whole world.*

Whoever comes to him shall receive deliverance from sin. Neither Jew nor Gentile is exclusively considered in the offering of the atonement of Christ; those for whom he died are of every race, and color, and class, and kin.

[1 John 2:3-6](#). *And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.*

May the Holy Spirit graciously lead us all to this extraordinary walk of grace, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

This exposition consisted of readings from 1 John 1 and [1 John 2:1-6](#).

Verses 1-29

[1 John 2:1](#). *My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not.*

For this we ought to watch and strive, that we sin not.

[1 John 2:1](#). *And if any man sin-*

What then? Is it a hopeless case? Oh, no, far from it; it is a sad case, but there is a remedy for it: “and if any man sin,”-

[1 John 2:1-2](#). *We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.*

Come ye, then, to Christ for pardon, whether ye are Jews or Gentiles, whether ye are saints or sinners, whether ye are old or young, whether ye are moral or immoral, for God is both able and willing to forgive all manner of sin because of the propitiation offered by his well-beloved Son “Jesus Christ the righteous.”

[1 John 2:3](#). *And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.*

Obedience is the test of discipleship. Mere head knowledge is all in vain, and all in vain our fears, unless we render a practical obedience to the commandments of Christ. We shall not only savingly know him, but we shall “know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.”

[1 John 2:4](#). *He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar and the truth is not in him.*

This is a terrible condition for anyone to be in, to say that he knows Christ, and yet to have the Holy Spirit calling him a liar because he is not keeping Christ’s commandments. Again I remind you that obedience is essential to Christian discipleship. If we refuse to obey Christ’s commandments it is clear that we do not really know the Saviour at all, we are not even beginners in the school of Christ.

[1 John 2:5](#). *But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.*

When every word of his is precious to us and when we strive to live according to his precepts, then we know that “we are in him.” This is even more than knowing that we know him, for it is the assurance that we are united to him by a living connection which can never be broken.

[1 John 2:6](#). *He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.*

What a walk would that be! How holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners is the man who tries to walk even as Christ walked.

“Lord, I desire to live as one Who bears a blood-bought name,
As one who fears but grieving thee,
And knows no other shame.”

“ As one by whom thy walk below Should never be forgot.
As one who fain would keep apart From all thou lovest not.”

[1 John 2:7-9](#). *Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning. Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth. He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now.*

Love is the true test of light, that light which leads us to love God, to love Christ, to love the truth, to love God’s people, ay, and to love the whole world of men for their good, this is the love that attests the light we have to be the very light of God.

[1 John 2:10](#). *He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.*

A loving spirit, kind, generous, forgiving, unselfish, seeking the good of others,-this is one of the best proofs that our natural darkness has gone, and that true spiritual light is within us. Some persons think very much of the doctrine of Christ, but very little of the Spirit of Christ. Let such remember that it is written, “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” If we do not know what it is to love, then we do not in the Scriptural sense know what it is to live, we are dead. Hatred is the cerement in which the dead soul is wound up, the grave clothes in which it is put away in the tomb; but love is the garment of life in which a truly quickened spirit arrays itself. The one who is full of hatred dwells in darkness, but he that loveth abideth in the light. Note how love and life and light are most blessedly linked to one another.

[1 John 2:11-13](#). *But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes. I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you, for his name’s sake. I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning.*

“You are old men, and you like to think of old things. The everlasting love of God, the covenant made with Christ before the worlds were formed these are things that are very dear to you; and you prize beyond all other; ‘him that is from the beginning.’”

[1 John 2:13](#). *I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one.*

“In the days of your strength, you have won the victory which no human power can ever win unaided. You have overcome that wicked one who would easily have overcome you if you had been left to fight him by yourselves.”

[1 John 2:13](#). *I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.*

That is all that little children need to know at first. They may not know the great mysteries that the fathers have fathomed, they may not well know some things that the young men know, but even babes in Christ know the Father, and rejoice in his love.

[1 John 2:14](#). *I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning.*

Twice, you see, John says the same thing about the fathers, and he says nothing more concerning them; but truly to “have known him that is from the beginning is practically to know all that even the fathers need to know or can know, for this knowledge includes all other that is worth knowing.

[1 John 2:14](#). *I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.*

Here again John repeats his former statement concerning the young men, but he adds to it “because ye are strong and the word of God abideth in you.” There is a purpose in the repetition of each case, it is to emphasize the importance of the apostolic declarations.

[1 John 2:15](#). *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.*

“Your affections are meant for something better than these transient and defiled things; so let not your heart’s love flow out to things so soiled and base. ‘Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.’”

[1 John 2:15](#). *If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*

These two things are such deadly opposites that they cannot live together where the love of the father is, there cannot be the love of the world. There is no room in us for two loves. The love of the world is essentially idolatry, and God will not be worshipped side by side with idols. “If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” Does not that text draw a very sharp distinction between those who love the Lord, and those who love him not? Remember children of God, that this is the language of John, the apostle of love; but true love is honest, outspoken, heart-searching, heart-trying. Do not imagine that there is any love to your

souls in the heart of the preacher who preaches smooth things, and who flatters you with his “Peace, peace,” when there is no peace. No, the highest, deepest, most heaven-inspired love is that which searches and tries the heart felt there should be any deception there.

[1 John 2:16](#). *For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.*

That devil’s trinity-“ the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life,”-“is not of the Father, but is of the world.”

[1 John 2:17](#). *And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof:*

It is only a puff, a phantom, a bubble, a mirage which will melt away as you try to approach it; there is nothing substantial in it.

[1 John 2:17](#). *But he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.*

Not, “he that doeth some great thing to be seen of men, “ not, “ he that builds a row of almshouses, or leaves a great mass of money to charity when he dies, because he could not possibly carry it away with him, “not, “he that sounds a trumpet before him to let everybody know what a good man he is;” not, “he that must needs outdistance everybody else;” but, “he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.” Obedience to the will of God is the pathway to perpetual honour and everlasting joy.

[1 John 2:18](#). *Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.*

And now, I think, even more than when John wrote, is this the fact for antichrists are multiplying on all sides, and there are even worse evils to come than we have seen as yet; and it therefore behooves Christians to be upon the watch and to let this truth comfort them, that “it is the last time.” Once get through this dispensation, and the battle is ended; even though the dispensation should be protracted beyond our hope and desire, yet, still, once get through it, and it is over. This is to be the last charge of our great adversary and all his hosts. Stand fast, therefore, ye soldiers of the Cross, stand like rocks amidst the onslaught of the waves, and the victory shall yet be yours.

[1 John 2:19](#). *They went out from us, but they were not of us: for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.*

The worst of men go out from among the best of men, the antichrists go out from the church of Christ. The raw material for a devil was an angel. To

make a Judas, you must make him out of an apostle. May God purify his professing church since even in her own loins she breeds adversaries of the faith.

[1 John 2:20](#). *But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.*

The Spirit of God will teach you as you need to know. He will so instruct you that you shall know all that is for your soul's good, and for his own glory.

[1 John 2:21](#). *I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth.*

That which is of man's making is false, "but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."

[1 John 2:22-23](#). *Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ. He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son the same hath not the Father: [but] he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.*

Some pretend to honour the Father while they dishonour the Son, but this can never really be done. Jesus truly said, "I and my Father are one," so that he that denieth the Son denieth the Father also.

[1 John 2:24](#). *Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall, continue in the Son, and in the Father.*

As it was the truth that was revealed to them at the first, there was no need of a later revelation to correct the mistakes of the first, as some foolishly and falsely teach nowadays.

[1 John 2:25](#). *And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.*

Let those that want them have these novelties, these constant changes we who believe in Jesus have something far better, even the promise of eternal life.

[1 John 2:26](#). *These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you.*

They would lead you astray if they could so beware of them. "Forewarned is forearmed."

[1 John 2:27-28](#). *But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing*

teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him. And now, little children, abide in him;- How John continues to urge us to stand fast in Christ. As the Holy Ghost has taught us to trust Christ, so would he have us “ abide in him.”

And this is one great reason why we are to abide in him;”-

[1 John 2:28-29](#). *That, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming. If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.*

1 JOHN CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

Verses 1-24

[1 John 3:1](#). *Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God:*

Behold it, wonder at it, and never cease to admire it. Is it not one of the greatest marvels that even God himself has ever wrought that we should be called the sons of God?

[1 John 3:1](#). *Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.*

It does not know the Father, then how should it know the children? It did not know the elder Brother, — the firstborn among many brethren, — and as it did not know him, how should it know us?

[1 John 3:2](#). *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*

And that vision will be transforming and transfiguring. The pure in heart see God, and they are pure because they see God. There is both action and reaction, when God has purified us we shall see Christ and when we see Christ as he is, our purification will be complete. When will that day arrive? Oh, for the blessed vision! Meanwhile, let us be content to look at him by faith, and to be ever growing more and more prepared for that brighter vision which is yet to be ours.

[1 John 3:3](#). *And every man that hath this hope in him purifies himself, even as he is pure.*

It is the nature of this divine hope, — this hope of being like Christ — that it helps us to grow day by day more like him; and so we purify ourselves, as Christ is pure.

[1 John 3:4](#). *Whoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.*

And there will never be a better definition of sin than this. However men may philosophically try to mar it, this simple statement will be better than any that they can give us: “Sin is the transgression of the law.”

[1 John 3:5](#). *And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.*

What a marvellous thing it was for Christ to bear sin as he did, and yet to have upon him or within him no taint arising from it. You have to go into the world, and you say, “How can we help sinning while we have to mix with so much that is evil?” Well, the Lord Jesus Christ had to mix with evil more than you will ever have to do, for he not only lived in this sinful world, but the transgression of his people was actually laid upon him, so that he came into very close contact with sin: “He was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.”

[1 John 3:6](#). *Whoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.*

If this declaration related to any one act of sin, none of us could ever say that we have seen or known him, but it relates to the habit of sin, — if we love sin, and live in sin, if the main course of our life is sinful, then we have “not seen him, neither known him.”

[1 John 3:7](#). *Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.*

You must judge a tree by its fruit; if it brings forth good fruit, it is a good tree, and if it brings forth evil fruit, it is an evil tree. Do not be deceived about that matter, for there have been some, who have dreamed of being righteous, and of being the children of God, yet they have lived in sin as others do. They have been self-deceived; it has been a mere dream on which they have relied. Practical godliness is absolutely needful to a true Christian character, and a man is not righteous unless he does that which is righteous.

[1 John 3:8](#). *He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning.*

Ever since he became a devil, he has continued to sin. It was sin that changed the angel into a devil, and a sinner he has always remained.

[1 John 3:8-9](#). *For the purpose the Son of God was manifested; that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whoever is born of God doth not commit sin;*

That is to say, this is not the course, and habit, and tenour of his life; there is sin in much that he does, but he hates it, loathes it, and flees from it.

[1 John 3:9-11](#). *For his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil, whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.*

Love is the essential mark of the true child of God. “God is love;” and, therefore, he that is born of God must love. Hatred, envy, malice, uncharitableness, — these are not the things to be found in the children of God; if they are found in you, you are not one of his children.

[1 John 3:12](#). *Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother’s righteous.*

That was the real evil at the bottom of his great crime; it was the wickedness of Cain’s character that made him hate the good that was in Abel; and, therefore, after a while, he slew his brother, “because his own works were evil, and his brother’s righteous.”

[1 John 3:13](#). *Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.*

This hatred is too old for you to wonder at it. If it began with the first man who was born into the world, even with Cain, do not marvel if it should spend some of its fury upon you.

[1 John 3:14-15](#). *We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.*

What a warning this is against the evil spirit of hate, revenge, and all that kind of feeling! These things are not compatible with the possession of the life of God. Where hatred lives, there is no life of God in the soul. That evil must be shot to the very heart, by the arrows of almighty grace, or else we are not free from the dominion of the devil. Every man who hates another has the venom of murder in his veins. He may never actually take

the deadly weapons into his hand and destroy life; but if he wishes that his brother were out of the way, if he would be glad if no such person existed, that feeling amounts to murder in the judgment of God. It is not the lifting of the dagger, nor the mixing of the poison, that is the essence of the grime of murder, it is the hate that prompts the commission of the deadly deed; so, if we never commit the crime, yet, if the hate be in our heart, we are guilty of murder in the sight of God, and eternal life cannot be abiding in us.

[1 John 3:16-17](#). *Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whose hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?*

Indeed, it cannot be there at all; he has the love of himself, and not the love of God, dwelling in him.

[1 John 3:18-19](#). *My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.*

You notice how the apostle constantly writes about knowing. Take your pencil, and underline the word “know” in John’s Epistles, and you will be surprised to find how frequently he uses it. He is not one of those who suppose, or fancy, or imagine, or have formed a certain hypothesis; but he knows, and he tells us what he knows, in order that we also may know. Love hath a knowledge which is peculiarly her own, — a full assurance which none can take from her.

[1 John 3:20](#). *For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.*

If you, with your narrow knowledge of right and wrong, — your imperfect understanding of your own motives, — if you find reason to condemn yourself, what must be your position before the bar of the all-seeing, heart-reading God? That little flutter in thy bosom, my friend, that trembling, that uneasiness, what means it? It not this a forewarning of the sounding of the trumpet of the great assize, when thou wilt have to stand before the Judge of all the earth, and answer for thyself to him? It is easy to deceive thy fellow-man, but it is impossible to deceive thy God.

[1 John 3:21](#). *Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.*

Other people may condemn us, but that does not matter; they may impute to us wrong motives, and misrepresent us, but that is no concern of ours so long as we have confidence toward God.

[1 John 3:22](#). *And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.*

Notice the link between confidence as to our rightness and power in prayer. When a child has done wrong, and knows it, he cannot run to his father, and ask for favors as he used to do; he feels timid in his father's presence because of the sense of his guilt. But if you and I know that we have endeavored with all our heart to love the Lord and our fellow-men and to act righteously in all things, we have a saved confidence which enables us to speak with God as a man speaketh with his friend; and this kind of confidence God greatly loves and he listens to those who possess it. Such people may ask what they will of God; they have learned to bring their minds into conformity with the will of God's, so the desire of their heart shall be granted to them.

[1 John 3:23-24](#). *And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.*

Oh, to be more and more under the saved influence of that blessed Spirit!

Verses 10-24

[1 John 3:10-12](#). *In this the children of God are manifest and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.*

Some people try to deceive us with the notion that all men are the children of God; but John, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, shows how false that idea is. Holiness and love distinguish the children of God from the children of the devil.

[1 John 3:13](#). *Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.*

As Cain hated Abel, so worldlings hate the saints, whose holiness is a continual rebuke to the ungodly.

[1 John 3:14-16](#). *We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.*

Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. Such self-sacrifice as this is the very highest form of love to the brethren, and is a following of the example of Christ, who “laid down his life for us.”

[1 John 3:17-18](#). *But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.*

Love that consists only of words is utterly worthless, if it is true love, it must prove itself by kind deeds and gracious actions.

[1 John 3:19](#). *And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.*

The love that will pass this test will bring a restful assurance of peace to the heart.

[1 John 3:20-22](#). *For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments. And do these things that are pleasing in his sight.*

It is not everyone who can have whatever he chooses to ask of God in prayer. This privilege is only granted to those who “keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.”

[1 John 3:23](#). *And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.*

Faith and love-faith in Christ, and love to one another,-are here most happily joined together; let us never put them asunder.

[1 John 3:24](#). *And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.*

Though this great truth of our dwelling in God, and God dwelling in us, is a great mystery, it is a mystery concerning which we need not be in doubt

if we will learn of the Holy Spirit what he delights to teach us.

1 JOHN CONTENTS

CHAPTER 4

Verses 1-21

1 John 4:1. *Beloved, believe not every spirit, —*

A simpleton believes every word that he hears, but “the wise man’s eyes are in his head,” so he examines what he sees and hears, and does not blindly accept whatever may be told to him. So John says, “Believe not every spirit,” —

1 John 4:1-3. *But try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God:*

Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: If there is any question raised about the Deity and the humanity of Christ, do not listen any longer. When you taste the first morsel of meat from a joint, and you find that it is tainted, there is no necessity for you to eat all the rest to see if it is good; and if any man questions the true Divinity and the real humanity of Christ, have nothing to do with him, and give no heed to what he says, for he “is not of God.”

1 John 4:3-4. *And this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. Ye are of God, little children,*

Ye who are trusting in Jesus, and are born again of his Spirit, though you may have only a small influence with others, and are but as little children in your own esteem, yet “ye are of God.”

1 John 4:4. *And have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.*

There are two spirits; the Holy Spirit dwells in believers, and the evil spirit dwells in the ungodly. But the Holy Spirit is stronger than the evil spirit, and will certainly overcome him.

1 John 4:5. *They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.*

When people say to you, “Everybody says so-and-so,” that is not the reason why you should believe it. “All the men of advanced thought, — all the scholars of the age, speak thus;” yes, just so: “They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.”

[1 John 4:6](#). *We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us.*

The apostles spake as men sent from God, for the Spirit of God dwelt in them; and they alone know the truth who keep to that which has been revealed to us through his holy apostles and prophets.

[1 John 4:6-7](#). *Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error. Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.*

From the abundance of love which was in John’s heart, we might almost be startled at the very strong things that he writes against those who are in error, did we not remember that it is only a false charity which winks at error. He is the most loving man who has honesty enough to tell the truth, and to speak out boldly against falsehood. It is very easy to pass through this world believing and saying that everybody is right. That is the way to make a soft path for your own feet, and to show that you only have love to yourself; but sometimes to speak as John the Baptist spoke, or as Martin Luther spoke, is the way to prove that you have true love to others.

[1 John 4:8-10](#). *He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*

By nature, we had no love to God; we were his enemies. We loved sin, and we had ruined ourselves by it; but God took out of his own bosom the only Son he had, that he might make reconciliation for us, and put away our sin. “Herein is love,” says the apostle, as though you could find it nowhere else as it is here. Here is the height and depth of love immeasurable; here is love summed up, here is love’s climax: “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”

[1 John 4:11](#). *Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.*

If such was his great kindness toward us that he denied himself his own Son for our sake, ought we not to be kindly affectioned one toward another?

[1 John 4:12](#). *No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.*

“God dwelleth in us” though we do not see him. The nearest approach we can have to God is by this golden way of love.

[1 John 4:13-14](#). *Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.*

John is speaking for himself and the rest of the apostles; for they were eye-witnesses who had seen Christ, and therefore could testify to him.

[1 John 4:15-16](#). *Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.*

Is there anyone here who is full of anger, enmity, malice, and envy? If so, let him know that God dwells not in the heart that harbors such abominations. Until these base passions are expelled, and we feel love to all mankind for Christ’s sake, God is not in us, for “he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.” The old method, according to Jewish tradition, was, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy;” but Christ’s new rule is, “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven.” This is the point in which our likeness to God will be seen, for he loved us when we were his enemies, and he expects his children to love their enemies; may he graciously teach us that sacred art!

[1 John 4:17](#). *Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.*

If we can be to the world, in our poor feeble measure, what God is to it, —fountains of love, dispensaries of goodness, — then we need not be afraid of the verdict even of the great day of judgment.

[1 John 4:18](#). *There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear:*

If a man is conscious that he intends no harm to anyone, that he wishes good to all mankind, that he loves his God, and loves his fellowmen for God’s sake, what has he to fear? He becomes the bravest of the brave, and often finds himself safe and unharmed in places where others dare not go.

[1 John 4:18-20](#). *Because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love him, because he first loved us. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar:*

John! John! John! This is a very strong expression. Did we not always understand that John was full of affection? Yes, but he was not one of those oily, sugary sort of people who cannot speak the truth. There is no real love in that kind of man; he has only the mere pretense of love. John speaks sharply because he loves ardently. True love hates that which is unlovely. It is inevitable that a man, who is full of love, should feel intense indignation against that which is contrary to love. Hence the apostle says, "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar."

[1 John 4:20-21](#). *For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.*

And the word "brother" is to be understood in the widest possible sense. We are all brothers, springing from the same common parent; and therefore we ought to be philanthropists, lovers of man, loving even the guilty and the worthless, having an earnest desire to do good even to those who do us ill. If we have not yet reached that spirit, we had need begin our true Christian life, at the foot of the cross, by trusting and loving him who there died out of love for sinners; for there only can we learn, in the person of Christ Jesus our Lord, this divine philosophy of love to God and men.

Verses 9-21

[1 John 4:9](#). *In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.*

There is love in our creation; there is love in providence; but most of all there is love in the gift of Christ for our redemption. The apostle here seems to say, "Now that I have found the great secret of God's love to us; here is the clearest evidence of divine love that ever was or ever can be manifested toward the sons of men."

[1 John 4:10](#). *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*

In us there was no love; there was a hatred of God and goodness. The enmity was not on God's side toward us; but on our side toward him. "He loved us and sent his son." The gift of Christ; the needful propitiation for our sins, was all of love on God's part. Justice demanded the propitiation,

but love applied it. God could not be just if he pardoned sin without atonement; but the greatness of the love is seen in the fact that it moved the Father to give his Son to an ignominious death, that he might pardon sinners and yet be just.

[1 John 4:11](#). *Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.*

Here we have a fact and an argument. We ought to love. We ought to love after God's fashion; not because men loved us. Nor because they deserve anything at our hands. We are too apt to look at the worthiness of those whom we help; but our God is gracious to the unthankful and to the evil.

He makes his sun to rise and rain to fall for the unjust as well as for the righteous, therefore we ought to love the unlovely and the unloving. But just as God has a special love for his own people, we who believe in him ought to have a peculiar affection for all who are his.

[1 John 4:12](#). *No man hath seen God at any time.*

We do not need to see him to love him. Love knows how good he is, though she hath not beheld him. Blessed are they who have not seen God, yet who love him with heart, and mind, and strength.

[1 John 4:12](#). *If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.*

He is not far to seek. If you love one another, God is in you; he dwells in you, he is your nearest and dearest Friend, the Author of all other love. The grace of love comes from the God of love.

[1 John 4:13](#). *Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.*

And his Spirit is the spirit of love. Wherever it comes, it makes man love his fellow man and seek his good; and if you have that love in your heart, it came from God, and you dwell in God.

[1 John 4:14](#). *And we have seen.*

Yes, there is something that we have seen. John writes for himself and his fellow apostles, and he says, "No man hath seen God at any time," but

—
[1 John 4:14](#). *We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.*

John saw him live, and saw him die, and saw him when he had risen from the dead, and saw him as he ascended. So he speaks to the matter of

eyesight, and bears testimony that, though we have not seen God, we have, in the person of the representative apostles, seen the Son of God who lived and laboured and died for us.

[1 John 4:15](#). *Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.*

Let Christ be God to you, and you are saved. If, in every deed, and of a truth. You take him to be the Son of God, and consequently rest your eternal hopes on him, God dwells in you, and you dwell in God.

[1 John 4:16](#). *And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us.*

How far is this true of all of you? How many here can join with the beloved apostle, and say, “We have known and believed the love that God hath to us”? We know it; we have felt it; we are under its power. We know it still, it remains a matter of faith to us; we believe it. We have a double hold of it. “We know,” we are not agnostics. “We believe,” we are not unbelievers.

[1 John 4:16](#). *God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.*

This is not mere benevolence; there are many benevolent people who still do not dwell in love. They wish well to their fellow men; but not to all. They are full of indignation at certain men for the wrong that they have done them. John’s words teach us that there is a way of living in which you are in accord with God, and with all mankind; you have passed out of the region of enmity into the realm of love. When you have come there, by the grace of God, then God dwells in you, and you dwell in him.

[1 John 4:17](#). *Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have a boldness in the day of judgment:*

That is a wonderful expression, “boldness in the day of judgment.” According to some, the saints will not be in the day of judgment. Then, what is the use of “boldness in the day of judgment”? As I read my Bible, we shall all be there, and we shall all give an account unto God. I shall be glad to be there, to be judged for the deeds done in my body; not that I hope to be saved by them, but because I shall have a perfect answer to all accusations on account of my sin. “Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.” If I am a believer in Christ, —

“Bold shall I stand in that grand day,

For who aught to my charge shall lay?

While through thy blood absolved I am From sin's tremendous curse and shame."

Because as he is, so are we in this world.

Happy Christian men, who can say that? If you live among men as Christ lived among men, if you are a Saviour to them in your measure, if you love them, if you try to exhibit the lovely traits of character that were in Christ, happy are you.

[1 John 4:18](#). *There is no fear in love;*

When a man loves with a perfect love, he escapes from bondage.

[1 John 4:18](#). *But perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.*

There is a loving, holy fear, which is never cast out. Filial fear grows as love grows. That sacred dread, that solemn awe of God, we must ever cultivate; but we are not afraid of him. Dear heart, God is your best Friend, your choicest love. "Yea, mine own God is he," you can say; and you have no fear of him now. You long to approach him. Though he is a consuming fire, you know that he will only consume what you want to have consumed; and will purify you, and make your gold to shine more brightly because the consumable alloy is gone from it. He will not consume you, but only that which would work for your hurt if it were left within you. Refining fire, go through my heart! Consume as thou wilt! I long to have sin consumed, that I may be like my God. Say you not so, my brethren?

[1 John 4:19](#). *We love him, because he first loved us.*

The reason for our love is found in free grace. God first loved us, and now we must love him; we cannot help it. It sometimes seems too much for a poor sinner to talk about loving God. If an emmet or a snail were to say that it loved a queen, you would think it strange, that it should look so high for an object of affection; but there is no distance between an insect and a man compared with the distance between man and God. Yet love doth fling a flying bridge from our manhood up to his Godhead. "We love him, because he first loved us." If he could come down to us, we can go up to him. If his love could come down to such unworthy creatures as we are, then our poor love can find wings with which to mount up to him.

[1 John 4:20](#). *If a man say, I love God.*

Not, "if a man love God," but if a man say, "I love God." It is a blessed thing to be able to say, "I love God," when God himself can bear witness to

the truth of our statement; but the apostle says, If a man say, I love God, —
[1 John 4:20](#). *And hateth his brother, he is a liar:*

It is very rude of you, John, to call people liars. But it is not John's rough nature that uses such strong language; it is his gentle nature. When a loving disposition turns its face against evil, it turns against it with great vehemence of holy indignation. You can never judge a man's character by his books. Curiously enough, Mr. Romaine. Of St. Anne's Church, Blackfriars, wrote the most loving books that could be; yet he was a man of very strong temper indeed. Mr. Toplady wrote some of the sharpest things that were ever said about Arminians; but he was the most loving and gentle young man that ever breathed. St. John, full of love and tenderness, hits terribly hard when he comes across a lie. He was so fond of love, that he cannot have it played with, or mocked or mimicked. "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar."

[1 John 4:21](#). *For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.*

This is that "new commandment" which our Lord gave to his apostles, and through them to his whole church. "That ye love one another as I have loved you." John was, in a special sense, "that disciple whom Jesus loved." It was meet, therefore, that he should be the apostle to be inspired by the Holy Spirit to bring "this commandment" to the remembrance of any who had forgotten it. "This commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also." God help us so to do, of his great grace!

Amen.

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CHAPTER 5

Verses 1-21

[1 John 5:1](#). *Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.*

Take comfort, believer, from that declaration. You have accepted Jesus as the Christ the anointed of God, so the apostle affirms that you are "born of God." It may be only lately that you have been born again, you may be only a babe in grace; but if you have a true faith in Christ as God's anointed, you are "born of God."

[1 John 5:1](#). *And every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.*

If you truly love God, you also love his well-beloved and only-begotten Son, and you also love all his children. There cannot be a true love to the Father and a hatred to his family, that is impossible. Judge therefore by this test whether you love God or not.

[1 John 5:2-3](#). *By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments and his commandments are not grievous.*

Love is a practical thing; love without obedience is a mere pretense. True love shows itself by seeking to please the one who is loved. May God the Holy Ghost work in us perfect obedience to the commands of God, that we may prove that we really do love him!

[1 John 5:4](#). *For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.*

This is the conquering weapon; he who truly believes in Jesus cannot be overthrown by the combined forces of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Remember the lesson that Haman learned when he contended in vain against Mordecai because Mordecai was of the seed of the Jews, and learn that they who belong to Christ shall, like Christ be more than conquerors.

[1 John 5:5](#). *Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus the Son of God?*

Let that truth be firmly fixed in your mind, and nerve you in your conflict with the world. The old cry, Athanasius contra mundum, "Athanasius against the world," may be uttered by every believer in Jesus into Christianus contra mundum." Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"

[1 John 5:6-7](#). *This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ, not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth. For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.*

Thus all the Persons in the blessed Trinity confirm the faith of the Christian; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost bear united witness to the faith which God himself gives us.

[1 John 5:8](#). *And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.*

Three candles in the room, but the light is one, three witnesses to our heart, but the witness is the same. If we have the witness of the Spirit, the water, and the blood, we know that we have received the truth.

[1 John 5:9-10](#). *If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself:*

What better witness than this could he have?

[1 John 5:10](#). *Because he believeth not God hath made him a liar;”-*

He need not actually say that God is a liar; the fact that he does not believe him has practically made out that God is a liar. How many of us are there to whom this passage applies?” He that believeth not God hath made him a liar;”-

[1 John 5:10](#). *Because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.*

Is this true concerning anyone here! If so, perhaps if you have not been aware of the extent of your guilt. You have remained unbelievers out of sheer carelessness, out of neglect of the Word. I pray you, rest not in such a state of mind and heart now that you are informed by the Spirit of God that, by your unbelief, you are making God a liar. Who would willfully commit that great sin? Let us shudder at the thought of the bare possibility of such guilt as this.

[1 John 5:11](#). *And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.*

Our only hope lies in Christ; but there is life for Us in Christ and life eternal, if we do but believe in him.

[1 John 5:12](#). *He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.*

You exist, and you always will exist, but true life is not yours if you have not Christ as your Saviour. Life is something infinitely superior to mere existence: “He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.”

[1 John 5:13-15](#). *These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God. And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we knew that we have the petitions that we desired of him.*

A very wonderful thing is prayer, yet it is not every man's prayer that is heard, but he that hath the life of God within him shall have his petitions granted because the Holy Spirit will move him to ask in accordance with the will of God.

[1 John 5:16-18](#). *If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death. We know that whatsoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.*

He who has committed the sin which is unto death have no desire for forgiveness, he will never repent, he will never seek faith in Christ but he will continue hardened and unbelieving; he will henceforth never be the subject of holy influences, for he has crossed over into that dark region of despair where hope and mercy never come. Perhaps some of you think that you have committed that unpardonable sin, and are at this moment grieving over it. If so, it is clear that you cannot have committed that sin, or else you could not grieve over it. If you have any fear concerning it, you have not committed that sin which is unto death, for even fear is a sign of life. Whoever repents of sin and trusts in Jesus Christ is freely and fully forgiven, therefore it is clear that he has not committed a sin which will not be forgiven. There is much in this passage to make us prayerful and watchful, but there is nothing here to make a single troubled heart feel anything like despair. He that is born again, born from above, can never commit this unpardonable sin. He is kept from it; "that wicked one" cannot even touch him, for he is preserved by sovereign grace against this dreadful damage to his soul. You need not be curious to enquire what this unpardonable sin is. I will give you an old illustration of mine concerning it. You may sometimes have seen a notice put up on certain estates in the country, "Man-traps and spring guns set here," but, if so, did you ever go round to the front door of the mansion, and say, "If you please will you tell me where the man-traps are, and whereabouts the spring guns are set?" If you had asked that question, the answer would have been, "It is the very purpose of this warning not to tell you where they are, for you have no business to trespass there at all." So, "all unrighteousness is sin," and you are warned to keep clear of it." There is a sin unto death," but you are not

told what that sin is on purpose that you may, by the grace of God, keep clear of sin altogether.

[1 John 5:19-21](#). *And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness. And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life. Little children keep yourselves from idols. Amen.*

After the Reformation in England, there was a certain part of the church, called the rood-loft, where the crucifix had to be, and it was ordered by the Reformers, when “the holy rood” was taken away, that these words should be printed in capital letters in its place,-“ LITTLE CHILDREN KEEP YOURSELVES FROM IDOLS.” This was an admirable arrangement, and this text might very profitably be put up in a good many Ritualistic churches now, instead of the Agnus Dei and the crucifix,-“Little children, keep yourselves from idols.” Might we not also say to many a mother and many a father concerning their children, and to many a lover of money and hungerer after gold, “Keep yourselves from idols”? Idolatry will intrude itself in one form or another. Some idolize themselves; they look in the glass, and there see the face of their god. O beware of all idolatry!” Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.” We may very well say “Amen” to that.

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CHAPTER 1

Verse 1

[Judges 1:1](#). *Jude*.

That is to say Judas, not Iscariot, —

[Judges 1:1](#). *The servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James*, —

He does not say, “and brother of our Lord,” for we know that James and Judas were both of them among the Lord’s kinsman according to the flesh; but now, after the flesh, knoweth he even Christ no more, but is content and happy to be known as “the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James,”

—

[Judges 1:1](#). *To them that are sanctified by God the Father,*

For the decree of election, the setting apart of the chosen is usually ascribed unto God the Father.

[Judges 1:1](#). *And preserved in Jesus Christ, and called:*

We have here a very blessed description of the whole work of our salvation, — set apart by the Father, joined unto Christ, and preserved in him, and then, in due time, called out by the Spirit of God.

[Judges 1:2](#). *Mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied.*

Christian letters should be full of love and good will. The Christian dispensation breathes beneficence, it is full of benediction: “Mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied.” May the Divine Trinity give you a trinity of blessings!

[Judges 1:3](#). *Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that you should earnestly contend for the faith that was once delivered unto the saints.*

In the sense of being once for all given to the saints, the faith of Christians is not a variable quantity. It is not a thing which changes from day to day, as some seem to suppose, vainly imagining that fresh light is bestowed upon each new generation. No, the truth was delivered once for all, it was stereotyped, fixed; and it is for us to hold it fast as God has given it to us.

[Judges 1:4](#). *For there are certain men crept in unawares, —*

They did not boldly avow their heresy when they came in; — they would not have been allowed to enter if they had done so, — but they sneaked in, they climbed into the pulpit, professing to be preachers of the gospel, when they knew, all the while, that they intended to undermine it. Basest of all men are those who act thus: “There are certain men crept in unawares,” —

[Judges 1:4](#). *Who were before of old ordained to this condemnation,*

Proscribed by God as traitors long ago. Those who have not the courage of their convictions probably have no convictions at all, but seek to undermine the faith which they profess to hold.

[Judges 1:4](#). *Ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and Our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Antinomians, “turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness,” falsely declaring that the law has no binding force upon the Christian’s life, and

saying that we may do evil that good may come; — and Socinians, “denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.”

[Judges 1:5](#). *I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not.*

If we have no real faith, we may appear to go a long way towards heaven, but we shall not enter the heavenly Canaan.

[Judges 1:6](#). *And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.*

See, then the need of stability, the need of abiding in the faith, and abiding in the practice of it, lest we should turn out to be like the Israelites, who, though they came out of Egypt, left their carcasses in the wilderness, or like the angels, who, though they once stood in God’s presence in glory, have fallen to the depths of the abyss because of their apostasy.

[Judges 1:7-8](#). *Even as Sodom and Gomorrhah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.*

Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities. They cast off all restraint; they claim to have liberty to do whatever they like; and when reprov’d, they utter railing words against those who honestly rebuke them.

[Judges 1:9](#). *Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.*

To what does this refer? I am sure I do not know. I cannot think it refers to anything recorded in the Old Testament, but to some fact, known to Jude, who here speaks by revelation, and records it. We believe it, and learn from it that, when an archangel disputes with the devil, he does not use hard words even against him, for hard words are an evidence of the weakness of the cause which they are used to support. Hard arguments softly put, are the really effective weapons, but it takes some of us a long time to learn this; and generally, in our younger days, we wear away our own strength by the violence with which we use it.

[Judges 1:10](#). *But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt*

themselves.

It is a horrible thing when a man's sin goes the full length of his knowledge, and he sins up to the degree of his possibilities.

[Judges 1:11-12](#). *Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core. These are spots —*

“These are spoilers,” so it may be rendered.

[Judges 1:12](#). *In your feasts of charity,*

They spoil your love feasts at the communion table, they mar your fellowship when you gather together for worship.

[Judges 1:12](#). *When they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear.*

Some of the best Christians, who come to the Lord's table, come there in great fear and trembling; and I have known some, who have had an undoubted right to be there, half afraid to come. Yet those very persons who have a holy fear lest they should come amiss, are those who really ought to come. “Feeding themselves without fear” is the mark of those who are farther off from God.

[Judges 1:12](#). *Clouds they are without water, carried about of winds.*

They believe according to what is said to them by the last man who speaks to them; they are easily persuaded to this doctrine, and to that, and the other.

[Judges 1:12](#). *Trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit,*

They seem to be bearing fruit, but it drops off before it ripens.

[Judges 1:12-13](#). *Twice dead, plucked up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, —*

They have nothing to say for Christ, yet they must say something, so they are “raging waves of the sea,” —

[Judges 1:13](#). *Foaming out their own shame, wandering stars, to whom is reserved the thickness of darkness for ever.*

These are the false professors of religion, the members of the church for whom there are seats reserved in hell. This is a dreadful thought: “to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever;” — not for the heathen, not for the open refusers of the gospel, but for such as creep into the churches unawares, teach false doctrine, live unholy lives.

[Judges 1:14-15](#). *And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among*

them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.

How Jude knew that Enoch said that, I cannot tell; it is another instance of inspiration.

[Judges 1:16](#). *These are murmurers, complainers,*

You know the sort of people alluded to here, nothing ever satisfies them. They are discontented even with the gospel. The bread of heaven must be cut into three pieces, and served on dainty napkins, or else they cannot eat it; and very soon their soul loatheth even this light bread. There is no way by which a Christian man can serve God so as to please them. They will pick holes in every preacher's coat; and if the great High Priest himself were here, they would find fault with the color of the stones of his breastplate.

[Judges 1:16-19](#). *Walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage. But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ how that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should talk after their own ungodly lusts. These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit.*

People who must, if they make a profession of religion at all, be continually breaking up churches, and holding themselves aloof from others, having no fellowship with anybody but those who can say "shibboleth" as plainly as they can, and sound they pretty loudly.

[Judges 1:20-22](#). *But ye beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And of some have compassion, making a difference:*

Some of those professors, who are not living consistently with their profession, in whom you can see signs and tokens of sin, yet there may be some trace of repentance, some reason to hope that they will forsake the evil when they see it to be evil: "have compassion" upon them.

[Judges 1:23](#). *And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.*

When you have to deal with unclean professors, there must be an abhorrence and detestation of their sin even when there is great gentleness towards the sinner. We must never be such believers in the repentance of the guilty as to be willing to wink at sin; for sin is a great evil in any case, and

repentance cannot wipe it away; and though it behoves us to be tender to the sinner, we must never be tender to the sin. How beautifully this short and sad Epistle ends! Having described the many who, after making a profession, yet turn aside, Jude bursts out with this jubilant doxology: —

[Judges 1:24-25](#). *Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.*

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CHAPTER 1

Verses 1-20

[Revelation 1:1-2](#). *The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John: who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.*

John was a most suitable person to see and to bear record of the Word of God, for in his gospel ([John 19:35](#)) he describes himself at the cross as both seeing and bearing record. So now that his once-crucified Lord is in his glory, it seemed meet that the same beloved disciple should both see him and bear record concerning him. No eyes were so fit to see the glory of Christ as those which had looked with so much love into the eyes of Jesus of Nazareth in the days of his humiliation. The head that had rested upon his Master's bosom at the supper table was prepared thereby for all the glory that should afterwards be revealed. The nearer your communion with Christ is, the more will you be permitted to know of him. Our perceptions of Christ, if they are true, will be spiritual; and in proportion as our spiritual life is in a right condition, shall we be able to know more and more of him.

[Revelation 1:3](#). *Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.*

I do not perceive that John says, "Blessed are they that understand this Book," for, surely, they would be very few. I do not doubt that there are portions of Scripture which are not meant to be understood as yet, — things concerning the future which are wrapped up in a phraseology which will be plain enough when that future arrives, but which for the present are not intended so much to gratify our curiosity as to stimulate our watchfulness.

To keep us constantly on the look out, is the main object of every revelation concerning the future. So far, then, we have the proem or preface of this great Book of the Revelation.

[Revelation 1:4-5](#). *John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth.*

John's benediction to the seven churches of Asia is like that of Paul when he is writing to a Christian church, "Grace be unto you, and peace." You have probably noticed that, when Paul is writing to a minister individually, his greeting is, "Grace, mercy, and peace;" for they who have the solemn charge of souls need "mercy" above all other men. May they find mercy of God in that day! But to the churches themselves, it is simply this double benediction, "Grace be unto you, and peace." These blessings, coming in their proper order, grace first, and peace afterwards, are very precious. That peace which is not founded upon grace, and does not follow grace, is a false peace. "Grace be unto you, and peace." But if you have grace, peace ought to follow; you have a right to it, it is a logical sequence to the possession of the grace of God. Well does Dr. Watts sing, —

"If sin be pardon'd, I'm secure;
Death hath no sting beside."

If grace be given, glory will follow. Wherefore, beloved, "Grace be unto you, and peace." And this grace and peace must come from the Lord Jesus: "from him which is, and which was, and which is to come." This grace and peace must come from the eternal Father, the self-existent Jehovah, and from the ever-blessed Spirit. God alone is the Lord and Giver of grace and peace. And this double blessing must come from a realization of the Lord Jesus Christ in his glorious character as "the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth." Never forget, dear friends, that even today Christ is the Prince of the kings of the earth. The Queen reigns, and the Czar reigns; but it is still more true that "The Lord reigneth." There is One who is higher than the highest of all earthly kings, even "the Prince of the kings of the earth."

[Revelation 1:5-6](#). *Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*

Do not all of us, who truly know our Lord, say that? Do we not wish for him glory and honour beyond anything that we can conceive? May all dominion be his for ever and ever, for it is his by right!

[Revelation 1:7](#). *Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him. and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him.*

They have crucified him; all kindreds of the earth have, alas! had a share in Christ's death, and dying unforgiven, or being found alive at his coming without repentance, they "shall wail because of him."

[Revelation 1:7](#). *Even so, Amen.*

Though the wicked shall wail at Christ's appearing, the saints must give consent to the judgments of God as well as to his mercies: "Even so, Amen."

[Revelation 1:8-12](#). *I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty. I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea. And I turned to see the voice that spake with me.*

This was a very natural thing for John to do. We always feel a desire to see who it is that addresses us, and especially would this be the case if we heard such a sentence as this, spoken with a trumpet voice by One who could truly say it, "I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last." Who would not have turned to see such a Speaker? I am sure that John would, for he must have recognized that voice, though it was pitched in a higher key than usual, and was full of more sonorous force than when he last heard it. He must have known the voice of the **Start Here** Well-beloved as he spake again to his highly-favored servant.

[Revelation 1:12-13](#). *And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, —*

It was the very same Son of man, but John could only say "like unto the Son of man," — like unto the One whom he had known long before, and

whom he had loved with undying affection, — like him, but, oh! how unlike him, notwithstanding. The Christ in every position is still discernible as “like unto the Son of man.” As John sees him, with his face shining like the sun in its strength, yet still he is “like unto the Son of man.” In the manger, he was like to what he was afterwards upon the cross; on the cross, he was like to what he is now upon his throne; and when he comes again in all his glory, he will still be like unto what he was and always is, — “the Son of man.” “In the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man,” —

[Revelation 1:13-18](#). *Clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.*

That dear familiar touch of Christ’s right hand had quickened John into sensibility again, and brought him back from his swoon when he was lying at Christ’s feet as dead. O Master, if we are dead in a worse sense than John was, if we have fallen into a spiritual swoon, if we have come into a fainting fit, lay thy pierced hand upon us now, and we shall live! Come near us, O Lord, come nearer, nearer still, and touch thy servants with thy hand of love and power, and we shall be able to hear what thou hast to say, and our heart shall be strong to obey thy command!

[Revelation 1:19-20](#). *Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter; the mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks.*

Then he proceeds to explain what he meant, just after the manner of the Son of man who, when he pronounced a parable in public, opened it up to his own disciples in secret, even as he does still. Oh, how blessedly is “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever”! His characteristics never change what he was, he is, and that he ever will be, blessed be his holy name.”

[Revelation 1:20](#). *The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.*

The Lord bless to us all the reading of this precious passage from his Word! Amen.

Verses 15-20

In the first fourteen verses we have given to us part of the glowing description of the glories of the ascended Christ, and here it is completed.

[Revelation 1:15](#). *And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.*

Seas lashed to tempests, cataracts leaping from their stupendous heights — such was the voice of Christ.

[Revelation 1:16](#). *And he had in his right hand seven stars: And out of his mouth went a sharp two edged sword:*

For his word is a killing thing.

[Revelation 1:16](#). *And his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.*

What magnificent figures put together! We are well prepared to find that John could not long endure this majestic representation of the Lord.

[Revelation 1:17](#). *And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead.*

He was not only brought to the posture of reverence, but he was so overawed that he became unconscious. It is the same person upon whose breast John had leaned his head, yet now he is represented as John had never seen him before. He was not so at the last supper; he was not so upon the cross; he was not so on the Mount of Transfiguration; he was not so even when he had risen from the dead, and, perhaps, he will not be so when we see him in his glory. This was a specially instructive representation of Christ, and it was too much even for the trained and educated spirit of John the Divine.

[Revelation 1:17-18](#). *And he laid his right hand upon me. saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.*

This is the great consolation of the people of God when they are brought very low — that Jesus lives, that Jesus reigns, that Jesus still comforts us and draws near to us in all the majesty of his power.

[Revelation 1:19-20](#). *Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter; The mystery of*

the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks.

The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 77; [Revelation 1:15-20](#).

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Revelation Chapter 2

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

Revelation Chapter 3

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

Revelation Chapter 4

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

Revelation Chapter 5

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER 6

Verses 12-17

[Revelation 6:12-16](#). *And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood, and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is*

rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:

Think of the contrast between this awful cry and the sentence we read just now: “Then did they spit in his face.” “Mountains and rocks, fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne.” Think, too, of the contrast of which we were reminded in our opening hymn, —

“While sinners in despair shall call,
‘Rocks’ hide us; mountains, on us fall!’
The saints, ascending from the tomb,
Shall joyful sing, ‘The Lord is come!’”

[Revelation 6:17](#). *For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?*

Let us read further on in the same Book. (See [Revelation 19:11-16](#))

This exposition consisted of readings from [Matthew 26:57-68](#), [Revelation 6:12-17](#), [Revelation 19:11-16](#), [Revelation 20:11-15](#), [Revelation 21:1](#).

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CHAPTER 7

Verses 1-17

Revelation 7:1. And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.

Observe that God has servants ever ready for his work. There were winds to be restrained. “And I saw four angels,” — mighty spiritual beings — who had power over the air. These winds were to be restrained until all God’s people were safely sealed and you may depend upon it that no calamity shall happen to destroy the people of God, they must first be saved. There shall be no deluge till there is the ark; there shall be no Romans to destroy Jerusalem till there is a little city in the mountains to which the disciples may flee. God will protect his own. The dead calm, the

perfect quietude which prevailed while the angels restrained the winds is set forth in these words. The wind did not appear to blow on land, or sea, or tree, not a ripple broke the surface of the waters, not a leaf stirred on the bough, everything is quiet until God's people are secured.

Revelation 7:2-3. *And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their forehead.*

See how other things are protected for the sake of God's people. The earth and the sea and even the trees, have a cordon of safety round about them while God's people are being secured. When the Lord Jesus put to sea on the Galilean lake, we read that there were with him many other little ships, and when the calm came for his ship they were in the calm, too. And so it is a good thing if you are not in the Church, yet to have some sort of connection with it; a great thing for the age to have the Church of God in it, for God will take care of a nation often for the sake of his people. As he would have spared Sodom had there been righteous men found in it, so doth he spare nations for the sake of his saints.

Revelation 7:4. *And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.*

Now we are going to read their names. I hope you won't say it is tiresome to read them. Remember he that wrote this Book in the Father of them, and children's names are not wearisome to their own father. Remember, he that fills this Book bought them with his blood, and wore them upon his breastplate as the great High Priest of Israel; bearing all these names upon his heart, graven upon the palms of his hands. We need not be weary of hearing names which Christ has worn on his breast.

Revelation 7:5-8. *Of the tribe of Juda were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nepthalim were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Zabulon were*

sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand.

Juda stands first and Benjamin stands last: they were joined together, but here they are as widely divided as they can be, yet they stand in an equal position; and the day shall come when first and last shall rejoin together in the equal blessing of the Most High. Where is Dan? Not mentioned here.

See, there is nothing without mystery. We shall never understand all the things of God. It seemed simple enough to bless the twelve tribes, and yet there is one wanting.

Revelation 7:9. After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;

This is the great gathering of the Gentile multitude redeemed by blood, numbered by God, never to be numbered by men, being like the sand on the seashore, innumerable. Of all colors they shall be, and they will look to us on earth if we could see them, to be a motley group, and if we heard them speak it would seem a strange jargon. Many are the languages of earth, but one is the speech of heaven. All hearts are alike in the kingdom of the Most High, whatever the color of the flesh. Do you know, that entrance of our Lord into Jerusalem seems to me to be the pattern we have here before us, only this is the fulfillment of it. Here are the crowds that gathered about him, the twelve disciples lead the way, and here are the multitudes with the palms in their hands scattering them in the pathway of their king.

Revelation 7:10. And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.

In Jerusalem they cried Hosanna, which was "Save, Lord," but now they have risen a little higher, and they sing, "Salvation to our God." It is the same melody but it is pitched to a loftier key, and there are more to sing it; and they are not now conducting a prince to his throne but they are looking up to the king upon his throne, reigning there.

Revelation 7:11. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God,

Not some of the angels, nor many angels, nor even an innumerable company of angels, but all the angels; they shall all gather on that august occasion around the throne of God and the Lamb.

Revelation 7:12. *Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.*

What a deep, sonorous Amen that will be! What a mighty volume of sound! How full and rich, how hearty! Oh, that our ears may be there to hear it, and our tongues to swell it.

Revelation 7:13. *And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes and whence came they?*

“And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest.” You see the question was put by an angel, as an answer one of the elders answered. Whom did he answer? Why, John; and what John’s heart was inquiring. He was saying to himself, “Who are these?” And one of the elders was responsive to his heart’s inquiry, and put the same inquiry into words on his behalf.

Revelation 7:14-15. *And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.*

Shall “tabernacle over them,” that is the exact word, as though he were a pavilion, a canopy over them.

Revelation 7:16-17. *They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.*

It looks almost as if they might have a tear in their eye when they first come there; certainly they shall never be sure of being without a tear till they have crossed the pearly threshold, but then he shall wipe away the very tear, there shall be no possibility of weeping there. May our eyes behold that sinless and sorrowless land, and its Eternal Lord!

Verses 9-17

We will read two passages from the New Testament tonight. The first will show us where the glorified saints are, and the second will tell us what is to become of their bodies.

Revelation 7:9-13. *After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying,*

Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, the wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen. And one of the elders answered, saying unto me,—

In reply, as it were, to John's question put by the very look of his countenance. Sometimes, the Lord Jesus Christ gave an answer to men who had never spoken to him; and the angelic elder here followed his example, and also in another respect imitated his Lord, by replying to the inquisitive glance of John by asking him a question.

Revelation 7:13-17. What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out, of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, the made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day the night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

This is to be the future state of all those who are redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus, and to whom the saving grace of God has come: so that, concerning all who have thus fallen asleep, we sorrow not as those without hope, for we know that all is well with them for ever. Now let us read a little of what the apostle Paul was inspired to write with regard to the resurrection of the body. (See 1 Corinthians 15:1-28; 1 Corinthians 15:50-58)

This exposition consisted of readings from Revelation 7:9-17; 1 Corinthians 15:1-28; 1 Corinthians 15:50-58.

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Revelation Chapter 8

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

Revelation Chapter 9

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

Revelation Chapter 10

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

Revelation Chapter 11

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER 12

Verses 1-17

[Revelation 12:1](#). *And there appeared a great wonder in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:*

This is that woman of whom the promise runs, “The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent’s head.” John saw this in a vision in the heavenly places; he saw the Church of God, enthroned, made glorious, clothed with the sun, having the brightness of divine light about her, with all that is variable, changeable as “the moon under her feet, and upon her head the crown “that her Lord had given, her “ — twelve patriarchs, twelve prophets, twelve apostles, a complete number of glorious lights kindled from heaven.

[Revelation 12:2](#). *And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.*

That child that is born of her, that seed of the woman, that shall bruise the serpent’s head is: first, Christ, and then all the first-born, of whom he is the great representative.

[Revelation 12:3-4](#). *And there appeared another wonder’ in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of*

heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.

The spirit of evil in the heavenlies fighting with the power of light and goodness and grace, a mysterious being with great power, high intelligence, seven heads, ten horns, and having mighty influence over multitudes of men, so that there were seven crowns upon his seven heads. “And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth.” The crocodile, which, I suppose, was the earthly figure from which John’s dream sprang, has great force in its tail; and Satan doubtless of old drew from heaven a number of its stars — other angels fell with him. And there are times in the heavens of the church when the ministers fall; they seem to go in companies. Those who should be lights for God, are into darkness, and become teachers of heresy “He did cast them down to the earth.” They lost their brightness, they betrayed their earthly origin. “And the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.” Remember how he sought to slay Jesus; and the like is the case of all the man-children born unto God, who will be of service in the kingdom of God. The main attack of the dragon was against the child: the main attack of the power of evil is against Christ and everything Christly. If he could destroy the gospel, he would not care about the church one whit: the woman might go if the man-child could be destroyed.

[Revelation 12:5](#). *And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up ,unto God, and to his throne.*

That is the brief history of the birth of Christ, and of his going from us. He “was caught up unto GOD, and to his throne.” God will take care of the great principle of truth. If it cannot have a refuge on earth, he will find it a refuge in heaven.

[Revelation 12:6](#). *And the woman fled into the wilderness where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.*

The church of GOD was long in obscurity. You can hardly find it among the Albigenses and Waldenses. It was hidden away among the mounts. The Wycliffites, and the Lollards, and others, held fast the truth; but history scarcely records their names. The woman was in the wilderness, hidden

away for many a day. "And there was war in heaven." You are not to think of heaven as a place, but among the heavenlies. John, in a vision, saw the great contending powers of evil. He was like the prophet when he saw a mountain full of horses of fire and chariots of fire.

[Revelation 12:7-8](#). *And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels. And prevailed not: neither was their place found any more in heaven.*

You remember how our Lord, who is the true Michael, the only great archangel, said at the beginning of the preaching of the gospel, "I beheld Satan as lightning falling from heaven." His power among the heavenlies is gone; he was cast out of the place called heaven; so is he now, by the preaching of the gospel, and by the death of Christ, cast down from among the heavenly influences.

[Revelation 12:9](#). *And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.*

This was done in the olden time as a matter of fact. It is done continually, spiritually, as Christ is lifted up, and his gospel gets the victory.

[Revelation 12:10](#). *And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren its cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.*

Always at it! this prince of evil pretending to goodness, and daring to bring accusations against the Holy One of God. But he is not permitted now to stand in the court; he is hurled from his high place. He used his place with a desperate pertinacity of malice, accusing the brethren day and night.

[Revelation 12:11-12](#). *And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.*

"Therefore rejoice ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them." Let great joy be in the hearts of all spiritual beings, whether angels or men, for Satan is cast down from among them. But the battle is not over; the scene of it is only transferred from the heavenlies to the earthly. "Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you having great wrath because he knoweth that he hath but a short time." We may expect

him to rage more and more as the time of his destruction comes nearer and nearer. He is like a bad tenant; he will damage the house out of which he is to be ejected. But he is to be ejected, and let God be glorified for it.

[Revelation 12:13](#). *And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child.*

He had changed his place, but he did not change his nature; and so he still perseveres in his attack upon God.

[Revelation 12:14-15](#). *And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood.*

Read history and see what fierce and brutal persecutions were used like floods against the gospel of Christ.

[Revelation 12:16](#). *And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.*

It is poor help that the earth can give, and yet God has over-ruled to make it useful. The kings and the powers of this world have for their own reasons sometimes protected the church. It was so in Luther's day. The jealousy that was felt of the influence of the Court of Rome politically tended to the preservation of Luther and those round about him, so that the gospel was not destroyed. "The earth helped the woman," and we may expect that even those political disasters, which we often dread, will all end that way. How often has priestly arrogance been put to the blush even for political reasons! We have nothing to do with that, but still we can see how God can over-rule. It is always amiss when a woman begins to help the earth: she has nothing to do with that: let the Church leave the State alone. But sometimes it happens that in the political providence of God the earth helps the woman.

[Revelation 12:17](#). *And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have testimony of Jesus Christ.*

"And the dragon was wroth with the woman." If ever you meet with a church of God which the devil likes, it is good for nothing; but if it is a true church of God, if it holds the truth, and if it walks in holiness, it will always be true. "And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war

with the remnant of her seed.” He had destroyed many already with that flood of persecution, and he kept on a battle with the remnant of her seed, “which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” Into the deep mysteries of this passage I have not attempted to go, but have simply skimmed the surface God bless the reading to us.

REVELATION CONTENTS

Revelation Chapter 13

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER 14

Verses 1-20

Revelation 14:1. *And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Zion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father’s name written on their foreheads.*

The great question for us is, — shall we be among the number? If we have the Father’s name engraved upon our hearts, we may conclude that we shall, one day, have it written in our foreheads, and that we shall be amongst that chosen company.

Revelation 14:2-3. *And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: and they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.*

Notice how loud their singing was, — it was like many waters and great thunder. But notice, also, the sweetness of it, for it was melodious as the music of well-skilled harpers harping with their harps. Note, too, the freshness, the vivacity of it: “they sang as it were a new song.” Shall we be there to sing that new song? If so, we must be “redeemed from the earth,” not with a general, but with a particular redemption, which lifts us up from the rest of our fellow-creatures; and we must also have attended the saved

rehearsals, for none can sing in heaven but those who have learnt the song; and none can learn it but those who are “redeemed from the earth.”

[Revelation 14:4-5](#). *These are they which were not defiled with women, for they are virgin. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, these were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.*

Now we have another vision.

[Revelation 14:6-7](#). *And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea and the fountains of waters.*

This vision represents the spread of the gospel. It is generally referred to the Reformation period, when, on a sudden, the truth, which had so long lain hidden in old musty tomes, was proclaimed in every market-place. Beneath many a “gospel oak” the good news was told out, — the good news concerning Christ, — as if an angel were flying through the midst of heaven. This preaching of the truth led to the commencement of the downfall of Rome, which is here called Babylon, and which is ultimately to fall to utter and everlasting ruin.

[Revelation 14:8](#). *And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.*

That is spiritual fornication, as we understand it in the Old Testament, — man’s idolatry, — the setting up of visible objects of worship, instead of the invisible God. And what is there, in all the world, that is so idolatrous as the so-galled “religion” of Rome? She multiplieth her idol gods to great excess, — her crosses and her crucifixes, her saints and her saintesses, her “sacraments” and her relics, her “old cast clouts” and her “old rotten rags.” The Papacy is the most paganish of all the paganisms that have ever existed on the face of the earth; but it is to come to an end, for the mouth of the Lord hath said so.

[Revelation 14:9-10](#). *And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the*

wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation, and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb:

How clear, therefore, we ought to keep of this idolatrous system! For even if we have not the mark of the beast in our foreheads by an open profession of loyalty to it, yet if we have the mark in our hands by being the partakers of Rome's sins, we shall also be partakers of her plagues concerning Romanism in all its forms. The great message to be proclaimed today is, "Come out of her, my people; — come away from her, as far as the poles are asunder; — that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues."

[Revelation 14:11-12](#). *And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name. Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.*

Truly, Rome has tried "the patience of the saints." What country is there in Europe which has not been dyed crimson with the blood of the martyrs? The rack, the stake, the brook, the dungeon, the fires, all sorts of cruelties have been practiced upon those who "keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." Let the valleys of Piedmont speak; do they not cry aloud to our God for vengeance? Let the St. Bartholomew massacre bear witness before the living God. Let the stakes of Smithfield say, "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus."

[Revelation 14:13](#). *And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.*

It matters not where they die, or under what ignominy they die, — whether branded with the name of heretic, or cast out as the offscouring of all things, yet blessed are they, and their works follow them to heaven to bear witness to their faith, and they spiritually, continue to live on earth to propagate the gracious seed for which they laid down their lives.

[Revelation 14:14-18](#). *And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the*

temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped. And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe.

After the glad harvest comes the sad vintage. After the ingathering of the righteous, there will be the ingathering of the wicked.

[Revelation 14:19-20](#). *And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.*

And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.

[REVELATION CONTENTS](#)

Revelation Chapter 15

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

Revelation Chapter 16

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

Revelation Chapter 17

SPURGEON DID NOT PROVIDE ANY COMMENTARY ON THIS CHAPTER

CHAPTER 18

Verses 20-24

May the Spirit of God take away the veil from our eyes while we read what was revealed to the beloved apostle John! Here we have the prophecy of the destruction of the great anti-Christian system of Babylon, which, being interpreted, is and can be none other than the apostate church of Rome.

18:20-24. *Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her. And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all. And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall he found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee; and the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived. And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth. Now, after the false church is put away, the true Church of Christ shines out in all her glory and purity.*

This exposition consisted of readings from [Revelation 18:20-24](#); and [Revelation 19:1-18](#).

Verses 21-24

We have no difficulty in knowing to what city this great Babylon refers, for the Church of Rome, in the plenitude of its wisdom, has taken the title to itself in attempting to claim that Peter was the first bishop of Rome. They quote the text, “The church that is in Babylon saluteth thee” that church, they say, being the church in Rome. Therefore, Rome is Babylon. Beside, the whole of the eighteenth chapter gives such a description as can only apply to her, and she must, and shall, come to her end.

[Revelation 18:21-24.](#) *And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down and shall be found no more at all. And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsmen of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee, And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no*

more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived. And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.

REVELATION CONTENTS

CHAPTER 19

Verses 1-10

Revelation 19:1-4. *And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, praying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever. And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen: Alleluia.*

For the overthrow of a monstrous system of error gives delight to all holy spirits, and chiefly to those who stand nearest the eternal throne.

Revelation 19:5-6. *And a voice came out of the throne saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.*

The harlot church is put away: the true church is introduced. fully arrayed in perfect holiness, ready for the consummation of her own joy, and her master's — her last delight.

Revelation 19:7-10. *Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God. And I fell at his feet to worship him, And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.*

If John made a mistake, because the saints in heaven are all so like their Master, it is well that the mistake was at once corrected, for angel-worship, or the worship of saints, is to be avoided by all saints. And God's word about it is, "See thou do it not." It is said that we should certainly pay reverence to holy men that are now with God, but see thou do it not.

Indeed, here, among men, the same kind of idolatry is sought to be kept up, and the preacher is arrayed in garments to make him distinct from the people, as though he were something better or different from them, and not their fellow-servant. But, for all this, let us hear the voice which says, "See thou do it not. I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus." Worship God, for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

Verses 1-18

[Revelation 19:1-4](#). *And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: for true and righteous are his judgments for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt thee earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever. And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia.*

Heaven and earth are equally glad, and they unite to adore the living God when the great apostasy, that has so long cursed the nations, is hurled into the sea.

[Revelation 19:5-6](#). *And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.*

And his great power is never better seen than in crushing the powers of darkness, and putting the hosts of evil to the rout.

[Revelation 19:7-10](#). *Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they, which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God. And I fell at*

his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God; for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

All worship, therefore, of saints and angels is a gross error, not to be tolerated for a moment. John was mistaken in falling down to worship the angel; but he was speedily rebuked, and his mistake was quickly corrected. There is no doctrine that needs more to be preached just now than this message of the angel, "Worship God." Neither crosses, nor crucifixes, nor holy wafers, nor anything that can be seen or handled, must be worshipped: "Worship God." We need still to hear God's mighty voice proclaiming from mount Sinai the great law. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments."

[Revelation 19:11](#). *And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make scar.*

Behold your Saviour, the Champion of the cause of truth! His war is not that of the carnal weapon and of garments rolled in blood. It is a spiritual warfare; but he wins a more glorious victory than ever sword or gun could gain.

[Revelation 19:12-14](#). *His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.*

All his true ones, all his faithful ones, all his saints, whether ministers or not, the heavenly armies, "followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean." Holiness is their armor, light is the panoply that they wear as they go forward to this holy war.

[Revelation 19:15](#). *And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword,*
He puts down vice, and evil of every kind, not with the sword of steel, but with his word: "Out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword,"-

[Revelation 19:15-16](#). *That with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.*

For this Son of God whom we worship, this Jesus of Nazareth, is Master of all. All power is in his hand, he is, “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”

[Revelation 19:17-18](#). *And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; that ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great.*

By this highly figurative language, we are to understand that, when Christ goes forth to war in battling for the truth, and his true followers come after him, their victory will be certain, and the slain of the Lord will be many. We look not for carnage and bloodshed to establish the kingdom of Christ in the earth; but this revelation gives us a picture of the utter overthrow and destruction of all forms of error through the power of the everlasting gospel of Jesus Christ. Amen, so let it be! Would God that the King of kings would mount his white horse at once, and that all his people would follow him! He will do so at the right time, and then the victory shall be unto God, and to the truth, and to love, and to peace and holiness, for evermore.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Revelation 18:20-24](#); and [Revelation 19:1-18](#).

Verses 11-16

[Revelation 19:11-13](#). *And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. and he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.*

That same Logos of whom John wrote in the gospel now stands before him, and he beholds him in his glory. That a delight it must have been to the seer of Patmos to see his Lord and Master once again in different array from that in which he had beheld him when, in humiliation he tabernacled here

among the sons of men! His name is still the same — the Logos — the Word of God.

[Revelation 19:14-16](#). *And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.*

And this is the man of Nazareth. This is the crucified, despised, and rejected once. Servus servorum once. — Servant of servants but now King of kings and Lord of lords. And what will the end be of the battle that he wagers? Will any of his adversaries escape? Will they hold their own? No, they shall utterly be destroyed before him. All the powers of evil of false doctrine everything contrary to his mind — shall be destroyed. And this is set forth in symbolic imagery by the dreadful battle feast which usually succeeds a battle, when the vultures smell the carrion from afar and come to rend the spoil. It shall not be thus with the bodies of men, but thus with evil — thus with the powers of darkness.

[REVELATION CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 20

Verse 11

Revelation 20:11 *And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.*

Driven, like chaff before the wind, from the face of him who sat upon the throne.

Revelation 20:12-15. *And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And*

whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

Revelation 21:1. *And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.*

This exposition consisted of readings from Matthew 26:57-68, Revelation 6:12-17, Revelation 19:11-16, Revelation 20:11-15, Revelation 21:1.

REVELATION CONTENTS

CHAPTER 21

Verses 1-27

Revelation 21:1. *And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.*

Astronomers tell us that, within living memory, several starry worlds have burnt out, and vanished out of sight. The apostle Peter has told us that this world also will be destroyed by fire, but it will afterwards be renewed, and a new sky and a new earth will appear after the first firmament and the first earth shall have become extinct. God means that this planet should continue to exist after it has had a new creation, and renewed its youth. The regeneration of his people, their new birth, is a foretaste of what is yet to happen to this whole world of ours. We have the first-fruits of the Spirit, and we groan within ourselves while we wait for the fullness of that new creation. “The first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea,” because the sea is the emblem of separation, and destruction, and unrest. The sea hath her dead which shall be given up. The sea now cannot rest nor be quiet, but all shall be calm and tranquil in the new heaven and the new earth.

Revelation 21:2. *And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.*

John saw, in vision, the glorified Church of God coming to dwell on the new earth, descending for a while from heaven to be the very glory of the newly-created world.

Revelation 21:3-4. *And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and*

they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

When there shall be a new heaven and a new earth, and the Church shall be in her new and glorified condition, then there will be no need for all those purifying forces which have been so active here below. There shall be no death, nor sorrow nor crying, nor pain, nor trial of any kind; all shall be happiness for all shall be holiness. And then, as God dwelt of old among his people in the wilderness, and as Jesus Christ, the Word, was made flesh, and tabernacled among us, and we beheld his glory, so in that new world shall God reveal himself to his people by a special indwelling and a peculiar nearness.

[Revelation 21:5](#). *And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.*

Once, the Lord might have said, “Behold, I make all things;” but now he says, “Behold, I make all things new.” Glory be unto the great Creator! Did not the morning stars sing together for joy when he made the world? But equal if not greater glory must be ascribed to the great Regenerator, the New Creator, shall we not all sing together to his praise? Yes, that we shall if we are numbered among the “all things” that he makes new.

[Revelation 21:6](#). *And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.*

Probably John did not expect to hear that sweet gospel message just then. The Lord Jesus Christ was speaking of lofty themes, of worlds newly made, and yet in the very middle of it all he puts this gracious promise. Let this be a pattern to all of you who are preachers or teachers, no matter what your subject may be, a gospel promise or invitation is always in place and in season. You may put it among the most golden sentences like a precious stone in a setting of pure gold, and it will never be out of order come when it may. Men hate God without the slightest reason for doing so, and God loves men without the slightest reason; there was every reason why men should love God, and not hate him; yet they have hated him without a cause, and there is every reason why God should hate man and not love

him, yet he loves him so much that he gave his only-begotten Son to die, that whosoever believeth in him may live for ever.

7. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.

What a wonderful word is that! “He shall be my son,” — not my servant, but “my son.” God give us the faith to rise to this more than royal dignity! “As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God.”

8. But the fearful, —

No, that is not the right word, it is the cowardly, for there are many who are full of fear who are nevertheless most sincere and right in God’s sight:

“But the cowardly,” —

[Revelation 21:8](#). *And unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers,*

—

And the apostle John tells us that “whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer, —

[Revelation 21:8](#). *And whoremongers,*

Unchaste and unclean men and women, —

[Revelation 21:8](#). *And sorcerers, —*

Persons who profess to have communications with the dead necromancers, spiritualists, and all people of that sort, —

[Revelation 21:8](#). *And idolaters, —*

That is, all who love anyone or anything better than God, —

[Revelation 21:8](#). *And all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.*

That is the death that never dies, the death which is far more to be dreaded than the death of the body.

[Revelation 21:9](#). *And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb’s wife.*

John had already caught a glimpse of “the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven;” and now this angelic messenger bids him come nearer, and look more closely into this mysterious and glorious city “prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”

[Revelation 21:10-13](#). *And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: and her light*

was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; and had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: on the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates.

God's Church glorified lieth open to all quarters of the infinitude of space, it is no prison-house of souls that dare not go beyond its borders, but a many-gated city, so that the blessed spirits there can fly whithersoever they will.

[Revelation 21:14](#). *And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.*

Not Peter only, but the whole of the twelve apostles shall have their names in the foundations of that holy city.

[Revelation 21:15-16](#). *And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal.*

It seems at first to be astounding that the height of a city should be equal to the length and the breadth of it; but if you have traveled in Italy, you must have seen many a city, perched upon a hill, which seemed to be even higher than it was broad or long, if you included the wall of the city, and the houses one above another right up to the loftiest minaret or tower. Yes, like a priceless square casket made all of costly jewels is this wondrous city, equally glorious whichever way you look at it: "The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal."

[Revelation 21:17-18](#). *And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is of the angel. And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass.*

Such gold as never was, nor is, nor ever shall be on this earth until that time when God shall have purified it. Our gold is dull, opaque; light is blocked out by it. How many might see if it were not for the gold which blinds them, and hides the truth from them!

[Revelation 21:19-20](#). *And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an*

emerald, the fifth, sardonyx, the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite, the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst.

You know that the stones of which this holy city is built are living stones. You and I, if we are trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ, shall be there, living stones prepared by living grace to have a name and a place in this living city. But what changes will have to be wrought in us before we are fit to be put among these precious jewels! We are like poor blocks of common-looking stone, but we do not know what we shall be like when we have been cut and polished on the great Lapidary's wheel. You may take a precious stone to a jeweler, and ask him what its value is, but he will say, "I cannot tell what it is worth until it has been cut and polished." That is how the Lord will prove the value of his living stones. If he will but work upon us by his grace, we cannot tell what he will make of us before he places us in the position he has appointed for us in the glorious city that rests upon these twelve precious foundations.

[Revelation 21:21](#). *And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.*

John had already said that "the city was pure gold like unto clear glass;" and now he says that "the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass." We do not always get such a combination as this here below, gold, precious and pure, yet unstained with blood, and undimmed with the oppression of the poor, — diaphanous gold, "as it were transparent glass."

[Revelation 21:22-23](#). *And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.*

Yes, and the glorified Church herself, because of this light, sheds such a bright light on all within her that all the saints rejoice in her light.

[Revelation 21:24-25](#). *And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there.*

Shut gates signify war; open gates mean peace. There shall be no more fear of war, no Gog and Magog to gather together to battle, no Armageddon

to be dreaded by the glorified Church of Christ, which shall be in perfect peace for ever.

[Revelation 21:26-27](#). *And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it.*

And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Verses 9-27

[Revelation 21:9-22](#). *And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; and had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: on the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel. And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.*

The less there is of true religion, the more there usually is of outward ritualism. When true religion shall fill every heart, and God shall be the supreme joy of his people, they will need no temple.

[Revelation 21:23](#). *And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.*

Outward means are abolished when their mission is accomplished.

[Revelation 21:24](#). *And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.*

The Church shall be the metropolis of the world; it shall be honoured and esteemed among the nations of mankind. When men are godly, then will they reverence the abode of God, namely, the living Church, built up of living stones, upon the one foundation, Jesus Christ.

[Revelation 21:25](#). *And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there.*

There will be no need to shut out enemies at night, for the day shall last right on. The Church's most intimate intercourse with God, her constant commerce with the skies, will have begun then.

[Revelation 21:26-27](#). *And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it. And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.*

Into this holy city, the graceless, the Christless, the faithless shall never come. Here, we have a mixture of light and darkness; but, in those better days, it shall be all light, and the darkness shall have fled far away for ever.

Verses 10-27

Here we shall see a picture of what the Church of God is to be in the latter days; but inasmuch as this vision came out of heaven, it gives us an idea of what is in heaven already. Crowded as it is with almost impossible beauties, this description is given to us to let us think, and by faith conceive, of the glories of the future state.

[Revelation 21:10-11](#). *And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God. Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal;*

But what the glory of God may be, what mortal mind can imagine. All the imagery which the Apostle uses must fall far short of that simple expression, "Having the glory of God." That glory is to be upon the Church, and upon every individual member of it. The glory of every believer shall be nothing less than the glory of God.

[Revelation 21:12-13](#). *And had a wall great and high. and had twelve gates, and at the gate twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel. On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates.*

From every quarter of the world God's chosen shall come and find a gate straight before them, an entrance into heaven. Die at the Equator, or die at the Pole, there is an immediate entrance into the rest of God from any place where we may die. Blessed be the name of God for this.

[Revelation 21:14-16](#). *And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal.*

This is an idea scarcely to be grasped, to see a city which is as high as it is broad. Such cities cannot exist on earth. They are meant for that glorious future state. They will exist under the new heavens and in the new earth, for which we look at the coming of our Lord.

[Revelation 21:17-18](#). *And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel. And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was of pure gold. like unto clear glass.*

All these joys are without sediment of sin. Gold on earth is a dull thing. You cannot look into it. But the joys of heaven, if compared to gold, must be diaphanous. "Pure gold like unto clear glass" — all the earth taken out of it, from all its earthly grossness quit. The joy of heaven is divine.

[Revelation 21:19-20](#). *And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the*

eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysopterus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst.

See how lovingly our Apostle counts the foundations. He might have run them all into one, and said, “The foundations were of these twelve stones,” but it must be the first foundation, the second, the third, the fourth. He dwells on every one. The joys of heaven will bear dwelling upon; they will bear reflection. Here our joys, when they are over, leave but a handful of thorns — but a handful of ashes like thorns that crackle and blaze under the pot, and leave little behind them. But the joys eternal and spiritual will bear for us to go into detail, and each one shall be most precious.

[Revelation 21:21](#). *And the twelve gates were twelve pearls.*

Whoever heard of such pearls? In what ocean but in the depth of God could such pearls be found? The twelve gates were twelve pearls.

[Revelation 21:21](#). *Every several gate was one of pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.*

Streets are used for fellowship. There men meet each other, and the fellowship of heaven will be golden, bright, clear, perfect. Here, when we meet with one another, we soon display and discover our mutual faults, but there they shall delight each other with their common beauty, all the beauties being borrowed from the Lamb, who is the glory of the place.

[Revelation 21:22](#). *And I saw no temple therein.*

For it was all one temple.

[Revelation 21:22-23](#). *For the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.*

Let us be going that way soon, brothers. Ah! my brothers, may we all meet there. What must it be to be there!

[Revelation 21:24-27](#). *And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there.*

And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations unto it. And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Romans 8:26-30](#); [Revelation 21:10-27](#); Revelation 22 :1-5.

Verses 22-27

[Revelation 21:22](#). *And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.*

It has a temple, that better state, that land of the Well-beloved, but not a material temple that John could see, yet he knew that it had a temple “ for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.” Where they are is the holy place where all the tribes of the spiritual Israel shall be gathered at the last to go no more out for ever. “ The Lord God Almighty “and the Lamb “ have a glory far greater than Solomon’s temple ever had and far greater even than that later temple which excelled even his in glory.

[Revelation 21:23](#). *And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.*

We have need of both the sun and the moon while we are in this world if it were not for the great central luminary, the solar system would cease to be, and this earth and the moon and all their sister planets would die out in darkness. But when the sun has been turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, it shall still be said of this holy city, the new Jerusalem, that the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. See how blessedly God and the Lamb are linked together, for Father and Son are truly one. It is pleasant also to reflect that he who is “the light of the world” is also the light of the world that is yet to be revealed: “ the Lamb is the light thereof.”

[Revelation 21:24](#). *And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.*

This is the Church of the latter days; the beginning of the heavenly state, a true type of what the eternal glory of the saints will be. The Church will no longer, like her Lord, be despised and rejected of men; but the highest and greatest among men shall count it an honour and glory to be permitted to share its blessings and triumphs.

[Revelation 21:25](#). *And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there.*

Well did Dr. Doddridge sing,-

“No rude alarms of raging foes

No cares to break the long repose
No midnight shade, no clouded sun
But saved, high, eternal noon.”

The saints will then be able to bear that eternal noontide for the sun shall not smite them by day; and they will have no need of the night which is now so necessary for resting our wearied bodies and minds, so “there shall be no night there.” There will also be no night of sorrow, no night of sin, no night of death in that blest land of light.

[Revelation 21:26-27](#). *And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it. And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life. That holy city would itself be defiled if anything that defileth could enter into it. Only they who are written in the Lamb’s book of life shall be found in the glorious city of which he is the light.*

“Those holy gates for ever bar pollution, sin, and shame. None can obtain admittance there But followers of the Lamb.”

This exposition consisted of readings from [Revelation 21:22-27](#); and Revelation 22

[REVELATION CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER 22

Verses 1-5

[Revelation 22:1-2](#). *And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.*

Abounding joy, varied joy, ever changing, yet ever perfect; a tree which bears twelve manner of fruits, and yet fruits every month. Oh! when shall we get away to those golden orchards; when shall we sit under those vines, and press the clusters with our lips?

[Revelation 22:3](#). *And there shall be no more curse:
Of labour, of sin, of sorrow, of death.*

[Revelation 22:3](#). *But the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it:*

So that we shall all be in the throne-room, all beholding the King in his beauty, and ourselves made his courtiers.

[Revelation 22:3](#). *And his servants shall serve him:*

That is heaven to me, for here we sometimes are unable to serve him as we would. We are distracted, worried, carried away from holy service by multitudes of cares, but there his servants shall serve him.

[Revelation 22:4](#). *And they shall see his face:*

What a happy blending — service and communion — the hands busy, but the eyes ravished with the wondrous sight of the face of God! Thou shalt see his face. If any of us could see the face of God on earth, no doubt we should die. The vision would be too bright for us. When one heard this.

one of the greatest saints, he said, “Then let me see it and die,” and I do not wonder that he said so, for the sight of God, even should we die here, must still be perpetual, and it would make us live again. “They shall see his face.”

[Revelation 22:4](#). *And his name shall be in their foreheads,*

Their faces made like God’s face, then — his name, his character, reflected on their brows — is not this worth having?

[Revelation 22:5](#). *And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light; and they shall reign for ever and They themselves shall be kings. They shall reign for ever and ever.*

This exposition consisted of readings from [Romans 8:26-30](#); [Revelation 21:10-27](#); Revelation 22 :1-5.

Verses 1-7

[Revelation 22:1](#). *And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.*

Infinite sovereignty bestows grace; the river of grace flows from the throne of God. It is the King who saves his people; yet the atonement is ever connected with the sovereignty: “He shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.”

[Revelation 22:2](#). *In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.*

God will enrich his Church by giving her a great variety of good things: “twelve manner of fruits.” There shall also be a constancy and perpetuity about the supply of them, for this tree “yielded her fruit every month.” And if there be ought of ill remaining anywhere in the world in those halcyon days, God shall supply a cure for it: “The leaves of the tree were for the healing of nations.”

[Revelation 22:3](#). *And there shall be no more curse:*

The curse shall be taken from the soil on which it fell obliquely when God said to Adam, “Cursed is the ground for thy sake.” There shall be no curse upon man’s body; there shall be nothing but blessing. Blessing shall swallow up the cursing, and God shall be manifest everywhere.

[Revelation 22:3](#). *But the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shalt serve him:*

This is what we try to do now, but we shall more fully accomplish the blessed task in those brighter days which every revolution of the wheel of time is hastening on.

[Revelation 22:4](#). *And they shall see his face;*

Oh, that is glorious service,—to serve the Lord and to see his face at the same time. Communion and service are ever best when they are blended. There can be no fellowship better than first which serves, and no service sweeter than that of those who continue to see the face of their Master while they are serving him,

[Revelation 22:4](#). *And his name shall be in their foreheads.*

There will be no mistaking: them; they shall bear in their foreheads the glorious name of God, just as the high priest of old had the words, “Holiness unto the Lord” upon his brow.

[Revelation 22:5](#). *And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun;—*

Even the sun is only worthy to be ranked with a candle in comparison with the light of God himself John puts the two things in one sentence: “they need no candle, neither light of the sun;”—

[Revelation 22:5-7](#). *For the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever and he said unto me, These sayings are faithful the true: and the LORD God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done. Behold I come quickly-blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.*

Even so, come, Lord Jesus; come quickly! Amen.

This exposition consisted of readings from [Jeremiah 5:1-6](#); [Jeremiah 5:10-31](#); and [Revelation 22:1-7](#).

Verses 1-21

[Revelation 22:1](#). *And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.*

Rivers partake of the character of the source from which they come that which proceeds “out of the throne of God and of the Lamb “may well be “a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal.” What but good and perfect gifts can come down from the throne of God? What but pure streams of mercy can flow from the throne of the Lamb?

[Revelation 22:2](#). *In the midst of the street of it,-*

For heaven is a place of sacred intercourse and hallowed communion: “in the midst of the street of it,”-

[Revelation 22:2](#). *And on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits,*

Every variety of joy and blessedness,

[Revelation 22:2](#). *And yielded her fruit every month:*

For the felicities of heaven are ever fresh and ever new, we shall never be satiated or wearied with that heavenly fruit.

[Revelation 22:2](#). *And the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.*

Everything in heaven is the very best of the best. The leaves of the trees in earthly gardens are blown about by the blast, and we take but little note of them; but the leaves of the tree of life are “for the healing of the nations.” O happy place, where even the leaves on the tree have such virtue in them!

[Revelation 22:3](#). *And there shall be no more curse:*

No more thorns or thistles, no more pangs of child-bearing, no more sickness, or sorrow, or death.

[Revelation 22:3](#). *But the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall serve him:*

They shall have nothing else to do, and it shall be their supreme delight to serve him perfectly and unceasingly.

[Revelation 22:4](#). *And thy shall see his face;*

Not through a glass darkly, but face to face shall they behold their God. Surely that will be the very heaven of heaven.

[Revelation 22:4](#). *And his name shall be in their foreheads.*

Aaron was to wear upon his forehead a plate of pure gold, with HOLINESS TO THE LORD engraved upon it, that the children of Israel might be accepted before the Lord, but the saints in glory are to have the name of their God “in their foreheads.” In the very forefront of their glorified personalities there shall be the marks to betoken that they are the children of God.

[Revelation 22:5](#). *And there shall be no night there;*

The saints in glory will have no need of sleep, so “there shall be no night there,” but one perpetual day of holy, unwearying service. There shall be no night of ignorance, of sorrow, of sin, of death; there shall be no powers of darkness there, and no darkness in which they might work their evil deeds.

[Revelation 22:5](#). *And they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light:*

Directly and distinctly, without using any means, by his own immediate presence, “the Lord God giveth them light:”-

[Revelation 22:5](#). *And they shall reign for ever and ever.*

Earthly kings die, or their empires on earth are taken from them; but as for us whom God hath chosen by his grace, our kingdom is like that of our Lord and Saviour, it is an everlasting kingdom.

“They shall reign for ever and ever.” I wonder that some wise man does not try to prove that this means that the saints shall reign only for a short time they have whittled “everlasting punishment” down to next to nothing, why do they not try to reduce the duration of heaven, bliss in the same way. The same words are used concerning the one as concerning the other, so we shall always hold to the eternity both of the one and the other, the bliss and the woe are equally “for ever and ever.”

[Revelation 22:6-7](#). *And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done. Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.*

You have the witness of God, you have the witness of the angel of God, you have the witness of Christ you have the witness of John, and all of them

agree that “these sayings are faithful and true,” and that they relate to facts that shall in due course be established.

[Revelation 22:8](#). *And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things.*

And, according to the Church of Rome, he was quite right; but, according to the Word of God, he was quite wrong.

[Revelation 22:9](#). *Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.*

Worship none but God; take care not to break the first two of the ten commandments either by worshipping another God or by worshipping the true God under any form of similitude whatsoever.

[Revelation 22:10](#). *And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand.*

“There is no need to roll it up, and set a seal to it; as it is so soon to be fulfilled, leave it open.”

[Revelation 22:11](#). *He that is unjust, let him be just still: and he which is filthy! let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.*

The Lord’s messenger speaks as if “the time” were so nearly come that there was no opportunity left for any charge to be made, and this is what will happen, sooner or later, to all men. When they die, their characters will be fixed for ever. The wax will cool, and the impress that it bears will be retained eternally.

[Revelation 22:12-13](#). *And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.*

These must be the words of the Lord Jesus Christ himself; no mere messenger, however high his rank, would have dared to say, “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.”

[Revelation 22:14](#); [Revelation 22:16](#). *Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.*

We thank God that they are shut out of heaven, for, albeit that we wish all men could be there, yet we would wish none to be there whose characters are of such a kind as this, unless they were washed and cleansed. Heaven would be no heaven if such men could be admitted there. They shall not be; they must, by infallible justice, be excluded from the realms of bliss.

[Revelation 22:16](#). *I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.*

So glory is dawning, for Christ the bright and morning star, has risen,
[Revelation 22:17](#). *And the Spirit and the bride say, come. And let him that heareth one, come. And let him that is athirst, come. And whoever will, let him take the water of life freely.*

Here we have the last invitations in the Word of God; may all who have not yet accepted them do so now, lest they should never again be uttered in their hearing.

[Revelation 22:18-21](#). *For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.*

So the blessed Book closes appropriately with grace, for 'tis grace that—
“All the work shall crown Through everlasting days;
It lays in heaven the topmost stone,
And well deserves the praise.”

This exposition consisted of readings from [Genesis 2:1-17](#); and Revelation 22.

[REVELATION CONTENTS](#)

CHAPTER SIXTY-SIX

Bible Study Guide

Study Guide

[A Secret Of Understanding The Bible](#)

[The Different Genres Of The Bible](#)

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[The Authority Of The Bible](#)

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[How To Study The Bible](#)

STUDY GUIDE

Studying the Bible is one of the most wonderful activities we can be involved in. Every session will reveal something more of God, His personality and His desire for each of our lives. Whether we gain insight into a complex area of theology or we are driven to worship Him as we see more of His wonder we are benefited and blessed by spending time in His word.

The Bible is God speaking to us, directly. It may seem too amazing to be true but it is.

These few pages offer us some ideas as to how we can use this commentary to find out more of God and His love for us.

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A SECRET OF UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

The Bible is one wonderful work of our God. There is nothing more daunting than approaching something so large that you do not know where to begin. This was certainly how I felt, and still do! So I decided to start the

ball rolling by posting some help for us. You could call this series Bible Study 101. What we are trying to do is to get a feel for the chain of events that happen in the Bible.

BREAK THE BIBLE INTO SECTIONS

The first stage to helping us understand the Bible is to break it down into manageable chunks. This will help us start to be able to put our finger on things that are going on through the whole book. We could look at individual books but given that there are 66 books of the Bible we might just find that too much at this stage.

At this stage, in terms of history, I think it is helpful to think of the Bible as running through 3 periods:

1. 1. Old Testament
2. 2. Inter-testamental Period
3. 3. New Testament

The Bible does divide itself up this way. The word testament means covenant or an agreement (between God and mankind). One way of understanding this is in terms of the old promise and new promise which refers to God's promise to save His people. The old way was through the Mosaic Law while the new way is through Jesus Christ, God's own Son.

It is worthwhile developing a grasp of what is going on in the Bible in terms of its story. Looking into the Psalms or in the book of Amos is not going to reveal much about the timeline of events from a long distance perspective. This is where it comes in handy to know what is going on and apply this knowledge to the passage of the Bible you are looking at.

OLD TESTAMENT

This section of the Bible covers the longest period of history. Starting with creation it charts the progress of God's chosen nation, Israel, from

their beginnings through to their return from and re-establishment after their exile in Babylon. Here is a list of some (very general and not exhaustive) of the key events taking place in the Old Testament:

- ↪ The story of Creation
- ↪ The fall of man
- ↪ The Great Flood
- ↪ God's selection of Abraham
- ↪ From Jacob through Joseph to Egypt
- ↪ Escape from Egypt
- ↪ The wandering in the wilderness
- ↪ Receiving of the 10 Commandments
- ↪ Claiming the Promised Land
- ↪ The Judges (e.g. Gideon, Samson, Samuel)
- ↪ The Kingdom of Israel (Saul, David, Solomon)
- ↪ Division of the Kingdom (into Israel and Judah)
- ↪ Exile
- ↪ Return from Exile.

It is worth pointing out that through the period of the Division of the Kingdom through to and during the Return from Exile God sent a number of prophets to speak to the people of the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah.

INTER-TESTAMENTAL PERIOD

This period is not covered in the Protestant Christian Bible. It covers a 400 year period from the time of Malachi's ministry (Circa 420 BC) through until the conception of John the Baptist.

It is accepted by the Protestant tradition that God was silent during this period. This meant that there were no prophets nor was anyone divinely inspired to record a narrative of the period. The Catholic tradition recognises the Apocrypha as part of the Canon of Scripture, a recognised part of the Bible but for the purposes of this blog it is not viewed in this light.

The Apocrypha is a worthwhile section of literature to read because it is a set of writings that dates from that period and can teach us about this period.

As this blog will not focus on the Apocrypha I think it is worthwhile to highlight some of the key events that took place during the period between the Old and New Testament. This will help us understand what happened to the nation of Judah (see back to the split of the Kingdom of Israel).

Political

- ↳ 400 – 334 BC saw the Jews ruled over by the Persians. It was the Persians who conquered the Babylonians and let the exiled Jews return home. The Jews tended to have a certain freedom to govern themselves but they were most definitely under the rule of the Persians. Aramaic became the common language spoken although Hebrew was continued to be used in their religion.
- ↳ 333 – 323 BC saw the rule of the area by the Greeks. Alexander the Great conquered the area. This resulted in the start of the spread of the Hellenistic culture. The Greek language became more common. The Greek philosophies began to take root in the thinking of the Jews.
- ↳ 323 – 199 BC after the death of Alexander the Great his empire was split between two of his generals Ptolemy and Seleucus. These generals and their dynasties waged war against each other. As a result Judea spent periods being ruled by both powers. During this period it was the Ptolemaic dynasty that controlled the region.

- ↪ 198 – 143 BC the Seleucids through Antiochus III took over in Jerusalem.
- ↪ 142 – 62 BC saw a period of some independence for the Jews. The Maccabees fought a guerrilla campaign to free Jerusalem from foreign rule. The revolt was sparked by many outrages by Antiochus Epiphanes. This rebellion led to the founding of the Hasmonean dynasty.
- ↪ 61 BC – Time of Christ was another period when Judea was occupied. This time they were conquered by the Romans. This conquest put Herod on the throne of Judea.

Social

- ↪ As mentioned above the Greek language began to become more prevalent in Judea.
- ↪ Some Jews were removed from Judea to Greece. This eventually led to the translation of the Scriptures (at that time the books of the Old Testament) into Greek. This is known as the Septuagint which established the official content of the Old Testament (the Canon).
- ↪ A number of sects began to spring up. These included the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

- ↪ The Dead Sea Scrolls were written by the scribe sect, the Essenes of Qumran.

NEW TESTAMENT

The New Testament begins, chronologically, with the announcement that John the Baptist would be born. He was the forerunner to Jesus Christ and would prepare the people for the coming of the Messiah (Hebrew for Christ).

Compared to the Old Testament the New Testament covers a much shorter period. It only lasts about 100 years (from the birth of John the Baptist to the writing of Revelation). During this period there was much activity and many events that changed the world around those living at the time.

The New Testament can be boiled down to the following key events:

- ↪ Birth of Jesus Christ
- ↪ Life of Jesus Christ – His teaching and His miracles
- ↪ Death of Jesus Christ
- ↪ The birth of the Church
- ↪ Development of the Church

- ↯ The Revelation to the Apostle John.
-

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THE DIFFERENT GENRES OF THE BIBLE

We just looked at splitting Biblical events into the Old and New Testaments. This is a very rough and ready way to split the story in terms of understanding Bible.

What we really need to do is drill down a bit further and look at some further ways to classify different sections of the Bible. When you read different books you will quickly realise that the structure and genre differs one from the other. Compare the story telling of Judges with the poetry in Song of Songs. Then look at one of Paul's epistles and see how it is different from the visions compared in Revelation.

So let us take a look at our original split from the post on understanding the Bible – the two covenants. We will look at further dividing these two parts into different genres and the books that make up these sub-sections.

SPLITTING THE OLD TESTAMENT INTO QUARTERS

While it is possible to make three sections out of the OT I favour four. To my mind the fourfold split makes more sense, I like things organised in my head in a certain way, but I would suggest that if you prefer the three then make use of that instead.

The four sections of the Old Testament are:

- • The Law
- • History

- • Poetry & Wisdom

- • Prophets (both the Major and Minor)

It is into these four general headings that we can put every one of the 39 books of the OT. The splits come in the natural running order of our Bibles.

The Law

The books making up this section are also known as the Pentateuch or by in the Jewish religion as the Torah:

- ♣ Genesis
- ♣ Exodus
- ♣ Leviticus
- ♣ Numbers
- ♣ Deuteronomy

These books outline the origin of creation, God's selection of His chosen people and also the giving of the law. While there is much narrative in these books what is very clear is the giving of a set of rules. A distillation of these rules, especially the 10 Commandments, later came to be referred to as the Mosaic Law.

History

This is a segment of the OT that is a narrative. It purely tells a story of God's people. There are highs and lows. From entering the Promised Land of Canaan to the division of the Kingdom and then the return from exile in Babylon these books fill out the history of the nation:

- ♣ Joshua
- ♣ Judges
- ♣ Ruth
- ♣ 1st and 2nd Samuel
- ♣ 1st and 2nd Kings
- ♣ 1st and 2nd Chronicles
- ♣ Ezra
- ♣ Nehemiah
- ♣ Esther

If you want to trace the story of how the nation of Israel rose and fell then the whole story is contained in these books. It is at the end of this selection of books that we leave the story of the Jews until the birth of the Saviour around 400 years later.

Poetry & Wisdom

Reading these books in English does not always reveal the poetic nature of their contents. We must remember that the original language was Hebrew and this had its own, distinct form of poetry. The books are:

- ♣ Job
- ♣ Psalms
- ♣ Proverbs
- ♣ Ecclesiastes
- ♣ Song of Solomon

These books are more abstract in nature and exist with little need for regard of the events of their day. In other words we do not necessarily need to know what was happening in Solomon's kingdom to appreciate the passion and the beauty contained in Song of Solomon.

Prophets

In a similar way to the Poetry & Wisdom books the Prophets contain information that is not heavily interlinked with the events going on at the time of writing. I would qualify this statement and point out that we can tell a lot about contemporary events from the prophets but it is their focus. They are not written to tell us what the king of the day was doing. They were written to reveal God's judgement and warnings to the people. Contained in this section:

- ♣ Isaiah
- ♣ Jeremiah
- ♣ Lamentations
- ♣ Daniel
- ♣ Ezekiel
- ♣ Hosea
- ♣ Joel
- ♣ Amos
- ♣ Obadiah
- ♣ Jonah
- ♣ Micah
- ♣ Nahum
- ♣ Habakkuk
- ♣ Zephaniah
- ♣ Haggai
- ♣ Zechariah
- ♣ Malachi

This section can be further sub-divided into the Major Prophets (Isaiah – Ezekiel) and the Minor Prophets (the remaining 12).

THE NEW TESTAMENT – FOUR SECTIONS TOO

It is quite fitting to split the NT into four headings just as we did the OT.

Gospels

The Gospels give us the story of the birth, life and death of our Lord Jesus:

- ♣ Matthew
- ♣ Mark
- ♣ Luke
- ♣ John

Matthew, Mark and Luke are known as the Synoptic Gospels because they share so much content. They even share the exact same words on occasion. John's Gospel differs markedly from the Synoptics as it reports events in a different order. In fact it has no mention of the birth of Jesus!

Narrative

This section contains only one book:

- ♣ Acts

This is a wonderful account from the Ascension of Jesus Christ back into heaven through the development of the early Church.

Epistles

Another word for letters these books lay down the doctrine of the Church as well as giving advice and rules.

- ♣ Romans
- ♣ 1st & 2nd Corinthians
- ♣ Galatians
- ♣ Ephesians

- ♣ Philippians
- ♣ Colossians
- ♣ 1st & 2nd Thessalonians
- ♣ 1st & 2nd Timothy
- ♣ Titus
- ♣ Philemon
- ♣ Hebrews
- ♣ James
- ♣ 1st & 2nd Peter
- ♣ 1st, 2nd & 3rd John
- ♣ Jude

This list can be further broken down into the Pauline Epistles (Romans – Philemon) and the General Epistles (Hebrews – Jude).

Apocalyptic

Apocalypse means disclosure of something that is hidden. It contains one book:

- ♣ Revelation

This is a book that has caused much disagreement and controversy in both Christian and secular circles. Some claim to have deciphered its hidden meaning, while many of us (myself included) are uncertain which particular definition seems best (I would argue we are not meant to understand – simply accept).

WHAT IS THE POINT TO THIS?

OK so Simon has managed to post a list of how we can slot all the books of the Bible into different categories. It is neither clever nor is it original. “So what is the point?” I hear you ask. Well I think it is important to recognise that the Bible is not written by one person nor are all the books

written for one purpose (when read independently of each other). When it comes to any form of Bible study we cannot read Ruth the same way we read Revelation.

We have to adapt the way we study so that our understanding of the Bible is secured in truth.

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GRASPING THE BIG PICTURE

The Bible is the word of God, divinely inspired and through His word God tells us the story of history (some have put it His Story). God does not lock away secrets in the Bible in the mystical way some would suggest but makes things clear.

Understanding the Bible is about patience and application. There is no need for college degrees or many decades in full time ministry.

I have put together a table that shows some of the events that took place in the Bible together with their approximate date and the Bible reference detailing the events.

DATE	EVENT	BIBLE REF
Before 4000 BC	The Creation	Genesis 1
Before 4000 BC	The Fall of Man	Genesis 3
Before 3000 BC	Cain kills Abel	Genesis 4
Before 3000 BC	The Great Flood	Genesis 7
Before 3000 BC	Covenant of the Rainbow	Genesis 9
Before 2100 BC	The Tower of Babel	Genesis 11
2091 BC	God Sends Abram to Egypt	Genesis 12

2085 BC	Abram and Lot Part Ways	Genesis 13
2081 BC	God's Covenant with Abram	Genesis 15
2067 BC	The Destruction of Sodom	Genesis 19
2054 BC	The Offering of Isaac	Genesis 22
1928 BC	Jacob's vision of a ladder	Genesis 28:10
1921 BC	Jacob Marries Rachel	Genesis 29:28
1916 BC	Rachel Bears Joseph	Genesis 30:22
1906 BC	Jacob Named Israel	Genesis 35:10
1898 BC	Joseph's Dreams and Betrayal	Genesis 37
1898 BC	Joseph Sold into Slavery	Genesis 37:25
1886 BC	Joseph Put in Charge	Genesis 41:33
1875 BC	Jacob and Family to Egypt	Genesis 46
1700 BC	Israelites Multiply in Egypt	Exodus 1:6
1600 BC	Israelites Oppressed by New King	Exodus 1:8
1539 BC	Pharaoh's Order to Kill Firstborn	Exodus 1:22
1525 BC	The Birth and Adoption of Moses	Exodus 2
1446 BC	Moses Sent to Deliver Israel	Exodus 3 - 6
1446 BC	The Ten Plagues on Egypt	Exodus 7 - 12
1446 BC	The Exodus Begins	Exodus 13 - 18
1446 BC	The Israelites At Mount Sinai	Exodus 19
1446 BC	Moses Receives the Commandments	Exodus 20
1446 BC	Moses Receives the Law	Exodus 21 - 24
1446 BC	The Golden Calf and Moses'	Exodus 32

	Anger	
1445 BC	Laws for Sacrifices and Offerings	Leviticus 1 - 7
1407 BC	The Bronze Snake	Numbers 21
1407 BC	Balaam and the Angel	Numbers 22 - 25
1407 BC	Joshua Chosen to Succeed Moses	Numbers 27:18
1406 BC	The Death of Moses	Deuteronomy 34
1406 BC	God Commissions Joshua	Joshua 1
1406 BC	The Israelites Cross the Jordan	Joshua 3 - 5
1399 BC	Land allotted among the Tribes	Joshua 13 - 22
1374 BC	Israelites Capture Jerusalem, Hebron	Judges 1
1169 BC	Gideon and the Midianites	Judges 6 - 8
1075 BC	Samson and Delilah	Judges 16
1043 BC	Saul Becomes King	1 Samuel 8 - 10
1028 BC	Saul's Disobedience and Samuel's Rebuke	1 Samuel 15
1024 BC	Samuel Anoints David at Bethlehem	1 Samuel 16
1024 BC	David Kills Goliath	1 Samuel 17
1010 BC	Saul and His Sons Killed	1 Samuel 31
1003 BC	David Reigns over All Israel	2 Samuel 5, 1 Chronicles 11
993 BC	David and Bathsheba	2 Samuel 11
970 BC	David's last days	1 Chronicles 28, 29, 1 Kings 1,2
967 BC	Solomon Asks for Wisdom	2 Chronicles 1, 1 Kings 3

966 BC	The Building of Solomon's Temple	1 Kings 6
966 BC	The Ark Brought to the Temple	1 Kings 8
946 BC	The Queen of Sheba Visits Solomon	1 Kings 10, 2 Chronicles 9
931 BC	Solomon's Death	1 Kings 11:40
931 BC	The Kingdom is Divided	1 Kings 12, 13
863 BC	Elijah on Mount Carmel	1 Kings 18
858 BC	Elisha Called	1 Kings 19:19
851 BC	Elijah Taken up to Heaven	2 Kings 2
851 BC	Elisha Succeeds Elijah	2 Kings 2:12
722 BC	Israel Led into Captivity	2 Kings 17:6
586 BC	The Fall of Jerusalem	2 Kings 25, Jeremiah 52
537 BC	The Exiles Return	Ezra 2
535 BC	Temple Work Begins	Ezra 3
457 BC	Ezra's reforms	Ezra 9
444 BC	Ezra Reads the Law	Nehemiah 8
6 BC	Birth of John the Baptist	Luke 1, John 1:6
6 BC	Augustus Taxes the Roman Empire	Luke 2
5 BC	Birth of Jesus	Matthew 1, Mark 1, Luke 2:6, John 1:14
5 BC	Visit of the Magi	Matthew 2
5 BC	Escape to Egypt	Matthew 2:13
4 BC	Slaughter of Infants	Matthew 2:16
4 BC	Return to Nazareth	Matthew

		2:23
8 AD	The Boy Jesus at the Temple	Luke 2:41
26 AD	John the Baptist Prepares the Way	Matthew 3 , Mark 1:4 , Luke 3 , John 1:15
26 AD	The Baptism of Jesus	Matthew 3:13 , Mark 1:9 , Luke 3:21
27 AD	Temptation of Jesus	Matthew 4 , Mark 1:12 , Luke 4
27 AD	Jesus Calls his First Disciples	Matthew 4:18 , Mark 1:16 , Luke 5
27 AD	Sermon on the Mount	Matthew 5 - 7
28 AD	Jesus Ministers in Galilee	Matthew 8 , Mark 2 , Luke 4:14
29 AD	Jesus Sends out His Twelve Apostles	Matthew 10 , Mark 6
29 AD	John the Baptist Beheaded	Matthew 14 , Mark 6:14
29 AD	Jesus Feeds the 5,000	Matthew 14:15 , Mark 6:30 , Luke 9 , John 6
29 AD	Peter's Confession of Christ	Matthew 16 , Mark 8 , Luke 9:18
29 AD	The Transfiguration	Matthew 17 , Mark 9 , Luke 9:28

29 AD	Greatest and Least in the Kingdom	Matthew 18
29 AD	The Woman Caught in Adultery	John 8
29 AD	Jesus Affirms He is the Son of God	John 9
30 AD	Jesus Cleanses the Ten Lepers	Luke 17
30 AD	Jesus Raises Lazarus	John 11
30 AD	Final Journey to Jerusalem	Matthew 19 , 20 , Mark 10 , Luke 18
30 AD	The Triumphal Entry	Matthew 21 , Mark 11 , Luke 19 , John 12
30 AD	Thursday Before Passover	Matthew 26 , Mark 14 , Luke 22 , John 13
30 AD	Jesus Comforts His Disciples	John 14
30 AD	Jesus Promises the Holy Spirit	John 16
30 AD	Jesus' Intercessory prayers	John 17
30 AD	Jesus' Betrayal, Trial, Crucifixion	Matthew 27 , Mark 15 , Luke 23 , John 18, 19
30 AD	Jesus' Resurrection	Matthew 28 , Mark 16 , Luke 24 , John 20, 21
30 AD	The Ascension	Acts 1
30 AD	The Holy Spirit Comes at Pentecost	Acts 2
31 AD	Saul Persecutes the Church	Acts 8
31 AD	Philip and the Ethiopian	Acts 8:26
34 AD	Saul's Conversion	Acts 9

37 AD	Peter Preaches to the Gentiles	Acts 10, 11
48 AD	Paul's First Missionary Journey	Acts 13
48 AD	The Council at Jerusalem	Acts 15
60 AD	Paul imprisoned in Caesarea	Acts 24
62 AD	Paul Sails for Rome	Acts 27
95 AD	John's Revelation on Patmos	Revelation 1 - 22

Not knowing or remembering these events and dates will not adversely affect our ability to study the Bible. I have posted this because I feel it is useful to have a resource where we can refer to when we wish to know the overriding social events to the passages we are studying. When we consider Daniels prophecy we need to know that he was in exile in Babylon at the time.

You will notice that the Bible references here are, in the majority of cases, from books that narrate the history of God's people. There are very few references to the Prophets or Epistles. This is because the narrative books serve the purpose of telling us what was happening.

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4 ESSENTIAL TIPS

VARY YOUR APPROACH

- • Just as there are different genres in the Bible there are different ways to study.
- • Mix things up – do not get tied into the one approach
- • Carry out word studies – what can you learn from studying “justification” or “adoption”.
- • Take a chapter and do a verse by verse analysis.
- • Set aside a month and do an indepth study of a book – include social aspect it was written against, look at it chapter by chapter and also give an outline of the whole book.
- • Look at different characters and identify traits, successes or even failures.

- • Delve into the study of different themes – “salvation”, “faith” or “the Trinity” are good starting points.
- • Don’t limit yourself to this list.
- • Post a comment telling me what you do to study the Bible and how you keep your approach fresh. We can all learn from each other.

USE THE RIGHT RESOURCES

- • The basic thing is to make sure you have a good, reliable study Bible. The translation you use is your call. I would recommend that you use a translation as opposed to a paraphrase because this keeps you much closer to the original Greek.
- • Do not feel you need an exhaustive library to get the benefit from studying the Bible.
- • If you want to build your library it is sensible to view this in the long term. Buying books, especially resources for studying the Bible is an expensive pastime.
- • When you do invest in some books think about what you need in terms of how you study the Bible. If you do not enjoy word studies then there is little point in buying Strong’s Complete Word Study Concordance.
- • The key thing to remember about any resource is that it should complement your study, not direct it.
- • The first thing, I think, you should invest in is an exhaustive concordance for the translation of the Bible you use.
- • Spend some time on a site like [Amazon](#) looking at various resources.
- • Remember that you can spend a smaller amount of money and buy a [Bible Study software package](#) for your PC. These software packages contain many different resources including, word concordances, Bible dictionaries and some commentaries.
- • Commentaries are a handy resource but I would caution you on when you use them in the study process. What YOU learn from the Bible is the most valuable thing you will learn. Not what some expert has written about it. By all means use a commentary to check what you

have found (far out ideas are not necessarily wrong but if you differ from the whole academic community on a doctrine you may want to reconsider your findings).

- • I love books so I am always adding to my reference library, I see it as a huge investment in something I love doing and something that benefits my life.
- • What sort of resources do you turn to in order to assist your studies?

DEVELOP A CONSTRUCTIVE APPROACH

- • Bible study will not happen without a concerted effort. We need to make sure that we dedicate time to it. Whatever amount of time this is or whenever you schedule it does not matter. Once you have determined to study then set aside the time, regularly.
- • When you approach study remember to begin in prayer. This is not purely an intellectual exercise and we must remember that what we learn from the Bible is revealed to us by God.
- • After praying dedicate yourself to the process – whatever form of studying you decide to follow, do it wholeheartedly.
- • This tip may sound obvious but you would be surprised at how many people ignore it – whatever you learn, **RECORD IT**. Write it down. Dictate it. Store it on a CD ROM... however you do it, do it. Recording your findings means you can come back to them later and add to them, or even correct them.
- • At the end of the slot make you sure you finish in prayer. In fact make sure you pray throughout your study. Involve God. Ask Him for guidance, thank Him for revelation and confess where you fall short in what you have found out.
- • What sort of routine do you use for study?

APPLY WHAT YOU LEARN

- • As I said above this is not simply an intellectual exercise. It is not a college exam you are preparing for, it is about learning more of the God who loves us.
- • When we learn from God's word we must move it from head knowledge to life altering knowledge. If you learn that hate is wrong – then work on cutting hate out of your life (if applicable).
- • God's word is a light for us to follow. It teaches us the way we need to live our lives. It helps us in times of trouble and it reminds us of God's goodness and promises to us.
- • Of all my advice this is where I would really pray for God to guide us – we cannot keep being the same people once we engage in God's word. It must change us.
- • One final word of encouragement – be ambitious. Do not avoid subjects because they seem too big, too deep, reserved for academics. Remember that simple fisherman, Peter? On Pentecost he was using the words of the prophet Joel to preach. Deep stuff for someone who had never darkened the door of the schools of learning of his day.
- • In a similar way what you learn for yourself will resonate the deepest in your life. Tackle justification. Investigate salvation. Drill deep down into faith. You will be rewarded for your efforts. Remember Isaiah 49:23 “And you shall know that I am the Lord: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for Me.”
- • I sometimes struggle to apply what I learn – dwelling on situations that make me angry is a big failing of mine. I know that writing words encouraging us to apply what we learn is rather easy compared to actually putting it into practice.
-

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There are many facets to our lives as Christians. There are a number of things that we should be trying to keep a the forefront of everything we do every day. This series of online Bible Studies for January is aimed at reminding us what is important to us and what should be made priorities in all that we try and do.

The first thing I wish to focus on is the Bible.

Before we go any further I want us to consider the following questions:

1. 1. What place does the Bible hold in your life?
2. 2. How often do you read it?
3. 3. What priority do you give to what you read?
4. 4. Do you believe it can change your life?

Make a note of your answers.

It is possible to answer these questions quickly, without really thinking about them but give some serious consideration to the consequences of your answers!

So what can we say about the importance of the Bible?

THE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE **ITS AUTHORITY**

I hope your answers to the 4 questions above were such that they give the Bible the place of highest authority in your life. What the Bible says is what we should do. Why? Because it is the word of God. To disobey the Bible is to disobey God Himself.

What does the Bible say about itself? In answering this we must remember that the canon of Scripture was not formalised until the [Council of Carthage](#) in AD 397 but the Bible is not silent regarding itself.

One key passage that is a foundational text for the Word of God is 2 Timothy 3:15-17. “How from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

We will return to this text from time to time. It is a most useful one to learn by heart.

Revealed As The Word Of God

Job 11:7 gives us the very words of God affirming how awesome He is. Job is asked how he can hope to fathom God who created the world. If it was not for God revealing Himself in word then we would not have the Bible. John Stott says in [Understanding the Bible](#) that we cannot discover God for ourselves – He must reveal Himself to us. The Bible is that revelation. God shows us who He is and what He has done for us.

1 Corinthians 14:37 reminds us that the written Scriptures are indeed the word of God as revealed by Him.

Inspired By The Spirit Of God

This is where we return to 2 Timothy 3:16. All word is God breathed. Breathing and inspiration are from the same Greek word. The words that made their way into the Bible did not come from man. While men wrote them down they were ‘inspired’ by God to do so. That is why the Bible is God breathed.

Take a look at 1 Corinthians 2:13. Paul is teaching that what he says is not about his own authority, it is God’s words inspired by the Spirit.

Endorsed By The Son Of God

We have briefly explored the role of the Father and Spirit in the provision of the Bible and how this defines it as the Word of God. Luke 24:44 shows the Son’s role in defining the Bible as the Word of God.

Here we see Jesus Christ referring to the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms. This instantly attributes divine authority to what had already been written.

Matthew 26:54 is another instance of Jesus Christ giving His authority to the Scriptures. The endorsement by Christ is irrefutable.

The Bible Has Timeless Relevance

Consider the fact that the Bible has survived for so many centuries. In fact the earliest writings have survived for thousands of years. We still read it regularly. It is still a best seller. Many people work on new translations. Sermons are preached from it on a daily basis.

This is not the mark of a book that is irrelevant or a simple intellectual piece of literature. The Bible hits home with messages that are 100% relevant for today. The stories of David's sin provide us with salutary lessons. The teachings of Jesus Christ resonate today – love your neighbour.

The messages contained in the Bible connect with people today. Why? It is the Word of God and God still speaks into this world today.

The Bible Has Living Power

The fact that the Bible is the Word of God, its continued relevance and the impact it makes on lives serves to demonstrate that it has as much power today as it has ever had. This is because it is the living Word of God. It is not a stagnant piece of material that is dissected

A piece of literature does not have any power. Just look at the power of the Bible. People read it and have their lives changed. Not because it is a beautifully bound book – because it is God's own Word.

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THE THEME OF THE BIBLE

The Bible's Theme

It can be a common misunderstanding that the Bible is solely about multi themes, but equally it is also incorrect to assume it is purely about one

thing only. The Bible is multi layered. It cannot be put in one particular box. A useful book to read on this subject is [IVP Introduction To The Bible: Story, Themes and Interpretation](#).

It is perfectly correct to say that Bible is the story of God's love for mankind. It is also correct to mention that there are other subplots – the story of Israel for instance. The Bible itself gives us an insight into its themes.

Let us look back at our foundational text from my earlier post **Christian Life: The Authority Of The Bible. This is 2 Timothy 3:15-17. Especially look at verse 15 which says “...from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.”**

Consider the following questions, noting down your answers:

1. 1. What is the benefit from reading the Bible?
2. 2. What themes are there to the Bible according to this text?

This verse gives us a rather sharp insight into three key themes of the Bible, namely, salvation, Christ and faith. Another way of putting this together is to say that the Bible tells us what we need, why we need it and how we get it.

Salvation

In Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 we read of how God created our world. That is the first 2 chapters of the Bible (out of over 1,000 chapters). Then in Genesis 3 we read how sin entered into the world and corrupted God's perfect creation. It is from that moment on that the Bible weaves in the need for our salvation. From Genesis 3 the need for salvation becomes clear after God's relationship with Adam is destroyed and from the same chapter we read of the promise of a Saviour.

Christ

After the need for a Saviour became apparent in Genesis 3 the Bible tells a story that charts the choosing and progress of God's chosen people. There are high points and many, many lows in this progression. Israel failed God on a continuing basis and this trend continued even after the split of the kingdom.

This inability to meet God's standards meant that for salvation to be available there needed to be a saviour.

The Messiah was promised to God's people. The Old Testament builds the case for the need of a Messiah and gives the people the promise of God's Chosen One to come. The New Testament describes the coming of the Messiah (the Christ) and His life on earth as complete man, completely divine.

Faith

The final theme is faith. Having established the need for salvation and identified the Christ who saves the Bible points out clearly that we must have faith. The Bible tells of only a few men who laid eyes on God, there were many who saw Jesus Christ but there were many more who did not. Belief in a God who loves and the Christ who saves is needed through faith.

Those hearing the words of the Prophets were required to have faith that the message came from God.

Elijah needed to have faith that God would send fire to ignite the burnt offering on Mount Carmel.

Moses needed faith that God would lead the Israelites to the Promised Land.

We are required to have faith so that we are justified.

Salvation through Christ requires faith.

Conclusion

The Bible is a book of many sub-divisions, chapters and verses. We can examine the themes of the individual books of the Bible but we can most definitely trace three themes from start to finish – Salvation, Christ and Faith.

My first two questions can now be answered. The Bible is, on a strategic level, about God’s love for us and His desire that we should not be lost for eternity.

How do these themes affect our own lives?

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THE IMPACT OF THE BIBLE ON OUR LIVES

So far we have examined the authority of the Bible and its theme. This post looks at the impact of the Bible on our lives.

1. 1. What do you find the Bible useful for?
2. 2. What does the Bible tell us it is useful for?

Read 2 Timothy 3:16 “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness”

1. 3. What does this verse tell us it is useful for?

There are 4 aspects to what the Bible is useful for here:

Teaching

This is where we start from a position of little or no knowledge and the Bible builds this up. We did not know what God was like until we read about Him.

The Bible shows us how we are called to live our lives. It is an educational tool. Nobody becomes a Christian and immediately knows everything that is required of them.

Rebuking

We all know what it is like to see a child misbehave. The child's parent will tell off the misbehaving rascal! This is a rebuke. It is harsh but necessary. Without the rebuke the child will continue doing wrong. The rebuke is needed because the deviation from acceptable behaviour is so marked.

So it is with us when we really step out of the line of God's commands. The Bible does not miss us and hit the wall! When we are wrong we need to be hauled back from our wrong doing and put right.

Correcting

This is similar to rebuking except it is really a lot gentler. Our mistake is maybe not so serious as to deserve a stinging rebuke but nonetheless we need to be guided back onto the right path. The Bible does this in a way that does not leave us feeling defensive but cared for.

Training

When we made the commitment to follow Christ we were called into a life of service for Him. Remember when you started that new job? You didn't know where anything was or what procedure you should follow in a given situation. It took training.

Training is a two way process. Somebody teaches and you learn. So when the Bible is instructing us on what God wants us to do we need to

listen, understand and then practice what we are told. The Bible is an exceptional training resource.

Further Study

Look at the following verses and write down what you think they tell us about what the Bible is useful for:

1. 1. Matthew 4:4
2. 2. Psalm 119:130
3. 3. Romans 10:17
4. 4. Psalm 119:11
5. 5. Hebrews 4:12-13

The Bible is not just a literary resource. It is not a simple handbook that we can read from cover to cover and then realise we are fully trained. The Bible is the living, breathing Word of God. That said, however, we it is a book we can turn to in order to find out what God wants us to do.

We must be committed to reading and studying the Bible on a regular basis because it is God's way of speaking to us (please note I am not ruling out the more supernatural means by which God can communicate with this world). We must be open to hear what God has to say to us.

So how did you get on with the verses?

Some answers:

1. 1. Food for our soul
2. 2. Light for our mind
3. 3. Depth to our faith
4. 4. Protection from sin
5. 5. Power to fight

As wonderful as [Charles Dickens'](#) masterpieces are they lack the ability to do all the things the Bible does. God is not silent today. He speaks, every day. We just need to listen and obey.

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HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

The other day a young friend of mine asked me how he should study the Bible. I thought it would be worthwhile to give a brief overview of a useful approach to study. I would stress that this is not the definitive or only way.

How do you approach the Bible?

My first piece of advice is to approach the Bible:

- ↯ With an open book (i.e. read the Bible itself, not what others say about it)
- ↯ With an open mind (do not be influenced by what others have said about the passage)
- ↯ With an open heart (be ready to learn and apply what you read and come to understand)

So here is one way I approach Bible study...

1.1) Read the passage you are studying through as many times as possible (minimum of 5 times) and if possible also look to see how different translations of the Bible put the same passage.

1.2) Try and identify key words, phrases or themes within the passage.

- 1.3) Set aside the divisions and chapters that are in your Bible and see if you can decide where the most appropriate paragraph divisions are.
 - 1.4) List the important points in each paragraph.
 - 1.5) Relate the passage to the general context of the book of the Bible it is in.
 - 1.6) Only when you reach this stage – consult a brief commentary to compare your understanding of the passage with what an “expert” thinks.
 - 1.7) Consult more detailed commentaries on more difficult points.
 - 1.8) Think of illustrations; other scriptures etc. to help you if you were to try and explain this passage to somebody else.
- 2.

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