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THE
HEIGHTS OF THE GOSPEL.

A
SERIES OF SERMONS

DELIVERED AT THE
METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE,
IN THE WINTER OF 1892-3.

BY
ARTHUR T. PIERSON, D.D.

London:
PASSMORE AND ALABASTER,
PATERNOSTER BUILDINGS, E.C.

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WORKS BY ARTHUR T. PIERSON, D.D.

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PREFATORY NOTE.

THE sermons embraced in this volume were selected simply because they bear upon one topic which it was my special desire to present with more than usual fulness and clearness, namely, the privilege and delight which belong to a true disciple. No firmer persuasion possesses my own mind that this, that very few, even among the saints, apprehend or appreciate the honours, dignities and rewards which are the heritage of a child of God, even in this life. And, as in a previous series of discourses, we sought to uncover the *Heart of the Gospel*, so in this series we have sought to get up to the *Heights of the Gospel*; to climb the Delectable Mountains, where the present privileges of the saints are both seen and enjoyed, and from which the towers and turrets of the Celestial City are more plainly visible.

ARTHUR T. PIERSON.

METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE,
LONDON, *March*, 1893.

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THE THREE DETERMINING WILLS.

SERMON I.

THE THREE DETERMINING WILLS.

“But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power. For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power. What will ye? shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and in the spirit of meekness?”—I CORINTHIANS iv. 19—21.

IN all the ages there has probably never been another Christian worker that has rivalled the apostle Paul. Whenever we study the character of this remarkable man we are more and more ashamed of ourselves. His great faith, his great courage, his holy yearning after souls, his willingness to be nothing in the eyes of men, his absolute giving of himself to His Master's work, and even his joy in suffering for His Master's sake, put to shame everyone of us, I am sure. And it is well for us to ask what are the secrets of a character and a career so marvellously beautiful as those of the apostle Paul.

I have taken this text this morning because it is one of God's gems that, entirely apart from its beautiful setting in the Word of God, burns with the very fire of the Holy Spirit. It is quite possible that you have never noticed the three great conditions of successful service which are here indicated.

There are three determining wills in every life of power among men: the first is the will of God, the second is the

will of the man himself, and the third is the will of those among whom he labours ; and these are beautifully referred to here. The first, "If the Lord will" ; the second, "I will" ; the third, "What will ye?"

Now with regard to the first : the Lord's will. The will is the centre of being ; it is that on which the whole being revolves as the sun moves upon its own axis. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and soul and mind and strength." I suppose that word "strength" means the will, as the strength of the character. Now as the will is centre of being, God's will represents God. What God chooses, what God prefers, what God eternally purposes—that is God's will. And all the relations of men to God are determined by the attitude of man's will toward God's will. If we take the system of the heavenly bodies as an illustration, the sun may represent God moving round on the axis of His own will for evermore, and all obedient souls may represent the planets that move about this central sun in the orbit of obedience, and all unholy and disobedient souls may be represented by wandering stars that will not move in the orbit of obedience to God, and to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever. The great question of the persecutor, Saul, when he met Christ on the road to Damascus was, first, "Who art Thou?" and as soon as he learned that it was the Lord, then the next question was, "What wilt Thou?" And that question he asked for his whole after-life, and may I not say for the whole of the eternal ages yet before him? From that moment he surrendered himself to the Mastership of Jesus Christ, and he knew henceforth no other Master but Jesus Christ ; and in the smallest matter the first question he asked was, "What is the will of the Lord?" and as

soon as he knew it, immediately he said, "That is my will." So he did in this case.

As to our relation to the will of the Lord, I pray you to notice two or three things. To obey the will of the Lord is the secret first of all, of *safety*—security. "All things work together for good to them that love God." From the moment a planet wheels into its path round the sun, there is nothing that can harm that planet, but just as soon as a star wanders from its orbit, and goes plunging headlong into the depths of space, it is liable to come into clash and crash with the universe of God. I have seen a great piece of machinery that would almost, if not quite, fill this immense building. Now, suppose that in that great piece of machinery, one little wheel, as small, it may be, as a shilling, should drop out of its place and fall into the midst of the machinery, that colossal mechanism moving round and round and round would grind this little wheel among its larger wheels into fragments, if not into powder. The Universe is one great Machine, and God is the Motive Power of it, and when a soul drops out of its place in this great machinery, and falls among the great wheels of God's purpose, it is ground into powder, unless the grace of God puts that wheel back into its place in the vast system. The moment that you find out what the will of God is, and drop into your place, all the universe moves with you, and all the universe moves for you, the whole Godhead is back of you, the wisdom of God, and the power of God, and the love of God, and the grace of God; and you are as absolutely sure and safe as God is. And so Peter says: "Who is he that shall harm you if you be followers of that which is good?"

I suppose you have read the story of William III. of

Orange, and his wars on the Continent. On one occasion he was exposing himself in the thickest of the fight on the battle-field, in order that he might control the forces at his disposal. A lieutenant-governor ventured into the same exposed place on the battle-field, and the sovereign remonstrated. He said, "You have no right here, for this is a place of peculiar peril." "Sire," answered the lieutenant-governor, "I can risk my life wherever my sovereign can risk his life." "Not so," replied the king, "Duty calls me here, and I am safe; Duty does not call you, and you are not safe." And no sooner had the words issued from his mouth than a shell swept by and took off the head of the lieutenant-governor, while the king stood absolutely unharmed.

The supreme question is, Does your duty call you? If it does, you are safe; but if you go where duty does not call you, you are not safe for a single instant. Secure in the cleft of the rock when God's hand is in front of you and hides you in the cleft; never secure in any other place than just where God would have you to be, and where you seek to be in obedience to His divine will. And so it was John Wesley who declared, "I am immortal until my work is done." And so with Paul at Corinth. You remember that, in the eighteenth chapter of the Acts, we are told that after he had that vision of Macedonia—the man saying in the vision of the night—"Come over and help us,"—he gathered that the Lord had called him to preach the gospel in Macedonia and the neighbourhood. And so he left Bithynia, where the Spirit would not suffer him to go, and went over into Macedonia, and down into Greece. And so he came to Corinth, and you know how he was met there. You remember how they persecuted him; how they drew him before the deputy's seat, Gallio being seated on that throne

of judgment ; but how the Lord had said, "Fear not, Paul, fear not, be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace, for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee : for I have much people in this city."

And so because one is perfectly safe in following the will of the Lord it is the secret, likewise, of perfect peace or *serenity*. I remember that the President of the United States, Mr. Lincoln, in the midst of the late war, was once approached by a very timid soul who said, "Well, Mr. Lincoln, I am very anxious that the Lord should be on our side." "Sir," said Mr. Lincoln, "that does not give me the least trouble in the world ; the only question is whether we are on the Lord's side. If we are on the Lord's side we are perfectly safe."

To be in the cleft of the rock makes the saint serene. It was this that made Stephen smile ; and his face was lit up as the face of an angel when the stones were flying through the air that caused his death. And it was this that enabled Luther, when his life was threatened as he went to Worms to meet the Diet. "I would go to Worms," said he, "if there were as many devils there as there are tiles on the roofs of the houses." And it was this that enabled the martyrs, when they lay on beds of coals, to say that they felt as though they were on beds of roses. My friend, are you doing the will of the Lord ? Then you are absolutely secure, and you can afford to be absolutely serene. Be not afraid to go right forward, for the Lord is at your back.

So this is the secret of *service*—a higher will controlling my will, not crushing my will. I wish that you might all get hold of this great distinction. When you yield yourself to God, He does not destroy your will. You merge your will into His ; you open your whole being to Him, and it

becomes the channel through which God shall flow, and pour the stream of His mighty and almighty power. To go as I am led, to go when I am led, to go where I am led, to go as I am led,—it is that which has been for twenty years the one prayer of my life; and I know nothing that is so blessed a help as that in serving God. And we must be willing to have the will of God gradually disclosed. It is not all unfolded to us at once. It is very much like that sheet which Peter saw let down in a vision on the house-top. It came down at the hour of prayer, and it ascended again when the hour of prayer was over, and all that it revealed to Peter was his immediate duty. "There are three men that seek thee; get thee down and go with them, nothing doubting, for I have sent them." That vision did not tell Peter what his duty was the next year, or the next month, but what his duty was just then and there. And it is a blessed thing if you are willing, on the house-top to-day at noon, when you are praying to God, to have Him let down so much of His will to you in the vision as pertains to the immediate duty before you, and leave all the rest to Him.

Do not you see that, as this is the secret of safety and serenity and service, so it delivers you from all worry and anxiety? I have long held, and I repeat it here, that any work which I am doing, which you are doing, which necessitates worry, which compels anxiety of mind, and care, and perplexity, and solicitude, is probably my own selfish work, and not God's work at all. It is something that you or I are doing because of our ambition, or appetite, or avarice, or selfishness, or our desire to get ourselves on in this world. For if it is God's work I am doing, and I am only putting my hand to God's work, why should I worry about it? Is

that not a kind of impertinence as though God were not able to take care of his own work? Why, the man that is on the battle-field, and has supreme confidence in the general-in-chief, and follows the general into the thickest of the fight, does not consider himself responsible for the issues of the battle. By no means. He knows that there is a competent hand that is regulating the whole matter, and all he has to do is as a soldier to follow where his leader goes, and strictly to obey his commands. A very beautiful story was told of a gunner at Waterloo, by Dr. Cook, of Belfast. The gunner was describing the supreme moment, just before the new recruits came up under Blucher, that under your great Wellington turned that decisive battle of modern ages, and the dust and smoke of the battle were so thick and intense, that the gunner, as he stood on the height on which he had been placed by the command of his officer, could not see five yards in front of him. He felt the swaying tides of the battle move this and that way as the troops were repulsed, and then moved forward again to the onset; and he did not know at one time whether he was among Englishmen or among Frenchmen—among friends or foes. Dr. Cook said to him, “Well, my friend, what did you do in that supreme hour of darkness and solicitude?” “I stood by my gun!” said he. That is all you and I have to do. We are not responsible for the swaying tides of battle; we are not responsible for apparent defeat, or apparent failure. The question is, Am I where God puts me, and do I stay where God puts me, and do I do what God would have me do?

And this leads me to say that as this doing of the will of God is the secret of safety, and serenity, and service, it is also the secret of *success*.

Now, I want to have it understood, that in estimating success you can never depend on the world's standards. What the world counts success God may count failure, and what man counts failure God may count as success. Until we get rid of the snares of man's judgment and our own judgment and leave everything to God, we shall never be able to do the will of God with a peaceful soul. When Stephen, early anointed for the work of God and just beginning to make an impression upon the people, fell under the stones of his enemies, I suppose most men would have said,—“What a sad failure is that life, cut off in its very beginning!” But there was a young man that stood and held the clothes of those that stoned Stephen, and looked on the face that was radiant with God's smile, on whom impressions were made at that time that never were effaced. He was Saul of Tarsus; and personally I have very little doubt that the conversion of Saul of Tarsus should be traced back even past the appearance of Christ at Damascus—to the first conviction implanted in his mind when he looked upon the first of the martyrs. So that for aught you know Stephen may have died to give to the Church Saul of Tarsus as Paul the Apostle of the Gentiles. When Paul and Silas went over to Philippi, a city of Macedonia, in accordance with the vision of the night, and when just as they got there they were put into prison, thrust into the inner prison, and their feet made fast in the stocks, I suppose most people would have said, “Well, that certainly is a failure. Paul must have mistaken that vision of the night, and he must have been off his track.” But when at midnight Paul and Silas sang praises unto God, and God answered by an earthquake that shook the foundations of the prison and loosened every man's bands, and the gaoler

and his family became the first-fruits unto Christ of that midnight hour, I suppose that in heaven it was seen that what man counted failure God counted success. And when Paul went to Rome and was chained by the hand to a soldier of the prætorian guard, and when every morning a new soldier was chained to him, until the whole of the prætorian guard had had Paul under custody, I suppose most people would have said, "It is a pity, is it not, that a man of such power as Paul should have an audience of only one man, and that audience changed every day?" But Paul could say, "I have preached the gospel of Christ throughout the whole prætorian guard." The clanking of the chains of the imprisoned apostle were the voices of the Holy Ghost to tell the story of redemption to those Roman soldiers. And who knows how much the conversion of pagans in Rome may be attributed to Paul's being thus chained by the hand to these soldiers!

Perhaps I am spending undue time upon this part of my theme, but this is where the main stress of the whole subject lies. The one "if" that is the most important in any man's life is this "IF the Lord will." Now, just as soon as you discover what the Lord's will is, then you are to do just as Paul did. Let us hear him. "If the Lord will, I will." Not only so, but, "I will come unto you *shortly* if the Lord will."

I thank God for that word "*shortly*" There are some people who have a sort of a vague intention to do the Lord's will, but the time of doing it is very far in the future. It is a very indefinite and uncertain purpose. There are people who have purposed to repent, twenty years ago, and have never repented yet; there are people who have purposed to believe, twenty years ago, and have never

believed yet ; there are people who have purposed to be baptised, twenty years ago, and have never been baptised yet ; there are people who have long ago purposed to identify themselves with the Church of Christ, and have never done it yet ; and they will go along until they drop off into the awful gulf at the close of life, and not one of these half-formed purposes will ever be fulfilled ! What did Paul say ? “ *Immediately, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision.* ”

Now, let us understand that it is perfectly right for you to wait until you clearly understand what God’s will is, provided you are searching meanwhile to know that will, earnestly desiring to be acquainted with it, and holding your whole nature open to the communication of it ; but the moment that will is made plain to you, then it is impossible for you to be too much in haste to fall into the line of God’s purpose and perform His blessed will.

Paul simply waited to know the will of God, and then acted. It is very likely that Paul had some signs of the will of God which are not communicated to you and to me, but I believe there is no child of God, especially in any matter connected with his higher life, who needs be in doubt very long as to what the will of God is ; and if you will allow me to stop just here for a moment to indicate some things that must be spoken of more fully hereafter, I will give you what have been to me, for many years, six signs of the will of God. There may be one or more of them at a time ; there may be some cases in life when all of these indications must be granted to make you feel sure, but I believe that if you will wait and study these six signs until one or more of them brings clear revelation to you of the will of God, you need never make an essential mistake in the performance of your duty.

In the first place, there is the witness of His Word. If anything is laid down clearly in the Holy Word of God which may be my guide in duty, God will never give me any light outside of that Word. If He says, "Repent," "Believe," "Be baptised," "Do not forsake the assembling of yourselves together," you need no further light. Light is given to you there, and that is to be adequate for you.

In the second place, there is the light of a conscience enlightened by the Word and Spirit of God. If your conscience compels you to a certain course, and you have compared that conscience with the will of God as declared in the Scripture, and it proves to be in accord with the Scripture, then there can be no doubt, so far as your conscience is concerned, what your duty is.

If these two fail to guide, then look for the outward call. Is there a door opened before you for service? Is a path plainly set before you, and does God seem to point providentially to that path? That is another indication.

Then the fourth indication is the inward call. How does your heart respond, in the times when you are considering what the will of God is? How does your better self respond to the voices of the word and of your conscience, and to the outward call of God's providence?

If these four fail, then let us look a little further. What about the rational judgment; that is, the judgment of the reason? Of course, God gave man common sense and the sound mind in order to determine questions of duty. Suppose, for instance, God calls you to a work, apparently, for which you have not the strength. It is impossible that God should call a blind man to do a work that can only be done when a man has his eyes; or a deaf man to do a work that can only be done when a man has the hearing of his

ears; or call to a handiwork which can only be done by a man who has the use of his hands, one whose hands are crippled or paralyzed. Here then your reasonable judgment is to come in to weigh questions of a claim of duty with respect to your having ability to do a thing that you are considering.

And then the last of all the indications is this, and I think it is the most important, next to the Word of God: How about your spiritual judgment? That is to say, when you solemnly weigh the question that is before you in the scales of your spiritual life. When you notice how, in prayerful moments, and in seasons of intimate communion with God, a question appears to you, and how in carnal moments when you are most worldly-minded, the question appears to you; if you find that whenever you are nearest to God the claim to this duty comes uppermost and will not go down at your bidding, and whenever you are most immersed in the world, and the flesh and the pleasures of this life, the matter gets lost sight of, and obscured—when you see such lights as those all in a line, you may make up your mind that that is the way to the harbour. And Paul was accustomed to weigh all these considerations—What is the command of Christ outwardly? What is the voice of conscience inwardly? What is the call of God's providence in the outward opening? What is the response of my own nature in the inward impulse? What is the judgment of my reason? And what is the judgment of my spirit when I am nearest to my God? To these may be added the calm judgment of the best and holiest saints.

But when you come to know the will of God by these or any other indications, the quicker you move the better, and the more cheerfully you move the better.

Now, I want you to notice that Paul not only said, "I will come to you shortly," but he said what is more important, "I will know not the speech of them that are puffed up, but the power."

At Corinth and at Athens there were four classes of men that were greatly conceited, and puffed up with pride—those that gave themselves to rhetoric, those that gave themselves to logic, those that gave themselves to wisdom, and those that taught others the snares of sophistry. Paul says, "I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ, I would not come with enticing words, and I would not come with endeavour after excellent speech or worldly wisdom, but the demonstration of the Holy Spirit."

You may be assured that the lost art in speaking to men about gospel truth is the art of commanding the power of the Holy Spirit. There are a few divine artists that have that power, and one of the most conspicuous in modern ages was the man that for thirty years stood in this very pulpit to tell men the story of the gospel. But it is a very rare art in these days to command the Holy Spirit's power in speaking to men. How much do we value the coming of the Holy Spirit? I took up this New Testament the other day, and I noted that fact, that where the Holy Ghost begins to be manifested the bulk of the New Testament began to be written; that is, at the Acts of the Apostles. If the Holy Ghost had never come we might have had the four gospel narratives, but the Acts and the Epistles and the Book of the Apocalypse we should never have had. And it is just so in a believer's life. There might be a measure of knowledge such as is represented in the four gospels; but, be assured, we should never have the new Acts of the Apostles, we should never have holy

service for God, we should never have Christian people engaging in work, and successful work, for the Master, if there were not a personal advent of the Holy Spirit into the heart of the believing child of God. And I would not myself give you a fraction of a penny for an entire ministry if there is nothing of the power of the Holy Ghost in it. There may be poetry and philosophy, and logic and wisdom: all this is good for nothing spiritually; begetting only the inflation of self-conceit and worldly power and confidence. But when the Spirit comes there is not the mere word, but there is the Power of God in which the kingdom consists, and by which it is furthered and forwarded.

Now, let me call attention to one word in the second chapter of this Epistle to the Corinthians—the word “demonstration.” I suppose there is not one of you here, even a child, that does not know that the word “demonstrate” means to prove. That word was used by these men who lived in Athens and in Corinth, of those means by which they sought to convince men through the power of logic. Now, Paul said, “I am not going to depend upon the demonstration of logic; but upon the demonstration of the Holy Spirit.” How does the Holy Spirit prove a truth? Suppose I tried to prove a truth by logic, how do I do it? I lay down a position which is called the major premiss; then there comes another one on the top of that, which is called the minor premiss, or the second of these propositions. The logician says, if this is true, and that is true, something else must be true, and that he calls the conclusion. That is what is known as the formula of logic. That is what reasoning men have always depended upon throughout the world for power in argument. When the Holy Ghost

wants to demonstrate a truth what does He do? Does He say this and another thing is true and so some other thing is true? Not at all. The Holy Ghost has quicker logic than that. You say you are not a sinner, do you? How does the Holy Ghost prove your sin to you? He touches your blind eyes, and breaks up your deception, and shows you your sin like a rotten carcass lying right there before you, and sending up its stench into your nostrils. You say, "I do not believe in a hell." The Holy Spirit just opens the very doors of the infernal regions, and compels you to look down into the bottomless pit. You say you do not believe there is a God. The Holy Ghost rends in twain the veil that hides God, and you feel that you are confronted with God and God is dealing with you. That is the way of the Holy Spirit's demonstration. Logic may fail to carry any proof; but when the Holy Ghost takes a man and shakes him in the hand of His Omnipotence, all the scales fall off from a man's eyes, and suddenly he sees what for twenty years he has been blind to. He knows himself, and he knows God; he knows hell, and he knows heaven. Saul of Tarsus thought he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth, and he went to Damascus, that he might commit men and women to prison; but on the way, in a moment of time, the scales fell from his eyes; he saw Jesus whom he persecuted to be the Son of God; he saw the truth that he hated, to be the truth of God; he saw the Church that he sought to imprison and slay, to be the bride of Jesus Christ; he saw himself a sinner, a rebel and apostate, and at once he said, and it was the question of the rest of his life, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" Argument might have been spent on the Apostle Paul for forty years, and not have brought him to

the conviction and the resolution that forty seconds accomplished on his way to Damascus. That is the demonstration of the Spirit.

I want you to feel with me this morning more deeply than you ever have felt before, that there is going to be no power in my preaching if there is not the power of the Holy Spirit. I would almost better drop dead here this morning than go on preaching to this congregation in any dependence on rhetoric, or logic, or poetry, or philosophy; and I bless God that I can say, from the depths of my soul as before Him, that my only purpose is, out of love to serve every man and woman, and child in this church, the representative of no part or party, but of the whole church, that with great unanimity invited me in June last to resume this ministry among you. I declare, as I am in the presence of God, my dependence upon just one thing; I believe God will bestow the greatest gift, the power of the Holy Ghost, and I am going to ask your prayers and co-operation in Christ Jesus, to make this little ministry of mine, that is flung in among you like a stray orb from the other side of the sea, a blessing to many souls.

Just a word in conclusion. I have not left myself any time for it, but you will notice that the apostle not only says, "If the Lord will, I will," but asks "What will ye?" Suffer me to add just a word of exhortation to a discourse already perhaps too long. A great deal depends upon this beloved people. The same word that is a rod of rebuke to a sinner is a staff of support to a saint. The same message over which a rebel sinner falls and stumbles is a stepping stone to a saint, and the same word that Paul spoke in rebuke to those in Corinth that were apart from God or backslidden from Christ became a word of help

and strength and support to those that were truly God's. Now remember, that your wants largely and often unconsciously guide the preacher in what he shall say to you, for the natural impulse of a man is to supply the demand that he finds to exist in a congregation; and, especially, your wants will largely determine the message. I suppose that Felix did not enjoy Paul's reasoning of righteousness, temperance and judgment to come; but it was what Felix needed, though it made him tremble. I suppose that Agrippa did not relish being almost persuaded to be a Christian, but it was what he needed—that presentation of the argument from the prophets with which he was very familiar. And so, there may be sinners here that will not relish a plain gospel message, but that is what they need. May God give me grace to give them what they need, even though it is not what they relish. For it is like medicine, that, being bitter in the mouth, may work great changes in the whole body.

And especially remember that your capacity to receive the truth will largely determine the power of the gospel. "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine." If, as you hear the Word from God, you obey it; if, as you see the will of God, you quickly undertake to perform it, you will find your own capacity to receive the truth, and capacity to obey the truth will grow with every new proclamation of the truth. It seems to me that this church is like a city set on a hill, that cannot be hid. I suppose there has been more of the gospel of Christ preached in its purity here than within any other four walls that stand to-day in the United Kingdom; and I am deeply concerned, that God should come, and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, bless His Word. I am going

SERMON II.

THE SECRET OF OVERCOMING SATAN.

“Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them : because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.”—1 JOHN iv. 4.

THIS General Epistle of John is the battlefield of the ages, and is full of sharp contrasts : life and death, light and darkness, sin and holiness, heaven and hell, love and hate, are put opposite each other all through this epistle. This is the Gallery of Battles which represents the greatest of all the conflicts of history, the everlasting fight between evil and good, between the Son of God as the leader of the good and the devil as the leader of the evil ones.

There is so much in this text to inspire and encourage that I pray God to help us all to enter at once into the heart of it. It is the message of comfort to God's dear children : “Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them : because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world.” Now there is no doubt that “He that is in you,” refers to God, and there is no doubt that “He that is in the world,” refers to the devil ; and the first thought that strikes us is that there is no attempt in the Bible to deny or dispute the greatness of Satan. This passage acknowledges his greatness, but it affirms that He that is in the disciples is greater than the god of this world.

First, then, let us consider the greatness of Satan so that we may understand the character of the adversary whom

we have to contend with. The Bible represents Satan as the head of a great army of foes. "Satan" is always in the singular number, and although in our English version we frequently find the word "devils," there is but one devil, and the Word translated "devils" should be translated "demons," as it is in the margin of the Revised Version. There is then but one devil, but there are many demons. Satan is the head of this great host, the general-in-chief of the armies of evil. If you will closely examine the Epistle to the Ephesians and the Epistle to the Colossians, you will find that there seem to be seven grades of fallen angels, as there are seven grades of unfallen angels. We read of "Principalities," "Powers," "Dominions," "Authorities," "Rulers," "Thrones," "Wicked Spirits, etc., and above them all, as I believe, there is a rank of archangels, or chief angels. We apparently have the names of three of these archangels given to us in the Bible. One of them is Michael, who seems to have had special care of the dead bodies of God's saints; one of them is Gabriel, who seems to have had special charge of the messages about our Lord's coming in the flesh; and the other of these three, apparently also an archangel, but fallen, is the Devil or Satan. So we are to imagine Satan as the highest over all the ranks of fallen angels.

Suppose that, for instance, one of the provinces or colonies of Great Britain should rebel and cut loose from the parent government; it might carry into its rebellion all its officers, from its governor-general down to the mayors of its cities, and even its police magistrates; and apparently when this great rebellion took place among the angels of God they carried over into their revolt the ranks they had before rebellion came among them, so that Satan is a chief

demon, an evil spirit, a fallen angel of tremendous power. He commands armies that may be almost as countless as the sands of the sea. I think the more closely you study the Scriptures, the more you will see this to be the case. For instance, there were seven demons in Mary Magdalene before Christ cast them out ; and in the twelfth of Matthew, we read of a man that had an evil spirit, out of whom the evil demon went but came back and brought seven other spirits more wicked than himself. That man in Gadara, who lived among the tombs, we are told, had a legion of demons in him, and when they were cast out they went into a herd of swine numbering thousands, and the whole herd of swine went down into the lake and perished in the waters. This is the first thought, that is suggested by text, that Satan has tremendous power and immense hosts of demons under his control, rendering him obedient service.

Then, in the second place, Satan has marvellous wisdom and knowledge. He has a master intellect, with all the knowledge that you might suppose would dwell in the mind of a fallen archangel. He knows how to reach the human soul ; he knows how to deceive you and mislead you. You have seen the magicians when, behind the silk handkerchief that they hold up, they perform their tricks and make you believe that they do a thousand things which they really do not, making your eyes the fools of your other senses. Just so, Satan by his sleight of hand, and cunning craftiness, whereby he "lies in wait to deceive," makes you believe that he proves a thing that cannot be proven, and that what is actually a reality and verity is a sham and an absurdity. When the Duke of Richmond presented his report about "Fortifications,"

Sheridan said, "I compliment the noble president on his talents as an *engineer*, which were strongly evinced in planning and constructing that very paper. . . . He has made it a contest of posts, and conducted his reasoning not less on principles of trigonometry than of logic. There are certain assumptions thrown up like advanced works to keep the enemy at a distance from the principal object of debate; strong provisos protect and cover the flanks of his assertions, and his very queries are his casemates." And Satan is a civil engineer. He constructs his fortifications to make the evil strong and repel the good.

And so as he is a demon of marvellous power and wisdom, is he also formidable in his familiarity with evil, and it is this that constitutes the great hold of Satan over the human soul. Remember this awful fact, that Satan has gone over the whole round of possible sin. Remember that he has had age upon age to practise ungodliness, and rebellion, and deception. Remember that he has in himself the very secrets of hell. And so when you come into conflict with Satan you meet one that has not only tremendous power, an immense following, a most acute intellect, and the greatest mastery of knowledge, but you are confronting one that has gone through the whole experience of evil doings, and who by long practice in the art of deceiving and seducing souls has become the master of that art.

Yet notwithstanding this, we are bidden to remember that "He that is in you is greater than he that is in the world." Conceding the greatness of Satan, let us look for a moment at the superior greatness of Jesus Christ.

In the first place, Jesus Christ has all power. Satan has great power, but not omnipotence. Jesus Christ met Satan

single-handed and alone. Satan assaulted Christ with legions of demons behind him, but Jesus Christ overcame him without even angels at his back. He said in the crisis of his great passion, "Thinkest thou not that I could pray to my Father and he should presently send me more than twelve legions of angels?" He could have summoned hosts of angels, but he met Satan single-handed like a champion in the fight. He preferred so to meet him that the disaster and the defeat of the Devil might be the more overwhelming and awful.

Christ is not only a God of all power, but he is a God of all wisdom. Satan is very wise, but he is not omniscient, and Christ is. If Satan understood something of the subtleties of a human heart, and the ways to reach that human heart with ten thousand forms of temptation, Jesus Christ is still wiser than Satan, and can discern the movements of the Devil afar off, and warn His servants against the subtlety and secrecy of his approach.

Then Jesus Christ is everywhere present. I speak more emphatically of this because there are some people who seem to think that if there be a devil at all he is omnipresent, everywhere present. For as they argue, "is not Satan represented as moving in your heart, and moving in my heart, and if he moves in the hearts of all men, and at the same time, is he not everywhere present?" That position is founded upon a great mistake, which has long since been exposed by Robert Hall in one of his discourses. There is no one that is everywhere present but Almighty God, and we must not be misled even by the language of Holy Scripture. Let us remember that it is a common thing to speak of a certain person as doing what the agents of that person do. For instance, you attribute to Queen

Victoria, as your sovereign, all that her subordinates do in all parts of the empire and its dependencies. You say that the act of her ministers and her magistrates is the act of your queen, and that is true. A general-in-chief on the battlefield can be in but one place at any one time, and yet if he has ten thousand officers under him, and they are executing his orders, and acting in obedience to his commands, you say these are the acts of the general-in-chief. You say, "He made a sally against the foe over there," or, "He assailed and captured that citadel." You say, "He repulsed and defeated that regiment," although he himself may have been on some commanding height on the battlefield, and all these things were only manœuvres executed in obedience to his orders, by his subordinates. So Satan could personally work only in one human heart at one time, but all that his subordinates accomplish is properly attributed in the Word of God to him, because it is under his mastery or control. But Jesus Christ is an omnipresent God. He is in your heart, and in my heart, and the heart of every disciple, by the Holy Spirit, so that of a true child of God we may still say, "He that is in you is greater than he that is in the world," since He is the all-powerful, the all-wise, and the all-present God.

And, then, remember that Jesus Christ represents perfect holiness. There is a common impression in the minds of people that darkness is as positively powerful as light. That is a great mistake. What is darkness? Darkness is the absence of light. What is light? Light is not the absence of darkness only; light is something real and positive. There was darkness in this house before the sun rose this morning and shone into it. But what is the sunlight? It is something actual and real, while the darkness is only the absence of sunlight, so that the darkness does not drive the

light away, but the light drives the darkness away. Let us all remember that. And so Jesus Christ represents infinite holiness, and holiness, like the light of the sun, positively dispels the darkness, that is to say infinite holiness repels evil and drives evil to the wall; and in the great ages to come, when Christ shall be crowned as King, we shall find darkness absolutely dispersed and light pervading the moral universe.

Now I come to the more practical part of this discourse. I have shown you something of the greatness of Satan, and something of the greatness of our dear Lord. The question is, What is the secret of our possession and exercise of this overcoming power? We are told in this wonderful epistle that there are three secrets of overcoming power. It is marvellous how the Bible tells its own story if it is properly read. If you will examine this First Epistle of John throughout, and read it prayerfully and carefully, you will find the whole secret of overcoming power laid down here. In the second chapter and fourteenth verse we read, "I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong." What is the secret of their strength? "And the Word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one." Now turn to the third chapter. Let us read in the eighth and ninth verses. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." And then in the twenty-fourth verse of the same chapter, "And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and He in him." Here are the three secrets whereby you overcome the devil. The first secret is, *the Word of God* abides in you. The second is

the seed of God abides in you ; and the third is *God himself* abides in you. That is the reason why the apostle says, "Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world."

Now look successively at these three secrets. The Word of God is represented in the Scriptures as the "sword of the Spirit," "a two-edged sword." A Damascus scimitar has but one sharp edge and a dull back. Hence you can hew with a scimitar, but you cannot thrust with it successfully. But when you have two edges to a sword, and each side is keen, you can cut both ways with such a blade ; and the two keen edges unite in one burning point, and you can thrust with such a sword. And so the Word of God is represented as having two keen edges and one burning piercing point. Again, it is represented as a living sword. The Word of God is quick, *i.e.*, alive and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword. This sword is represented as going out of the mouth of Christ, for he speaks the Word of God. It is represented as being held in the hand of the Christian warrior, because his dependence is on the Word of God. Here, then, is the first secret of strength. You have in this the only offensive weapon that you are recommended to use in the Word of God ; all the other pieces of armour are simply defensive ; this one piece of armour is added that you may cut both ways among your enemies and thrust them even to the backbone. So that a man who knows the Word of God, and has the Word abiding in him, and is mighty in the power of that Word, is able to make his way among all opposers ; and never was that illustrated more grandly than in the career of your own departed pastor whose one weapon for forty years was this Word of God, and who wielded that weapon in such a way that the enemies of God and of the truth were afraid of him, as well they might be. Knowing

the Word, and having it in your heart, you shall find that Word going forth like a two-edged sword out of your mouth, a living sword, and a powerful sword, that hews men to pieces before God, and lays bare their thoughts and intents.

And then, secondly, the seed of God abides in the child of God. The seed represents the living principle. I suppose you are all familiar with certain great facts of nature. You know how, for instance, in the vegetable world the seed is the most carefully preserved and guarded of all the products of plant life. Here is a little plant growing up and putting out its branches and leaves, and by-and-by its flowers. The flowers may be very beautiful and very fragrant, and you may value them and consider them the finest products of the plant, but, if I may use such language, the plant does not so regard them. The thing the plant cares most for in the economy of nature is not root nor stem, is not beauty nor blossom, nor even fruit, but seed. And you will find that in this great world of plant life, the most carefully developed, and the most carefully preserved, and the most carefully scattered, is the seed. Indeed, there are some plants that, like the dandelion, have the power to float their seed in the air, supported as by a parachute, so that it shall be borne on the atmosphere, and then when the seed lodges it has a little hook to fasten in the soil and root itself there. And there are other seeds that are variously supplied with appliances for their distribution and propagation; I think I have counted fifty different methods by which the seed in nature preserves itself and scatters itself when it is ripe. Now the seed in the plant and the seed in animal represent not only the highest products of life, but the means of producing and propagating life, and therefore the seed is the most precious thing in nature. And how

significant it is that the principle of life in God which represents the highest perfection of Deity and represents the means by which God's likeness is reproduced in you and in me is called by the sacred name of "seed," and we are told that when the seed of God remains in us we feel that we cannot sin. We have a new *affinity*. I want even these dear boys here to understand what I am saying—I want to use this word intelligently, and so will explain it. Now, my young friends, you have all heard the word "affinity." That is a big word, but it means simply this, a desire or drawing after something that is like myself. We say, "Birds of a feather flock together," "Fishes go in shoals," or "Insects go in swarms." These are all illustrations of the law of affinity in nature, and this law is singularly illustrated in the case of seed. Suppose I take a little germ of sugar-cane and put it in the earth, it will take up sugar. That is what makes sugar-cane sweet, and gives us molasses, as we call it,—or sugar in its refined form. If I set an asparagus germ in the earth that takes up the salt, because the asparagus is a sea-weed and lives on salt. If I set a peach tree, it takes from the ground and the atmosphere what we call prussic acid, and that gives the peachy nutty flavour to the peach as to the almond. Every plant has its affinity. One for sugar, one for starch, one for salt; and these plants take up out of the soil that for which they have affinity. So when the seed of God is planted in us we may be put in the soil of worldly society, but we select out of the soil and atmosphere the things of God not the things of man—that for which we have a divine affinity, and we feel we cannot sin because we are born of God. And so we come to have the sugar of God in us, and the salt of the gospel in us: we do not absorb the poisonous evils of this world, we do not

take them up, but we have affinity for the things of God. We are like a tree planted by the rivers of water with its little spongelets at the end of the roots drinking up the blessed water of life, and making sap of it. That is what John means when he says the seed of God is in the disciple, and he feels that he cannot sin because the seed of God leads him to love the things of God and hate the things of the evil one.

But we are told once more that God Himself abides in us. Read John xiv. 23. "If a man love Me, he will keep My words : and My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." God would have you to feel this great fact, that if Jesus Christ dwells in you by the Holy Spirit, He makes you strong to overcome Satan, as He himself was strong to overcome Satan in the desert and in the Garden of Gethsemane, and that is the secret of your triumph over evil.

Did you ever ask yourself that question which Friday is said to have asked Robinson Crusoe, "Why God not kill the devil?" Did you ever ask yourselves how it is that we find sin in the universe of God? I suppose we shall never be able to answer that question, certainly not on this earth, but it is possible, perhaps, to give you a hint or two about it. Perhaps it is necessary to a free moral agent that he shall have the power to sin as well as to obey. Now I grant you that God could keep sin out of the universe, but it might be by making such beings as we are, little more than machines. If a being is created, free to choose right or wrong, the possibility of sinning may be involved in the fact of such freedom. Certain it is that of all the intelligent beings that God has created, some appear to have turned from their first estate. Satan and his hosts fell from their original

innocence by voluntarily sinning against God. Man was created in innocence but in freedom, and like the fallen angels abused his liberty, and fell into ruin.

But there is another thought that I feel more sure of, and I throw out this as a helpful suggestion, that for us who are in a world of sin and sorrow, contact and conflict with sin is one secret of all highest attainment in holiness. I wonder if you have ever thought that the various animals in this world may represent some form of vice or sin that men are guilty of, as though God has put these vices in the form of an animal that we might see how hateful they are. For instance, the peacock represents pride, and the turkey-cock represents vanity. The fox represents cunning, and the serpent represents subtlety. The wolf represents rapacity, the tiger represents ferocity, the panther represents deception and treachery, the lion represents arbitrary use of power and strength, and so the swine represent sensuality, and the sloth represents laziness. When you look at these animals what do you see? You see the vices that curse humanity, embodied in hateful, ugly, repulsive forms. Did it ever occur to you that you have got one of these animals inside of you; that if you are cunning there is a fox there, that if you are treacherous there is a panther there, that if you are revengeful there is a tiger there, that if you are arbitrary and overbearing there is a lion there, that if you are lazy there is a sloth there, that if you are given to lust there are swine there? Did it ever occur to you that you are a menagerie all at once, a cage of unclean birds and beasts; that to-day cunning comes up like a fox, and to-morrow treachery like a panther, and the next day subtlety like a serpent, and the next day some other form of vice that may be represented by one of these animals? I do not intend to awaken a smile, for it

is serious business, but as I have lived long, more than fifty years, and have looked into the depth of my own heart from time to time, I have felt that there was a whole menagerie of wild animals right in my own heart needing to be tamed and subdued.

A friend once asked an aged man what caused him so often to complain of pain and weariness in the evening. "Alas!" said he, "I have every day so much to do. I have two falcons to tame, two hares to keep from running away, two hawks to manage, a serpent to confine, a lion to chain, and a sick man to tend and wait upon." "Why, you must be joking," said his friend; "surely no man can have all these things to do at once." "Indeed, I am not joking," said the old man, "but what I have told you is the sad, sober truth; for the two falcons are my two eyes, which I must diligently guard; the two hares are my feet, which I must keep from walking in the ways of sin; the two hawks are my two hands, which I must train to work, that I may be able to provide for myself and for my brethren in need; the serpent is my tongue, which I must always bridle, lest it speak unseemly; the lion is my heart, with which I have a continued fight, lest evil things come out of it; and the sick man is my whole body, which is always needing my watchfulness and care. All this daily wears out my strength."

Now, how are you, as God's saint, to overcome the evil that is in yourself and this world? If, for instance, cunning rises up in your heart like a fox, and you defeat and destroy cunning, there is one animal the less to contend with. If deception comes up, and you subdue your tendency to deception, there is a serpent that is strangled. If some other form of sin, like lust, is slain, there is a whole herd of swine

driven out of you. Let us not fear to come into close contact with sin, for every time in the strength of God you vanquish your sin, you vanquish one of those low forms of animal life in you, and you will thus become finally triumphant as a man in God over all these forms of evil.

[These thoughts seem to have no little warrant in the Word of God. The Psalmist says, "I was as a beast before Thee." Jude, verse 10, compares certain ignorant evil speakers to "brute beasts," etc. In different parts of the Word of God, man in his depravity and corruption and sensuality and indifference to holy things is compared unfavourably to twenty different forms of animal life.

To the Ass, in Proverbs xxvi. 3.

To the Bear, in Daniel vii. 5.

To the Boar, in Psalm lxxx. 13.

To the Bullock, in Isaiah xxxi. 18.

To Dogs (wild), in Phil. iii. 2 ; 2 Peter ii. 22 ; Mat. vii. 6.

To Dogs (mad), in Proverbs xxvi. 18, 19.

To the Fox, in Matthew viii. 20 ; Luke xiii. 22.

To Jackals, in Canticles ii. 15.

To the Goat, in Daniel vii. 5.

To the Horse, in Psalm xxxii. 9.

To the Horseleech, in Proverbs xxx. 15.

To the Leopard, in Jeremiah xiii. 23 ; Revelation xiii. 2.

To the Lion, in 2 Timothy iv. 17.

To the Mule, in Psalm xxxii. 9.

To the Ox, in Isaiah i. 3.

To the Serpent, in Matthew x. 16.

To the Swine, in 2 Peter ii. 22 ; Matthew vii. 6.

To the Vulture, in Matthew xxiv. 28.

To the Viper, in Matthew xxiii. 33.

To the Wolf, in Acts xx. 29 ; Matthew vii. 15.

Thus the whole round of the animal creation is explored, to find types of stupidity, violence, rage, obstinacy, ferocity, rapacity, bloodthirstiness and cruelty, malice and malignity, cunning and fraud, depredation and destruction, stubbornness and insensibility, wilfulness and waywardness, insatiate greed and selfishness, treachery and stealthiness, wrath and hate, insinuating flattery and subtlety, sensuality and beastliness, slander and venom, and every conceivable form of diabolical passions and warfare against God and man. The theme demands far more careful treatment than the space available now allows.]

Let us also notice that Satan having for ages practised iniquity, represents every possible form of sin in himself; and, therefore, if you come into conflict with him and vanquish him, you practically vanquish all foes in vanquishing him. He is like Goliath, who was the strongest of the Philistines. It would scarcely have been any more a triumph for David to have met every one of those Philistines single-handed one after the other, and to have vanquished them than it was to meet the strength and pride and arrogant defiance of them all in one giant, and bring him to the earth. So God lets you and me come into close conflict with the devil in order that by the strength of Christ in us we may accomplish a conquest over him who is the giant champion of evil, and may in him virtually put all the forces of evil to flight. If you have never thought of this it is worth coming across the sea to give saints the comfort of that thought. If we are in Christ, and He in us, let us not fear even Satan, for "He that is in you is greater than he that is in the world."

I think you have noticed that I never preach a sermon to the children only, and why? There are some of my brethren

that have a sort of "prelude"—I do not think that was known in apostolic times, but it is a modern invention—a sort of a preliminary sermon to children, and after they have got through with their ten minutes' talk to them, the children are supposed not to have much interest in what follows. I want these children to understand that I never preach a sermon without thinking of them, and putting something in the sermon that they will understand. And now the rest of you need not listen unless you choose, but I wish to talk to these orphanage boys just for a few moments, and apply this truth to them.

"Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome these foes, because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." Here the Spirit of God speaks to "little children," and I want you to understand that if Jesus lives in you, He is just as mighty in you to overcome the devil as He is in the oldest saint in this house, because it is not the age of the saint, it is not the long life of the saint, or his attainments, that makes him able to overcome the devil. It is only the fact that Jesus is in him; and if Jesus is in a little child he shall overcome Satan just as well as a man eighty years of age. I suppose you have all read about Hercules. Hercules was the ancient god of strength. I suppose that very likely the Romans and Greeks got the idea of Hercules from the story of Samson told by the Israelites. Now we are told that when Hercules was a little baby in his cradle, there were some serpents that came into the room and wound their way into the cradle and tried to sting him, and folding their coils round him to choke the life out of him. But we are told in the fable that with his little hands he just took hold of the necks of these serpents and strangled them to death. God would have you to feel

that a little babe in Christ that is rocked in the cradle of the Church, when he comes into contact with the great serpent, the devil, if Jesus is in him, can beat back the serpent, the serpent cannot strangle him.

But then, dear boys, remember this, that you are only strong when you are on the Lord's ground, not on the devil's ground. Now I have read a story about a swan that was walking on the shore of a lake, and a wolf came up and ran after the swan and would have torn him to pieces. But the swan said to himself, "I am not strong on the land, but I am strong on the water." So he plunged into the water, and when the wolf followed him into the water, he with his strong bill just gripped the wolf by the ears, and pulled his head down under the water, and drowned him. There are a great many people, dear boys, who try to fight the devil on the devil's ground, and they always get defeated; but if you can meet the devil on the Lord's ground you will defeat him. Compel him if he assails you at all, to come to the fountain of water and blood that is opened in the house of David for sin and uncleanness; and when you are thus on the Lord's ground, and close by the shelter of the Lord's presence and power, you are strong and the devil is weak, and you can easily overcome him, because in Christ you are abiding, and Christ is abiding in you. Yes, little children, greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world.

Do not let us be afraid even of the devil. Get out of the way of temptation if you can just as well as not, but when you cannot avoid meeting temptation, when you are bound to face it, and when it is cowardice to flee, stand your ground. Meet the devil, and all the foes that the adversary can bring against you, and depend upon it, that He that is

in you, by His word, and by His seed, and by His spirit, is infinitely greater than all those that be against you.

Perhaps, that young man is in the house and hears me, who had a conversation with me a few days ago, and told me that he was in the grip of a life of awful sin, that he had long been a sinner, and a flagrant sinner, given to vices of which I could not speak here, and feeling himself to be dragged down to hell by those evil doings. I want that dear young man to feel that God gave me this sermon specially for him. I have thought of him, in that awful fight with the devil that is to issue either in his salvation or in his damnation, and I ask him to think that God means this little message for him. You need not fear the devil if you are abiding in God, and God is abiding in you, and if you are meeting the devil on the Lord's ground, and not on his own ground, you can resist every effort to arrest or hinder your spiritual life. Believe in God, believe in His power, cast yourselves upon Him, and let His Spirit, and word, and seed abide in you and make you mighty to overcome all evil!

SIN'S DOMINION DESTROYED.

SERMON III.

SIN'S DOMINION DESTROYED.

“For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.”—ROMANS vi. 14.

THE greatest demand of our day is for a higher type of piety on the part of God's children. John tells us, in his First Epistle, third chapter, eighth verse, “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.” And if so, the works of the devil in your heart and mine certainly ought to be destroyed. The argument in the sixth and seventh chapters of the Epistle to the Romans covers this subject, the privilege and the duty of the child of God to be freed from the power and dominion of sin; and the key to both of these chapters is supplied in the first verse of the sixth chapter: “What shall ye say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid.”

First, then, let us look at the argument of Paul, then at a certain reason or consideration that he urges, for “Ye are not under the law, but under grace”; and then draw some practical inferences.

First, his argument. I am quite aware that this is a very difficult subject to discuss, and I therefore ask your closest attention, for I shall try to make it as plain as I

possibly can. This argument is illustrated in three ways. First, judicially; second, maritally; and thirdly, actually. Let me explain these terms. First, it is looked at in the light of a judgment; secondly, in the light of marriage; thirdly, in the light of actual duty and privilege. The word "judicially" refers to that which pertains to a judge; and we are all familiar with the meaning and application of this word in our courts of law. For example, over a dead criminal the law has absolutely no hold. If a man has been executed for a crime like murder, the moment that he is pronounced to be dead by the attending physicians and surgeons, the law has no more control over him; it can execute no more vengeance upon the dead criminal, and his body is often given into the hands of his surviving relatives, to be buried. There are some very remarkable features about this law process. I will give you two examples that will show what is meant. There is a story in law books to this effect, that in one instance a man had been hanged and his body was given over into the custody of his friends, and they succeeded in bringing life back into what appeared to be a dead body; and the decision of the judge was that the law had no more hold over that criminal, he having been executed and declared to be dead, and delivered over into the hands of his friends. They had successfully resuscitated the body, but the law had executed its penalty upon him, and he was no longer amenable to justice. A more remarkable case than this occurred in my own country, of which I was told just before I left home. A judge in one of the Southern States had sentenced a criminal to be executed on a certain day, at a certain hour. Through some misapprehension of the sheriff, or a misunderstanding of some sort, the appointed hour

and day passed by without such execution. Then the question was, What shall be done with this man? The judge was appealed to, and he said, "This criminal is now unknown to the Court. Such a day and hour were appointed for his execution; he is supposed to have been executed, and the Court knows no such man." Now, whatever you may think of these applications of law they illustrate this: there is such a thing as a man being dead in the eyes of the law, which is the argument of the Apostle first of all in this chapter. He says that by the death of Jesus Christ you, a believer, have become dead to the law, so that you are judicially free. The law condemned you, but Jesus Christ atoned for you, and your faith and your repentance make you one with the atoning Saviour, so that the law says it has no longer any hold on that penitent and believing sinner. You, as a believer, died with Christ, were buried with Him, rose with Him, and, in the eyes of God, ascended with Him, and are now seated in the heavenlies, and the law has no longer any power to condemn you. That is the position of the Word of God. We may find illustrations of this in history. It is said that in the wars of Napoleon there was a man drafted to enter into the French army. There were circumstances which prevented his going, and he hired a substitute to go in his place. That substitute went into the war and died on the battle-field. Another draft was made, and this man was again drafted. He appeared at the recruiting office and said: "I, in the person of my substitute, died on the field of battle, and I can never be drafted again;" which was true, and he was released. Now look at the argument of the first ten verses of this chapter: "What shall we say then? shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?"

God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized unto Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall also be in the likeness of his resurrection. Knowing this, that our old man is " [not *shall be*] " crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve him. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more: death hath no more dominion over him:" so that, just as Christ rose from the dead never again to die, you that are in Him, having died in Him, and risen in Him, have risen to die no more, risen into newness of resurrection life. Magnificent conception!

Now look at the second illustration of the argument, drawn from marriage. Read from the 7th chapter, the first few verses. " Know ye not brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised

from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.”

As the Apostle has illustrated this great argument from the department of judicial life or the law, he now illustrates it from the department of marital life. Let us look at the illustration. There are two ways in which a marriage can be dissolved in the eyes of God. One is by that particular form of abhorrent sin, which, in laying the foundation for another family, saps the foundation of the former family relation; and the other is by death. If the husband dies, the wife is free to marry again; if the wife dies the husband is free to marry again. Now, the Apostle says, you have become dead in the body of Christ to the law; that is, he compares the believer to a wife married, and the law is compared to a husband having a hold over the body of the wife. Paul argues that you are dead to the law, and therefore the law has no hold on you any more; and furthermore, that in Christ the law is dead to you, and therefore you are no longer in bondage to the law. That is the argument framed into a new illustration. Let us look more closely at it. Christ's death slays the law, not as a rule of life, but as a source of condemnation. Faith in Jesus Christ implies the legal death of the believer to the law, dissolving the bond of law and the bondage of sin. We are told that in heaven they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but faith forms a spiritual union with Jesus Christ that is far above the physical union implied in marriage. As, when the wife dies she passes out of the body, and out of the sphere of the body into another where she is no longer under the control of the husband whose marriage covenant had a hold upon her so long as she was in the body; so the believer who dies to the law is free to be married in a spiritual sphere to the Lord Jesus Christ as a husband. That is the

illustration. Once you were bound by the law. It was like a husband that had despotic control over you as a wife, but from the moment that you believed in Jesus Christ, His death on the cross had slain the law and destroyed its despotic control over you ; and in Jesus Christ you yourself died to the law, and became free in another sphere to be married unto your Redeemer.

There is still another department in which this thought is illustrated, and that is in actual life. The first I referred to was what is called a legal fiction — that is to say, if it is not an actual reality, it is a way that the law has of construing the facts ; the second was simply an image or illustration to give us in vivid form the truth presented by the other. But now Paul comes down to the department of actual life : let us see what is here said from verses 11 to 14, “Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin ; but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you.”

If you do not understand the argument from the judicial side, or from the marriage side, mark the distinct declaration of God here. This is a series of injunctions. “Reckon yourselves dead,” “let not sin reign,” “yield not your members,” “sin shall not have dominion over you.” I wonder that, having read these words a thousand times, I should never have seen the force and power of them as they are now impressed upon me ; and I most earnestly pray

God that I may make these commands bear heavily upon your consciences, and at the same time uplift you by their marvellous assurances that God is on your side.

What does this mean, "*Reckon* ye yourselves to be dead"? The word "*reckon*" means to think of ourselves, to count ourselves, as dead unto sin but alive unto God. When you take account of your own condition, look at yourself as a redeemed man or woman and as having been slain so far as the law is concerned. We have an instance of the same teaching in Chapter xiii. 14, and perhaps the best commentary on it is thus in this same Epistle to the Romans: "But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ" (that is, as a garment) "and *make not provision* for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof." Life is a constant providing against the future. You know that your appetite that has been satisfied to-day will return by-and-by. You know that you are liable to be taken ill, and so you make provision against possible illness. You men that are in business know that losses may overtake you, and so you provide a margin of profit, so that what you lose in one transaction may be made up by other bargains. We know that death is before us, and we are constantly making provision against the dying hour, and drawing up a will so that whatever little or much property we may have may be disposed of according to our pleasure, and our sense of right; we are thus arranging things with reference to the dying hour, and many men have insured their lives so that their families shall not be left in destitution. I remember a man who said that he was always accustomed to make such preparation for death, that if it should overtake him at any time his business might be found in order. His rule was, "Think of yourself as about to die to-day; act and live as though you were to live for ever"; that is, go about your duty as

though you had eternity in which to do it ; but feel all the time that you are liable at any moment to pass away. And when latterly he did actually pass away his wife said that everything about his business, about his family, and other persons for whom he had been a trustee, was found on the night of his death to be absolutely in order. Now think of yourself as dead to sin : and make no provision for the flesh. If you knew you were never going to be hungry again you would not have made preparations at home for another meal, would you ? If you knew that your shoes would never wear out, you would not order another pair of shoes this week, would you ? If you knew that the clothes you were wearing would never need to be replaced by another suit, you would not trouble yourself to get money saved up for another, would you ? If you knew that there was no possibility of your dwelling falling out of repairs you would not lay aside anything to put in new timbers, or new bricks, or new plaster on the walls. How plain this is ! do you not see that we are constantly making provision against contingencies that are liable to come—want, loss, sickness, death, disaster of every kind ? Now the apostle says, “ Do not make provision for the flesh as though you expected to fulfil its lusts ; do not reckon yourselves as sinners, but reckon yourselves as saints : and, therefore, do not provide for sin, as though you expected to commit sin, but make no provision for committing it.” What an injunction that ! may God help you and me never more to think of ourselves as a stronghold in which sin is entrenched, and where the devil has his habitation ; but to think of ourselves as the sanctuary of God in whom the Holy Spirit dwells. And, just as the care-taker of a temple in charge of the holy courts is not making provision for a theatrical

performance where the gospel is going to be preached, is not making provision for all sorts of worldly and secular entertainments, where Jesus Christ is the head and enthroned, so you as the Sacristan that is in charge of God's temple, are not to calculate on its being defiled by sin, but calculate on its being inhabited by God, and sanctified by the power of the Holy Ghost. Would that I could command the trump of Gabriel to declare this truth to this people this morning! I have long as a child of God lived more or less in the expectation of sinning; I am ashamed of it. I have calculated on sin, and calculated on repentance, and calculated on forgiveness, and swung like a pendulum now toward sin, and again toward sorrow for sin, and then back to sin again. I am ashamed of this. I confess it before God and before you this morning. Reckon yourselves to be dead, do not reckon yourselves to be living unto sin; reckon yourselves not to be castles of the devil where he has right and is bound to control, but reckon on yourselves as the temples of God, and say to yourselves to-day, "The Holy Spirit is in me, I must walk softly and keep these courts clean, and free from idols, and see that there is a holy offering on God's altars, and that the holy lamps are kept always burning."

Yes, the Apostle adds, not only reckon yourselves dead and make no provision for your lusts, but let not sin reign in your mortal body. When the devil asserts over you the right to rule, dispute every inch of territory. Say "Thou shalt not?" When Satan advances to assume control of you, stand your ground and reply, "This is God's temple, it is not thy stronghold. Begone; get thee hence"! Go down on your knees; Satan cannot advance over a kneeling Christian, and never did yet. Call on Almighty God, and say, "Lord.

this is Thy temple, drive back the adversary that would take possession and lift the black flag of revolt over the turrets of Thy sanctuary!" Do not let sin reign in your mortal body. Dispute, as I have said, every inch of territory, and every step of advance.

Let us hear Paul once again, "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin; but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead." Jonathan Edwards said at the Lord's table, "I have this day solemnly covenanted with my Saviour, that as he gave Himself wholly for me I will surrender myself wholly to Him. Henceforth, these eyes shall not look with lust, but they shall look as the eyes of Christ; these ears shall hearken to no impure suggestion, they shall hearken unto the words of my God; these hands shall handle no uncleanness, the name of God shall be written on the palms of my hands, and these feet shall walk not in ungodly ways, but softly and sweetly before my God." I want you to feel, I want to feel, that these members belong to Christ. Shall I take the members of Christ and make them the members of a harlot? Shall I engage in the harlotry of this world while Christ owns me and has purchased my members? Shall I give faculties of mind or body to the service of the devil when Christ owns me wholly? No! let me be obedient to God! And so the apostle who says, "Reckon yourselves dead, let not sin reign in your mortal body, let not your members be instruments of unrighteousness unto sin," teaches us, positively, to "Obey from the heart." Let us look at that suggestive verse, the 17th,— "But God be thanked that ye were the servants of sin—" your service of sin lies in the past,—ye *were* servants of sin, but "ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was

delivered to you." If you notice the marginal reading it is this—"That form or mould of doctrine into which ye were delivered." Now, I suppose, we have some persons here this morning that are moulders, that are casters, and who know what the foundry business is. You go into a foundry, and there is a cast, or mould, or matrix. The metal is put into the furnace and heated to a white heat, and poured into the moulds, and presently the moulds are knocked to pieces, and you see the various castings. Here is, for instance, the bed-plate of a range. It has only filled out part of the mould; it is imperfect, and it is knocked to pieces, and the pieces are put into the furnace again and melted over. And there is another casting of some sort that has run out in one direction and taken form, but there is a portion of the mould that has not been taken on. That also is knocked to pieces and put into the furnace again. But here is something else that has filled out the whole form, and every impression of the mould is left on the metal, and that is useful for the purposes of manufacture. Now the apostle says, "Once ye were servants of sin"; but you have been broken down by contrition and put into the furnace of God, and you have been melted down into holy surrender and submission, and then you were poured into the gospel mould, and you filled out the gospel form, and took the whole impression of gospel teaching. Ah, dear friends, why should not we take on the whole impression of the gospel mould, and instead of yielding ourselves unto Satan, yield ourselves unto God, get impressed more and more with Godliness, and manifest the spirit and temper of Godliness more and more in our lives?

Now, before I pass to a few closing reflections I would say a word as to what Paul gives as a consideration. He

says, "For ye are not under the law, but under grace." That is not exactly a reason, but an argument; and it is very much misunderstood. I suppose nine-tenths of people think when they read, "Ye are not under the law, but under grace," that it refers to two dispensations, one of law, like that of Abraham and Moses, one of grace, like that of Christ and the apostles. And they think that the Bible says we are not under the law, but under grace, because we do not belong to a previous dispensation in which men were liable to be justified by works, but belong to the present dispensation in which we are justified by grace. And I must confess, dear friends, that I think this is a very dishonouring interpretation both to the Scriptures and the Lord. I suppose Abraham was saved just exactly as you are saved, by faith in the Atoning Lamb, only he looked forward, and you look backward. That is all the difference. Somewhat dimly he looked forward, more clearly you look backward. Praise God for that. But if you are saved by faith so was he; for he believed, and "it was counted unto him for righteousness."

But now, while in every case in which these words are used they may not mean exactly the same thing, it is perfectly evident what they must mean here. There are motives for your not allowing sin to have dominion over you, because you are not "under the law, but under grace." The idea is that, when a man is under the law, he cannot live a holy life. The moment a man transgresses he comes under the dominion of the law; I do not care whether his transgression is known to other people or not. Suppose that there was a man on the streets here that this day committed murder and nobody knew it but himself. That man goes about with the consciousness that every other

man that is looking into his eyes is charging him with murder, every police officer he sees coming towards him he thinks may have a warrant for his arrest; and his conscience proclaims him a murderer, though no man may proclaim him to be such, and from the time he commits that crime he is under the law, although the law may not yet have ferreted him out or put him into gaol. Adam committed sin, and when God came into the garden in the cool of the day to walk with man, Adam and Eve shrank right away from the presence of God, and before God said a word to them, they hid themselves behind the trees of the garden. They were under the law. Do not you see they had broken the law, and the law had its sword hanging over them, and although God had not accused them, and there was no man to accuse them, their conscience accused them, and they knew they were guilty? And when Joseph's brothers stood before him, he did not accuse them. They did not know it was Joseph. God did not accuse them, but they said, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us." You see, from the day they sinned against their brother, they were under the law, the penalty of the law, and the sense of the power of the law, and the power of sin was in them. Just so the moment a man transgresses the law of God, he is under the law, and the law has dominion over him.

And then, in the second place, he has become a sinner, and the consequence is that his character is in ruin. If an angel to-day should rebel against God and refuse to do God's bidding, he would not simply become a transgressor of the law, but he would shatter himself as well as break the

law of God. The moment you fling the tables of the law down, and break them by your transgressions, you break yourself as well as the law. And as you cannot repair the battered, broken, shattered tables of the law, you cannot repair the battered, broken, shattered character. Once innocent, now guilty, Adam could not recover himself to where he was before. He had sinned. No repentance would do; no reformation would do. Suppose you are going along a level way and you come to a chasm and desire somehow or other to get across that chasm and go on to the level beyond. You must have the chasm bridged. There is no way across the wide gulf unless there is a bridge built there. Now, suppose a man goes along in a moral life and comes to a point where he sins. Sin constitutes an awful chasm, and even if he could begin a moral life again and go on as before, there is that awful chasm to be bridged, and he cannot do it; no good works cannot repair past evil doing. The thought I want you to get hold of is that the moment Adam sinned, the moment any man sins—he is under the law, the penalty of the law overhangs him, and the power of the sin remains in his own shattered constitution and character. The consequence is that no sinner can ever undo his own evil-doing. It is impossible in the nature of the case. Now when Jesus Christ comes and offers salvation, and puts away the penalty of the law because He bore it, He breaks up the power of sin because He gives a new nature, and He will more and more banish the presence of sin if you will allow Him to do it by the entire surrender of yourself to Him, until you come into the heavenly life itself, where nothing enters which defiles, works abomination or makes a lie. Therefore, when the apostle says, "Sin shall not have dominion over you," he adds, "Ye are not

under the law, not under its penalty, and have no right to be under its power, and ye ought to be more and more rid of its presence for you are under grace."

Now suffer me to gather these thoughts up as well as I can in a few words of practical suggestion. In the first place, there is a divine call to holiness—mark that, "Be ye holy for I am holy." God does not mock us. The command to be holy implies that there is, in God, power to be holy, and that all we have to do is to lay hold of that power and we shall be holy. I wonder if you have ever noticed these remarkable words in 1 Corinthians vi. 13, "The body is not for fornication but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body." Not only is the body for the Lord. We shall all admit that. That is to say, when I come to Christ and give myself to Him, accept him as my Saviour, my body is for Him, its powers and faculties for Him. But did you ever observe that we are also told that *the Lord is for the body*? That is to say, if you have given your body for the Lord, He has given Himself to you, and as you have consecrated your body to Him—shall I say it?—He has dedicated Almighty power, love, wisdom, and grace, to the sustaining of your body in the overcoming of sinful lust and the carrying out of your purpose to be His! So that you have the whole Godhead on your side in your determination to be holy as He is holy.

Then my second remark is, Do not be afraid that people will say of you, if you are seeking to be entirely the Lord's, that you are a perfectionist. You know I am not a perfectionist. If there is anything perfect in this world I have not yet found it, and I have had a great deal of opportunity to observe; and some of the people that are foremost to claim perfection are foremost to exemplify

imperfection. But I am perfectly certain of this, that if there be one danger in seeking perfection, there are a thousand in being content with imperfection. Do not be frightened by the ghost of a word, do not be alarmed because people may possibly say of you in your endeavour to be entirely the Lord's, and to live a sinless life before Him, that you are advocating perfectionism,—let each of you by your life and by your lips witness that you are never going to be satisfied with anything that lacks the image of Jesus, and entire conformity to His pattern. I think there is a good deal of difference between the two forms of expression,—“No longer able to sin,” and “able no longer to sin,”—quite two different things. The perfectionist says, “I am no longer able to sin”; the child of God that understands his privileges, and lays his hand on the right hand of his Father, says, “By the grace of God I am able no longer to sin; I put my foot on the old lusts I indulged, and the old appetites that I gratified.”

Now, once more. We are saved by hope. What your expectation is about your life will be very largely what your realization is. You remember that when in *Pilgrim's Progress* Christian got into Doubting Castle, and was in despair about himself, he found there was a key that opened its gates, the Key of Hope; and by the Key of Hope he got out of it. Now, your sin is a Doubting Castle. If you expect to sin, you will sin; if by the grace of God you expect not to sin, that very expectation becomes in God the Key of Hope to you, and it opens the doors to let you free. Suppose that this great congregation, to a man and woman, this morning, should go out of this house and lift up holy hands and hearts and say, “O God, Thou hast bidden me to be holy as Thou art holy. Thou hast said my

body is for the Lord, and the Lord is for my body ; henceforth this shall be Thy temple. I will think of myself as Thy temple ; I will not reckon that I am going to sin, but going to serve. I will not yield my members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin ; I will not let sin reign over me ; I will dispute every inch of territory, and every step of advance on the part of the adversary." And if you have lost the greatest preacher of the age, my brethren, this Tabernacle congregation may remain the greatest preacher of this or all ages in the testimony of what God can do to purify unto Himself a peculiar people zealous of good works.

THE SECURITY OF THE SAINT.

SERMON IV.

THE SECURITY OF THE SAINT.

The text is the first verse of the ninety-first Psalm :—

“ HE THAT DWELLETH IN THE SECRET PLACE OF THE MOST HIGH SHALL ABIDE UNDER THE SHADOW OF THE ALMIGHTY.”

Eleven Psalms in this book of Psalms are, in the Talmud, ascribed to Moses. Over the ninetieth Psalm, we find the inscription : “ A prayer of Moses the man of God.” Of course the authorship of these two Psalms is ascribed to Moses only by tradition, and we have no certainty about it ; yet, if you examine the two Psalms, they bear evidence on their face that this tradition is probably true. And there is a thought which came to my own mind, in the study of these two sacred poems, which serves to illumine them as with a new light, and to explain and interpret their contents.

The ninetieth Psalm is a dirge of death, but the ninety-first is an anthem of life. A very marked contrast is noticeable, as we pass from the ninetieth to the ninety-first, in their entire tone. In the former, the theme is death, destruction, disaster, and the wrath of God ; thousands and tens of thousands fall under the judgment of the Almighty, and a whole generation is swept away as in one night. But the ninety-first Psalm is jubilant with the air of exultation

and rejoicing. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty"; and from beginning to end there is not a despondent tone or a suggestion of despair; it is hopeful and joyful, and ecstatic in God.

Let us suppose that these two psalms were composed by Moses with reference to the experience of the children of Israel in connection with the Exodus from Egypt. For example, as the midnight hour approached on that fatal night which left one dead in every family of Egypt, and among every herd of cattle, let us suppose that, as the Angel of Death was passing through the land, and the blood had been sprinkled on the lintels and the two side-posts; and as the families were gathered round the Paschal lamb, eating it in haste, the leader of the sacred feast of sorrow, as the Angel might be coming near to the houses which he was to "pass over," in his awful errand, chanted, or offered as a prayer, this ninetieth Psalm. The darkest midnight hour is upon them; the most awful plague ever visited on the children of men is just in the very process of infliction; and these timid and shrinking children of God, that have witnessed all the judgments that God has visited upon Egypt, are now compelled to behold that tremendous visitation which was the last great catastrophe.

We may imagine them with a trembling but trusting spirit surrounding the Paschal lamb and repeating this "Prayer of Moses:"

"Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations."

This prayer having been offered, the Angel of Death comes in front of the dwelling; and a voice is heard, outside the blood-stained door, from the Angel himself:

“He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.”

Again the trembling believer, behind the blood-stained doors, responds :

“I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress : my God ; in him will I trust.”

Again the Angel answers :

“Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence.”

In the concluding verses Jehovah himself, as though confirming all that the Angel had said, in His own person speaks to His trusting people, for this psalm is manifestly a dialogue, in which three parties are speaking.

“Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him.”

We are introduced thus, to the child of God, sheltered behind the blood, addressed by the Angel of God :

“He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty ;” and all the rest of this ninety-first Psalm is a sort of commentary on that first verse ; and the thoughts it contains fall into two divisions : first, the place of blessed security as found by those thus sheltered in God ; and secondly, the conditions by which we get into that place of security.

I. First of all, “Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.” There is no mistaking this figure. Its natural interpretation is found, not in the wings of the Cherubim in the Holy of Holies, but in words such as our dear Lord used when He said, “How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her brood under her wings.” As Bunyan says in his *Pilgrim's Progress*, there are four calls by which the hen calls to her brood. The

first is the call of *night*, when they need a shelter from the dampness and from the darkness. The second is the call for *food*, when the hen would attract her little ones to pick up some dainty morsel that she has found for them. The third is the call of *danger*, when the hawk descends, or the brood is in peril. And the fourth is the call of *love*, when, with motherly desire and yearning, she would gather her brood where they may feel the softness of her breast-feathers and the warmth of her own body. So, "He shall cover thee with His feathers, and under His wings shalt thou trust." "When the night shadows are falling, when the night-hawk is descending, when food is needed by you in your hunger, or when My love yearns for a closer embrace, you shall find a safe and a delightful shelter under the shadow of My wings."

The one thought of this psalm is *deliverance*. "Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence;" and this single verse interprets all that follows; for all the dangers against which we are warned in the rest of the psalm may fall under one of these two divisions: they are either like the "the snare of the fowler" which may represent the perils that threaten the soul: or "the noisome pestilence" which may represent the dangers that threaten the body; and when the child of God is sheltered within His folded wings, no harm can come either to body or soul.

First, then, as to the security of the believer's *body*. "Surely he shall deliver thee from the noisome pestilence. . . . A thousand shall fall at thy side and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee." "But," you ask, "do not children of God suffer from disease? Are they not prostrated upon

beds of sickness, and do they not die like other men?" They do indeed, but notice the limitations suggested in this psalm: "Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see *the reward of the wicked.*" There are two aspects in which we may consider disease and bodily sufferings. On the one side it is obvious that these may represent Divine judgments on evil doing, and on the other side it is obvious that they may represent Divine discipline and correction for the children of God. It is not said that you shall escape such suffering as has to do with your discipline, with your education, with your perfection in the divine life; it is only said that whatever bodily ills represent the reward or the recompense of the wicked, and are, therefore, the judgments of God, abroad in the earth, that the inhabitants of the world may learn righteousness, you, as a child of God, shall escape when you dwell in the secret place of the most High.

How often, when God's scourges sweep over the earth, when awful epidemics of pestilence rage, do the children of God, especially those that are closely abiding with great confidence and fidelity in Him, seem marvellously to escape! Your departed pastor has often told how, in 1854, when he had been scarcely twelve months in this City, there raged in London a fearful epidemic of Asiatic cholera. With all his youthful vigour he plunged at once into the work of relieving the sick, the suffering, and the dying, and burying the dead, not sparing himself, with his proverbial unselfishness, until weary and worn with much work and much weeping, he came back from a funeral service, feeling as though he, himself, were a ready prey for this awful judgment and scourge of God. He was passing along Dover Street and he observed in the window of a shoemaker's shop a paper, wafered to the pane of glass, on which it was obvious that something was to be

found besides an advertisement. He stepped up and looked at it more closely, and he found there inscribed in large characters the ninth and tenth verses of the ninety-first Psalm: "Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation; there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling," and he said, "That was God's message to me. I at once took heart and from that moment I neither felt any fear of cholera myself, nor did I suffer any harm from repeated ministrations to the sick and dying."

When I was a lad in the City of New York, an awful scourge of cholera visited that city; and after the pestilence had departed it was remarked, by the pastor of the church of which I was a member, that, although hundreds and thousands within a short distance of the church had fallen under that terrific scourge, not one solitary church member of all that large communion had sickened or died. God does not assure you that any suffering that is essential to the maturing of your spiritual life and your education for service, you shall be spared, even though you be His child; but He does say to you that, if you are abiding in Him, such scourges and such judgments, as represent the recompense that God administers to wicked and rebellious souls, shall not come nigh you; and though a thousand fall at your side and ten thousand at your right hand, you shall go through such perils with safety. The pestilence that walks in the darkness, and the destruction that wastes at noonday shall not touch you; and you shall, not only be delivered from danger, but be without fear; "thou shalt not be *afraid* of the terror by night, nor the arrow that flieth by day."

We now turn to notice the second and more important part of this divine deliverance. "Surely he shall deliver

thee from the *snare of the fowler.*" "Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder; the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet." It would seem again that there is no mistaking what this means. There are here four conspicuous names or terms, "fowler," "lion," "adder," "dragon." You recognize at once four names appropriately applied, even in the Scriptures themselves, to the great Adversary of God and man. He is a fowler, on the one hand, that spreads his net to catch the feet of the unwary disciple and especially of the sinning soul.

"Satan the Fowler who betrays,
Unguarded souls a thousand ways."

He is the "roaring Lion who goes about seeking whom he may devour." He is the Adder, the subtle insinuating Serpent, that plants his venomous fangs in man. He is the Dragon out of whose mouth issues the fiery breath of blasphemy and profanity, and all forms of evil speech. And the blessed LORD says, if you will abide in Him, Satan shall neither take your feet in his snares as the deceiver, nor devour you as a roaring lion, nor plant his venomous fangs in you as a serpent, nor breathe his fiery breath on you as a dragon; in other words you will not only be free from all the recompense of the wicked, that comes in the form of judgments of God, that are abroad in the earth: but you shall find in God security against all the subtleties of the devil, all his destroying power, all his venomous poisons, all his blasphemous, and profane, and impure suggestions and accusations against Almighty God. Here is deliverance, deliverance from physical ills and ailments; deliverance from spiritual diseases and disobediences, because in God you have found your abiding place.

II. We turn now to the other side, and ask, what are the conditions of our entrance into such security?

We may still find the answer in this psalm. It will be found to indicate four great secrets of such serenity and security, and we may give them in the language of the psalm. "I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust." That is the first. The second is, "Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation." The third, "Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him." And the fourth, "Because he hath known my name." These are the four reasons given in the psalm for such abundant security in God.

First of all, "I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress." The power and force of this verse lies in that little word "MY." It is not he who says of the Lord, "He is *a* refuge and *a* fortress," or "He is *the believer's* refuge and fortress," or "He is *the church's* refuge and fortress." It is he who, with the personal power of an appropriating faith, says "The Lord is *MY* refuge," who enters this safe abiding place. Notice how the eighteenth Psalm begins: "I will love thee, O Lord, my strength: the Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower." There are nine "my's" in two verses. The power of the little word "MY" is that it puts me into personal relations with Jehovah: it claims Him as *my God*, just as much as though there were no other sinning, suffering, penitent, believing soul to put trust in the Lord God.

One of the greatest troubles or obstacles that we find in the way of Christian living is the hindrance of

a false humility ; we think that it savours of pride or self-confidence to take the living God as ours ; but the psalmist does not so consider it, and the Angel of God, and God himself, does not so regard it. I am to say of the Lord, boldly, "He is my refuge," just as though there were no other soul that needed to flee to Him for shelter ; and "my fortress" just as though there were no other soul that needed a stronghold : "He is my God, in him will I trust." God says, not only to believers, but to unbelievers, that to look up into the face of Jehovah and say from the heart, "MY GOD," is the beginning and the middle and the end of faith. To write your name in a promise and say, "That promise is mine and I claim it"—that is appropriating faith ; it is that which makes His truth your "shield and buckler," as this psalm indicates. There is the first condition : you get into the secret place of God by claiming God as yours. You leave all other believers out of the question ; for the moment you forget all about this dying world in the bonds of sin and perdition ; and you just come face to face with God and you look up to Him, and as though you singled out God to be your God, and believed that He singles you out to be His believing child, you say to Him, "Thou art my God and I am Thy disciple" ; and He says to you, "I am thy God." That is the first condition of entering into this divine security.

The second is, "Because *thou hast made* the Lord which is my refuge, even the most High, *thy habitation.*" You not only say "My God," but you declare this "God to be your habitation." "Habitation" differs from a place of *sojourn* in this : you may stop for a night in a place where you are sojourning, but you *dwell* in the place that you inhabit. In that first verse, the emphasis is on that word "*dwell*."

“He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High.” This psalm is not a message for every soul, it is not even a message for every believing soul, but only for such believing souls as continually abide in God. It is a most melancholy thing that not every believer does thus abide in God. Jesus says, “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you.” This implies that there are some believing children of God that do not thus abide in Christ, and in whom His words do not thus abide, and so their prayers have little power and little prevalence with Almighty God. The psalm tells us that the dear child of God that enjoys such security as this, is the believer that does not run to God for a refuge only in the time of some special temptation or danger ; who does not call on God only in the hour of sorrow and suffering, but whose *habitual place of abode is God* ; who by night is with God, who by day is with God, who in prosperity finds his very sunshine in his Father’s smile, who in adversity finds the light still breaking through the clouds in that Father’s smile ; the man who daily walks with God, not only on Sunday, to go down in the week into paths where God is forgotten ; not the man who reads a verse of Scripture in the morning, and offers a hasty prayer, and leaves the Word of God and prayer behind him to be absorbed through the rest of the day in secular employments and carnal pleasures. The believer who abides in Jehovah is the man who stands before God as Elijah did, waiting for God’s command, and walks with God as Enoch did, finding no fellowship so sweet as the companionship of the Lord.

The third condition is, “Because he hath *set his love upon Me.*” It is the deliberate fixing of the love on God that is the next condition of this abiding in God. There is a great

deal of misapprehension on the subject of love. Over and over again have I been met both by penitent sinners and believing saints with such a question as this : " I would like to love God more, but really I have little control over my affections, feelings and emotions. I cannot love any object more, simply because I will to do it." That is very largely true. Your feelings are not directly under your control. You cannot awaken more emotion because you think you ought to feel more, and cannot always directly arouse more affection because you think you ought to love more deeply. But did you ever notice that the Word of God does not treat love as an emotion or even as an affection? Love is there regarded as a *law* or *principle of life*. For instance, James says, " If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture : thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." He does not call this " the royal affection," or " the royal feeling," but the " royal LAW."

Paul, referring to this same thing in Galatians, says, " Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfil *the law of Christ*," and he is obviously referring to what Jesus said, " A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another." Now a commandment is a precept, and we voluntarily obey a commandment ; and so love is obedience. It is not simply a feeling, or an emotion, or a movement of sensibility, or even an out-going of affection ; love is a law of life. You may not be able to govern your feelings, but cannot you control your choice? When you think of two objects and you determine to which you will devote yourself, do you not make a choice between those two objects? If Mammon is on one side and God is on the other side, cannot you choose Mammon or choose God? Now if you choose Mammon you love Mammon ; if you choose God you

love God, and so the Apostle John says in his first Epistle, "And *this is the love of God; that we keep his commandments.*" And so, when this psalm says, "Because he hath *set his love upon Me*, therefore will I deliver him," it means that you are distinctly and definitely to set the choice of your life on God, that you are to endeavour in everything to obey Him; that this is to be the principle of your life, the governing law of your conversation and conduct. God hath spoken, I will obey; God hath called, I will follow.

"He hath set his love upon Me." You know when you set your love upon God, and you know when you set your love upon something else, because you know which way the obedience of your will and the choice of your whole nature leads. And so the apostle again, in the Epistle to the Colossians, says, "If ye then be risen with Christ *seek those things* which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." "*Set your affection* on things above, not on things on the earth." Here we have precisely the same thought. And again the psalmist says, "I have set the Lord always before me."

Let us therefore dismiss from our thoughts henceforth, the mistaken idea that love is treated in the Bible simply as a feeling, or an emotion, and let us settle ourselves upon this conviction that love is a law of life, a principle of conduct, distinctly chosen and followed in obedience to the Master; and thus shall we escape the subtle snare which the Fowler sets for unguarded feet; we shall stop looking inside of ourselves, and worrying over our love and affection because it is not so strong as it ought to be; and we shall, instead, look at our daily life, and mark which way the magnetic needle of our will turns; if it turns God-ward,

toward the great Polar-Star of the Universe, we need not give ourselves any concern as to whether or not our life is directed God-ward.

The fourth and last condition is this, "Because he hath *known My name.*" This is, at first glance, the most obscure of all these conditions, and yet, when rightly understood, it perhaps throws more light upon the subject than all the others. In this psalm there are found four names of Deity: the first is "most High"; the second, "the Almighty"; the third is "Lord," or Jehovah; and the last is "God." We may be always confident that, if we want the interpretation of any verse in the Bible, it is most surely found by searching the Bible itself; and so if you would know what is meant in this psalm by "*knowing His name,*" you would best compare scripture with scripture. The word "Because" is here conspicuous. "*Because* he hath set his love upon Me." "*Because* he hath known My name." "*Because* thou hast made the Lord thy habitation." This word, "because," assigns a reason: *therefore* it is possible for God to be to you all that He says He will be to a believer.

What is it, then, to *know God's name*? Think of the four names revealed here. The name of God represents His character, as my name represents me and distinguishes me from other men; I am known by my name; my name attaches itself to me, and wherever I go identifies me. So God's name stands for God. You never saw Him, looked in His face, or heard His voice, or felt His touch; and there is no way to know God except as you know Him by His *name*, or become acquainted with His character. In these four names, therefore, we have here a fourfold aspect of the divine character: MOST HIGH, ALMIGHTY, JEHOVAH, GOD.

How do you know Him as the Most High? That which

is "most high" is lifted up above all else. The lower down we are the more perishable everything is. The grass under your foot in the summer is one of the frailest things in nature; it grows and blooms to-day, it withers and decays to-morrow. You ascend a little higher and you find the trees that last not only for one season but many seasons, till you come to great trees like the Sequoia Gigantea in the Californian forests, that have been standing for 3,000 or 3,500 years, but even these decay and fall by-and-by. You rise above the level of the trees, and come to the hills that last for ages, though they are worn away by rains and snows, and are shaken by storms and upheaved by earthquakes until sometimes they disappear altogether as hills and become the beds of lakes. You mount still above the hills, and there are what are called in the Bible "everlasting mountains" that have stood ever since the world began. You soar above the mountains, and you come to the planets that are constantly changing their places in the sky as they move around the sun in their annual journeys; but far beyond the planets stand the "*fixed* stars," that never have changed their place since time began. So you see that, the farther up you go, the nearer you come to that which does not change, and beyond all these is He who is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." Do you know the name of God as the Most High? He is the unchanging God and the unchanging friend of His people, Who when He says a thing means it and stands by it; when He takes an attitude towards a child of God always preserves that attitude; when He is reconciled is for ever reconciled. Then you have learned what the "Most High" means, the unchanging helper, friend and refuge of a believing soul.

The name "ALMIGHTY" simply means that He who is

“Most High” in His unchanging eternity, is most *Mighty in His power*. So that, if you understand this name of God, you know that there is no time in your life, no place in your history, no need of your soul or body, that God cannot meet. A thousand foes may be around you, all men may array themselves against you, but it makes no difference; the All-powerful God is your friend, and beneath His Almightyness you take shelter. Do you know that name of God? If so, then you understand God’s power and know that almighty is on your side, and if He is for you none can be against you and succeed. A man might as well lift up his arm and try to stop the planets in their courses round the sun, or hurl the sun out of the heavens, as to interfere with the plans of God. If, therefore, you are sheltered under God, the arrow from the enemy’s bow must pierce His wings before it reaches you!

Do you understand the name of Lord, or Jehovah? Jehovah is the name of the God of Covenant. The only thing that gives you a right to claim the Most High as yours, or the Almighty as yours, is that you have first claimed Jehovah as yours by the blood of the Covenant which Christ sealed with His own life. You must first be able to say, “I come in Christ, I come to enter into covenant relations by the blood-stained door; I come taking God to be my God, through the sacrifice made for me by His dearly beloved Son, my brother in the flesh, but the Son of God, by the power of the Holy Spirit and the participation of Divine nature.” Do you understand what it is to say “Jehovah, my Jehovah”? Then you have come to know it, only by covenant relations with God in Christ.

Finally, do you know what it is to say “MY GOD”? I have been searching in this psalm to see what new thought

it is that would be added when we came to consider this fourth name of "God." The key seems to me to be given in the verse where we read that name, "my God, *in Him will I trust.*" Now, what is trust? Trust is confidence in truth. You see it in the word, "trust." Did you ever ask yourself where the word "trust" came from? Look at it closely, *true, truer, truest*—trust. Leave out the "e" in "truest," and you have "trust." What is "trust" but *confidence in truth.* What is the highest trust but confidence in the *truest Being* in the universe? He who, as "Most High," never changes; Who, as Almighty, possesses power which none can resist; Who, as the Jehovah of the Covenant, becomes mine in Christ, He is the Truest of all beings, the God of Truth. Truth is the foundation of His character, truth is the secret of His Word, truth is the bed-rock of His promises. If therefore, you who believe in Him as the eternal unchangeable God, and the all-powerful God, and the God of the Covenant, believe in Him as the infinitely True,—that whatever He saith to you He means, that you can take every word of His promise to build upon it as a sure rock of foundation; if therefore, you have fastened and girded His truth around you as a "buckler," and held it up before you as a "shield," then you know the four names by which He reveals Himself: the "MOST HIGH," the "ALMIGHTY," the "JEHOVAH," the "GOD" of all truth.

I feel ashamed of my own incompetency to deal with one of the greatest themes that has ever come to me through a ministry of thirty years. In the study of this subject I have felt my mind overpowered and overwhelmed, and have asked for special grace to bring to you this message from the Lord your God.

In conclusion, I ask your reverent and thoughtful

attention, first to the fact that such privileges as these are the portion of every man and woman that fulfils the conditions laid down in the psalm. If you are willing to set your love on God as the one object of your obedience, to appropriate all there is in God as your own by faith; if you are willing to trust on every word of His promise, and study to know Him in all the aspects of His wonderful character, as "the same yesterday, to-day and for ever," the All-powerful, the God of the Covenant, and the Truest of all beings; if you are ready to call on Him in the secret place and give Him the chance to show you that He is there, and that He is your friend; and if, with all this, you do not simply run to God in times of danger and special need, but constantly abide under the shadow of His wings, you shall find Him your security against physical judgments and against all the powers of the Adversary of your soul.

I am seeking to bring out of this great congregation at least a few believers who will dare to appropriate all there is in God, and consecrate themselves entirely, spirit, soul and body, property and family and influence, to His service and glory. Malachi hints that God is "weary" of professing disciples that are so mixed up with the world that you cannot tell the difference between them and the children of Mammon; and what God yearns for in these days of a secularized church, split up into factions, and pervaded with the venomous influence of scepticism and infidelity, is, at least, a few souls, if only few there be, who believe the Bible and the whole Bible, who take Christ and the whole Christ, who believe in the Holy Spirit as a Person, resident in the Church and in the believer, who know the secret of prayer in the secret place, who understand the names of God because they have had experience of His own abiding in

them, and who defy all the powers of man and all the enmity and malignity of the devil in their persistent, wholesome, unswerving fidelity to Him that bought them with His own blood. It is to such heights of holy living that, if need be, as with dying breath, I would call my fellow-disciples, beckoning them up to these lofty summits to which few attain, but upon which, even while on earth, we find the days of heaven brought down in advance and foretaste.

One word to the unbelieving portion of this audience—one solemn word. There is no possibility of getting into that secret place with God, except you pass through the blood-stained doors. It is not by a mere worldly morality or nominal piety, that leaves out Christ, that this Refuge and Stronghold in God is entered, but like the Holy of Holies, only through the "rent veil," the Saviour's flesh. And if there be one of you that is willing to take the bunch of hyssop and dip it in the blood of the basin, and sprinkle the blood on the lintel and on the door-posts, and then humbly hide behind the blood, the Angel of Death and Judgment that passes through in retribution, will pass over you and you shall be absolutely safe. But apart from the blood there is no safety, and apart from the blood-stained doorway there is no entrance into this secure place, where, under the shadow of the wings of God, warmed by His heart and protected by His love, you shall for evermore abide !

THE PRESENT REST OF
BELIEVERS.

SERMON V.

THE PRESENT REST OF BELIEVERS.

“For we which have believed do enter into rest.”—HEBREWS iv. 3.

IN the ninth and tenth verses of the same chapter we further read: “There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from His.” The emphasis of this whole passage is therefore on the present rest of God’s saints, another of the high privileges to which God invites believers.

The greatest work of John Bunyan, and perhaps the greatest religious book except the Bible, that was ever given to men, we call *The Pilgrim’s Progress*. But there is in the Bible itself a “Pilgrim’s Progress” that was written long before John Bunyan was in Bedford Gaol. It is the account, begun in the Book of Exodus and concluded in the book of Joshua, of the pilgrimage of God’s people from the borders of Egypt into the Holy Land of Canaan. We cannot read this history of the wanderings of the Israelites without saying, with Paul, “which things are an allegory.”

It is quite plain to the attentive student of the Word of God that there is back of the simple historical narrative a meaning that can be explained only by spiritual things. And this is one of the most remarkable allegories that has ever been written for man's learning : it is a parable throughout. The history we are very far from questioning as actual history ; we simply intimate that beneath the history there lies the allegory. There is Egypt with its bondage, with its darkness, with its plagues, with its sins, with its judgments ; there is the blood-sprinkled doorway with the Israelite hiding behind its shelter ; there is the deliberate leaving of Egypt, and the crossing of the Red Sea ; there is the wilderness journey with the law given at Sinai, and the pillar of cloud going before God's people ; there is the Kadesh Barnea on the borders of the Holy Land with the steps that were taken backward toward Egypt, and the long forty years of journeying ; there is the crossing of Jordan, and the occupation and conquest of Canaan. And who cannot see in all this a higher spiritual meaning ? Egypt is the world with its bondage to sin and to Satan ; the blood-sprinkled doorway is the atonement of Jesus Christ, with the security from the judgments of God accorded to the believer ; the crossing of the Red Sea may represent justification, passing away from Egypt and beginning the new life under the leadership of God ; the wilderness journey may represent the uncertain and the unsettled course of those that are disciples, but have not learned the fulness of their privileges ; and the crossing of Jordan may represent the disciple coming into the possession of his present privileges, realizing the rest that is given to him in Christ and by the Spirit even in this world. There is a mischievous notion that has found its way into the Church of God, and sometimes even into our hymns,

that Canaan represents heaven, and Jordan represents death; and so we read such verses as this :—

“On Jordan’s stormy banks I stand,
And cast a wishful eye,
To Canaan’s fair and happy land,
Where my possessions lie.”

Well, I thank God our heavenly possessions do *not* lie in such a Canaan. Palestine was a very poor type of heaven, was it not? Canaan was a land of enemies, and wars, and conquests, and conflicts, and by-and-by of fatal and awful apostasy of the people of God from His worship; a very poor type of heaven, where there are no conflicts because all conquests are past; where there are no possible sins and no possible snares; where the people of God shall never depart from the knowledge of His ways or cease from a perfect worship and service. Jordan is never treated in the Bible as the emblem of death, and Canaan is never treated as the symbol of heaven. Jordan should be crossed in this life, and Canaan is the type of privileges into which the disciple may enter here, and which are a foretaste and foreshadowing of privileges that lie in the ideal land of promise far beyond. We shall consider then, the present rest into which believers may enter in this world, the foretaste of heaven anticipated upon earth, imperfect but still far more complete than most of the experiences that Christian disciples actually enjoy.

We shall ask two questions, and seek, by God’s grace, to answer them from His Word: First, What is this rest? and secondly, How shall it be entered?

First, What is this rest? A present rest. Suppose we take this wilderness experience as the illustration of the theme. We have already seen in the reading of the Holy

Scripture that "My rest," to which here Jehovah refers, was the rest of Canaan, the land of promise, that the Jesus referred to here is the Joshua that led the children of Israel after the death of Moses, and, as Moses had led them over the Red Sea, led them over the Jordan. So that we shall find, in the passage of the children of Israel over the Jordan into the land of Canaan, a very complete illustration of the Christian disciple's entrance into the rest that God gives him in this life.

For instance, this rest which God offers the disciple is a rest from *wandering*. When these Israelites crossed the Jordan into the land of Canaan they ceased to wander, and entered upon a settled and permanent habitation. They had been moving about in tents; pitching their tents to-day and striking them to-morrow; staying a few months, it may be a few years, in one locality, and then, as the Pillar of Cloud might go forward or backward, advancing towards the Holy Land or going back again towards Egypt. That life in the wilderness was unsettled, and uncertain, and unsatisfying. They hungered and they thirsted, they were weary and worn, they went over hot desert-sands under dry skies that withheld moisture, they fought enemies, they suffered defeats, they passed through plagues and pestilences, and all manner of evils; but just as soon as they crossed the Jordan and came into the land that God had given them for a possession, the tents were laid aside, and settled habitations were built; the tabernacle of God ceased to be, and the temple was erected in its place. God says to you, who believe in Jesus Christ, that it is your privilege to stop a life of wandering, to get out of your unsettled, and uncertain, and unsatisfying experiences into a settled, a certain, a satisfying life. You are harassed with doubts,

it is God's will that you should have assurance ; you are burdened with discontent, it is God's will that you should be content ; you hunger and thirst, it is His will that should be filled ; you are tired of a tent life, it is His will that you should have a house, and that you should have, near by His temple, the place of your abode. That is the first element of rest : that wandering should cease, that you should come into something certain, and satisfying, and settled, and comparatively permanent.

Then, again, when these children of Israel crossed the Jordan they got *out of the wilderness* into a favoured land. They had been across the desert sands which yielded no crops, and where it was not worth while to sow. They may, here and there, in some comparative oasis, have raised some harvests for a time, but for the most part they had been over sterile desert tracts ; had wandered in a wilderness way where no man was, where there were no springs of water, and no green and fair and fragrant meadows. But when they went across the Jordan they went into the garden of the Lord. Palestine, in those days, was one of the most fertile, one of the most beautiful, and one of the most attractive sections on the surface of the earth. Its hills teemed with harvests and had oliveyards, vineyards, and orchards ; the early and the latter rains were God's benediction upon their crops, and those crops did not fail. And when they went up to worship God in the temple and left their homes comparatively without protection, God, according to promise, watched over their harvest fields, and their homes, and no enemy was ever permitted successfully to invade Palestine, to destroy the fruits of their ground at such seasons, until after they crucified the Lord of Glory. So God says to you,—“ You have been in the wilderness, you have been journeying through desert-sands, you have been

where there were no crops and harvests, where you had not abundance, but a sterile land, an unfertile soil. Come out of the desert and go into the garden; get out of the barren sands and come to the fertile hills; your past life has brought forth no fruit to God: come where you shall have abundance to repay you for your sowing, and where the Lord's benediction of early and latter rain shall cause your seed to spring up and bear abundant fruit in the salvation of souls, and the glory of His dear name. So there is a second element in this rest,—it is the rest of service; it is the rest of a fertile, and beautiful, and useful life, over against a life that has comparatively wasted its powers and resources, and energies, in a half-and-half obedience, and unfruitful, half-hearted attempts at serving.

Then, again, when the children of Israel passed over the Jordan, into the Holy Land, they got rid of what may be called a certain *weariness* of their desert experiences. Perhaps you think it strange that we should speak of people as being weary of doing nothing. Yet, no doubt, a human soul becomes more weary of doing nothing than of most diligent working for God. There is nothing so absolutely wearying as an idle life, an aimless life, a life without a purpose, without any definite end before it, any definite object toward which to press. The young man who is the heir to property, and with it the heir to laziness, the spendthrift who has nothing to do in this world but to enjoy himself, to waste in pleasure what his father has accumulated, who goes about aimless and purposeless, must be a very weary man. I like to see a human soul get thrilled with a purpose! a life that has been like a trumpet hanging up on the walls of society—silent, getting rusty, losing lustre and even musical power, and that some warrior comes

forth and seizes, and puts to his lips, and blows a blast through it. Blessed be God when He takes some idle and aimless and purposeless life, and, by the breath of His Spirit, turns the old rusty trumpet into a clarion that sounds the peal for advance. Here was a people that, all through this wilderness journey, had been aimless. They had had no definite object before them, they had been consulting their own pleasure, the gratification of their appetites, feeding themselves to satiety with quails, trying to be contented with the manna that fell, having nothing before them but each day's endurance of privation, of labour, of the weariness of their march. But, when they came into the land of Canaan, they had a definite object. The land was full of enemies, of Canaanites to be driven out, of Anakim, the giant sons of Anak, that had to be dispossessed and driven back with their chariots of iron; and the Lord set Canaan before them, with its fair hills and verdant valleys and limpid streams and charming woodlands, and all its attractions and resources, and said, "Go, and take possession, build your houses, build My temple; I will dwell in the midst of you, and you shall be My people; and I will be your God." That is what He says to you to-day, that have been living an aimless and purposeless life, and are weary of the very life you have been leading, because it has had nothing of the blast of the breath of God through its old rusty trumpet!

Then, once more, these children of Israel, when they went over Jordan, forsook a life of *backward movement* for a life of forward movement. There is a little phrase in the previous chapter which very few people have ever thought about: "As in the *day of provocation*." What is that? If you turn to the fourteenth chapter of Numbers,

second to fourth verses, you will find out what the provocation was. When the people murmured against Moses and Aaron, and said, "Why hast thou brought us out of Egypt to die in this land?" When they threatened, as they often did, to go back into Egypt, and even to make another captain that should lead them back into the bondage of slavery and the misery of their Egyptian life, they cared more for the leeks, and onions, and garlics, and cucumbers, of Egypt, than they did for the presence of God, in the wilderness journey with His tabernacle and pillar of fire. When they entered the land of promise they began to make an onward advance and stop their retrograde movements. May it not be said, on the basis of the Word of God, with entire reverence, that there is nothing that is such a *provocation* to the Lord of grace and glory as that, when disciples have tasted of His Spirit, of the powers of the world to come, and of the good Word of God, they should turn back again to a worldly life, and desire the leeks, and garlics, and onions, and cucumbers, of Egypt? caring more for a worldly bill of fare than for the dainties that God sets on the banquet table beneath the banner of His love. How many of us, since we crossed the Red Sea and became children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, have been continually tempting, grieving, and provoking God, by our worldly appetites asserting themselves, and by a willingness at times to go back again into the bondage of sin, and slavery, and misery, in the world we have forsaken! Sinners no doubt provoke Him, tempt Him, grieve Him; but scarcely more than backsliding children of God provoke Him, tempt Him, grieve Him. When you have found out Christ, to go back from Christ; when you have tasted the glory of grace, to go back to law and, worse still, to con-

demnation under sin ; when you have looked into the riches of the Word of God, to absorb yourselves in man's poor productions, as though the Word of God were of no value : what a provocation that must be to Almighty God ! God says to you, " Come out, come out of this wandering of yours into a settled, certain, and satisfying life ; leave the desert for the garden ; leave the sterile life you have been leading, for a fertile life of usefulness and service ; stop your weary aimlessness, and idleness, and shiftlessness, and laziness, and come into work, and war, and conquest, for God ; and leave your waywardness, your backward movements, your longings for past and forsaken things, and move straight on and forward into a higher and holier, and more beautiful, and more consistent, Christian demeanour and character." That, it seems to me, is the rest that remains now for the disciple, and which the passage of the Israelites over the Jordan represents in type—the present privilege of a believer.

The second question is, How do we enter into this rest ? Though that question has been already partially answered, let us give it a candid and careful answer now. I think it will be found that this passage of Scripture indicates to us what the method is by which we enter into this most blessed rest.

First of all, we enter it by BELIEVING : " For we which have believed do enter into rest." Faith is the beginning, middle and end of all holy living. Every successive step in the upward and onward progress of the disciple, is a step in newness of faith, in more cordial and complete belief, in more absolute confidence in the Word of the living God. " We which have believed do enter into rest." I have already referred to the " provocation " to which we have subjected God. And how is it that we have provoked Him ? By

unbelief; and the whole passage, of which the text is part, emphasizes the hardening power of unbelief. "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. For some, when they had heard, did provoke." There is nothing that hardens a human heart like unbelief. The rejection of the testimony of God, turning away from Christ as a Saviour, turning away from the Holy Ghost as a Sanctifier, turning away from the Word of God as a guide, that is unbelief. Notice the difference between unbelief and disbelief. Disbelief is denial, disbelief is dispute, disbelief is rejection of a thing as truth. But unbelief may entirely consist with a state of mind in which there is no real disbelief or disposition to deny the truth of the Gospel or the reality of Christ's work. If I shut out that gospel and that work from possessing and controlling my life—that is unbelief, which is thus very different from disbelief.

There are a great many who think they will be saved because they do not dispute the truths of the Gospel or the reality of the life and death, the resurrection and ascension of Christ. But one may be a believer in one sense, and an unbeliever in another sense. The devil believes and trembles. The devil is an unbeliever of the worst sort; but the devil is not a disbeliever. He believes, for he dares not deny; but he has no faith; he has no reception of Christ; he knows no taking in of the great truths of salvation, for his own personal uplifting. Yes, there is nothing that petrifies the heart like unbelief. Even disbelief hardens the heart less rapidly, for a man may have been brought up in certain circumstances, in which he is surrounded by an atmosphere of scepticism; his father was a disbeliever and an infidel, and he has always breathed the air of infidelity. Such a man is not as much hardened by disbelief as another is hardened by unbelief,

who dares not deny the truth of the Word of God, and yet shuts out that Word in its power, and hinders its transforming influence in his own heart.

As unbelief hardens, so faith softens. Just as soon as you believe Jesus, your heart at once turns from a heart of stone to a heart of flesh. The heart upon which no impression could be made before, becomes a heart keenly sensitive to touch, now. The heart that before had no throb, pulses now with life; the heart that before had no feeling, is full of feeling that responds to God's appeal; and every time you take a step in advance in believing, in more fully believing, in more cordial, in more absolute belief, the more tender and soft and responsive your heart becomes; until, like an ear that was once half deaf, but is now keenly sensitive to every sound, or like an eye that was before half blind and only saw men as trees walking, but now sees everything clearly; every new step in faith makes the heart softer, makes it more responsive, makes it more receptive to the influences of God.

A second thing which helps us to enter this rest is, *ceasing from our own works*. Notice the tenth verse of this fourth chapter, "He that is entered" (that is, has already entered) "into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from His." Now what was the first rest of which we read in the Bible? It was the rest of the original Sabbath. When God had completed the works from the foundation of the world then He set apart the seventh day for rest, and He ceased from His own works. And so we find that rest has always in the Bible been linked with, and never more can be separated from, Sabbath keeping. Sabbath keeping, what is it with us? It is ceasing from our own works. You were busy at your trade yesterday, or

profession, or whatever be your calling. You laid it aside and you came up to the House of the Lord this morning, not to handle the tools or implements of your trade or calling during the Lord's-day; you have excluded worldly pursuits, you have banished business affairs from your mind; you have left sealed your secular letters as you have shut up your secular warehouse, and you took the Word of God and read it, and besought God in prayer to give you His personal presence and blessing, and came up for worship here where only God is acknowledged, His Word magnified, and His Spirit besought. You have ceased from your own works in order that you should keep the Sabbath. If, while you are here, you are meditating business schemes, studying about what you shall say in answer to letters that you have received—if you are opening your mind to things outside of the limits which God has set to guard His day of rest, and doing it voluntarily, you are not keeping the Sabbath; you have not ceased from your own works. So the rest that is in store for God's people, and which He invites them to enter, is a rest in which, in three senses, they cease from their own works.

First, *sinful* works. If there is anything you have been doing that you know to be a sin, or any duty that you have been neglecting that you understand to be a duty, you never can enter into this rest of God till that sin is abandoned and that duty is taken up. There can be no rest in a soul where voluntary sin still exists, or where there is voluntary non-performance of duty. How important this is! To enter into God's rest, that is just before you to be possessed by you, put away your sinful works. If there has been a lie that you have been telling, acknowledge that lie, confess it, forsake it. If there has been a slander that you have circu-

lated about one of your brethren, acknowledge it before God, and go and acknowledge it to your brother. If there has been a disposition that you have been cherishing that has been malignant, malicious, uncharitable, unkind, forsake it, and ask that the spirit of love may possess you. If there has been any neglect of the Word of God, of prayer, of Christian fellowship, of the ordinances of the sanctuary—if there is any act you ought to have performed that you have not performed, or if you have performed any act that you ought not to have performed, you must cease from your sinful works; that is the only way to enter into rest. Any other rest than the rest of voluntary abandonment of sin is deceptive, delusive and utterly false.

Then you must cease from your own *legal* works, that is cease relying on the law; you must rely on grace. Remember that while Moses led the children of Israel across the Red Sea, he could not lead them into the promised land; it was Joshua that led them into the land of promise. Moses represented Law, Joshua represented Jesus, or Grace. If you turn back to the works of the law you can never have the rest that is in God. Ah! many of us—I trust very many of us—know what it is to stop resting upon our own works for justification, and know what it is to fall back on what Jesus has done for us, and say, “Dear Lord, henceforth this is the rock on which I build; my strength, my righteousness, is found only in Jesus.”

Then you must cease from your own *selfish* works. If you are doing something for self-gratification, for self-advancement; if you are living in this world to gather riches, to get pleasure to yourself, to get fame for yourself, to gratify your ambition, to mount to some elevated point of influence and power among men; as long as you are

seeking your self-interest you never will have rest. There is nothing so restless as a selfish man, and the very gratifications that he gathers to himself only make him more restless.

Then, again, we must not only cease from our own works, but we must take a *definite step of consecration*. That is a much-abused word, and has become very offensive in the ears of some devout and earnest disciples, because it has been used so much in the interests of cant and rant and offensive forms of pietism. But there is a true consecration that we never ought to lose sight of, because of false types of consecration that we hear of and see round about us. What is consecration? It is made up of two words, and it means to set apart wholly unto the Lord our God; as when the Tabernacle was completed, Aaron took the gold, the silver and the brazen vessels, the tongs, the snuffers and all that pertained to the slightest matters connected with the Tabernacle; he gathered them all together and poured the holy oil upon them; he consecrated them to God. And God will never give a disciple the rest unto which the child of God is invited if he does not cross the Jordan of a new consecration. Half a life for God brings no rest to anybody; it is a tiresome life, it is an unsatisfying life. You cannot mix oil with water; you cannot mingle light and darkness; you cannot wed Christ and Belial. There must be a whole heart for God, or there can be nothing known of the rest into which God invites you.

The Jordan, in my judgment, stands for that consecration fully to God as the Red Sea stands for conversion, passing from Egypt into a life of dependence upon Jesus. There is a great deal of difference between acceptance of Christ as my Saviour, and acceptance of Christ as my Master; a great deal of difference between taking Christ as my

Redeemer to save me from hell and lift me to heaven, and taking Christ as my Sovereign to rule over me, to reign in me, to direct my conduct, to govern my thoughts, to give an end to my purposes, and to control my life. May God's grace help each one of us to comprehend what blessings come to a child of God who simply takes his Redeemer and his Saviour to be also his Ruler and his Sovereign. You should ask Jesus what His will is concerning your life and what work He would have you to do, what of your present activities He would have you forsake or diminish because they are worldly and selfish, and what new forms of service for Him He would have you assume in His dear name; how, when you have sought to sanctify your family altar, you may sanctify the counter in your business shop; how, when you have sought to sanctify yourself at the Lord's table, you may sanctify yourself at your own family table; how, when you have sought to give one day in seven wholly unto the Lord, you may keep every day holy unto the Lord, so that, in a sense, every day should be a Sabbath of rest; so that you should go to your place of business to-morrow morning as truly to transact business for God as when you come to the Lord's supper to-day to take the bread and the cup in His dear name; so that, as you sanctify the Sabbath day wholly unto His service, you should seek to pervade all your daily life with the conscious presence of your Master; so that He shall be a partner in your daily business, a sharer of its profits, and the constant companion of your daily walk.

If you would see what a difference there is between a man before he crosses that Jordan and after, look at Peter as a single example. There he was, a child of God—no one dares to doubt it—but he was in the wilderness; he was

moving up towards to the land of rest, and then going downward and backsliding from his Master ; and when he met the maid and she said, "Thou wert also with Him," he said, "I know Him not," and, when afterwards, again and again, he was accused of being one of the company of which Jesus was the head, he denied with curses and with oaths. That was when he was in the wilderness, a wanderer, a wayward man, without his impulses and his purposes being yet firmly fixed on Jesus. But he crossed the Jordan in that baptism of tears and prayers after Jesus looked upon him, and especially when the Holy Ghost came down in a mighty flood, and he trod, as it were, through the very midst of that flood and reached the other side. Peter was now a new man, and we hear him on the day of Pentecost preaching a sermon for Christ, the immediate result of which was three thousand converts. And we find this same man that shrank from the sight of the maid in the garden and the courts of the High Priest, actually confronting the great Sanhedrim, the supreme council of the Jewish nation, and when they threatened him with scourging, and intimated even death as the possible result of his fidelity to Christ, he calmly said, "We ought to obey God rather than men." And he went forth rejoicing to be counted worthy to suffer shame for his Master's sake. Ah, there is a world of difference between Peter in the desert, and in the Lord's garden ; in the wilderness, and in the Land of Canaan ; between Peter sighing and longing for the leeks and onions of Egypt, and Peter sighing and longing to be a sharer in the sufferings and the glory of his Lord Jesus.

When Paul went to Ephesus he found twelve disciples there, who had not received the Holy Ghost since they believed ; they had gone over the Red Sea, but they had

not gone over the Jordan; and he asked them carefully about their experience, and found that they knew only the baptism of John, a baptism unto repentance; then he taught them the fuller things of Jesus, and they were baptized again in His name, and down upon them came the same Spirit as at Pentecost in Jerusalem, and they began to prophesy and speak with tongues. Have you known the Spirit of God since you believed? Have you got any further than the baptism of John, which was unto repentance? Have you known what the fulness of the Holy Ghost is? If you have not, I beseech you come to God, and ask that your share in Pentecostal blessings may be bestowed upon you this day, that your tongue may be anointed for His service, and your whole soul animated and stimulated and cheered by His presence.

Let me add two very brief applications of these truths. First, a word to disciples. Just before they crossed the river, Joshua said, "Prepare you victuals, for within three days ye shall pass over Jordan." The Lord comes to you and says, "Prepare to cross this Jordan, for within three days you may enter this rest of God." Nay, more, within three minutes you might enter this rest if the obstacles were removed out of God's way, and your feet dared to cross the river Jordan. Think how these children of Israel came out of Egypt, and moved on to Kadesh Barnea, within, probably, less than three days of Canaan; and, from that point on the very borders of the Holy Land they went back, to and fro, through the wilderness for forty years; because of unbelief, because of disobedience, because of the provocation of their hard hearts, God sent them to wander to and fro, almost, in sight of the hills of Palestine. You have been wandering, some of you, forty years in the wilderness. When you first

accepted Jesus Christ, and moved, under the impulses of your new life, onward toward the rest of God, you came to your Kadesh Barnea, and, perhaps, you got a few bunches of grapes from Eshcol to indicate to you what was the glory of the rest that God set before you. But your wayward and disobedient hearts backslid from God, and you have been wandering all these long years in the wilderness. But the Lord says to you to-day, within three days ye may pass over Jordan." And how many of you are ready to pass over? If God should see to-day, not a show of hands but a show of hearts—if in this great congregation some people that have been wandering from God in an unsettled and uncertain life of doubt and difficulty and almost despair, backsliding from God, loving the leeks and onions, looking back towards their life of slavery and misery, dismayed by their adversaries, having no courage for God, no aim for God, the old rusty trumpet still on the wall, and the Holy Ghost never having pulsed His breath through it—what if God should see in this great congregation to-day many hearts opening their doors to Him, and saying, "Come, blessed Lord, lead me over this Jordan, I will undertake a consecrated life for the service of my Master," what tremendous issues might hang on such consecration.

There are some of you, that are not even yet out of Egypt. You are in the land of plagues and darkness, you are in danger from the angel of judgment, and have not even taken refuge behind the blood-stained door-way; the Red Sea of justification is yet to be crossed, as well as the wilderness and the Jordan. What shall I say to you? I can only entreat you this very moment to begin your departure from the land of slavery, and poverty, and misery; come to the Red Sea, the blood of Jesus Christ,

and pass over and begin your pilgrimage with God. The year 1892 is almost at its close ; a few Sabbaths more and it will be numbered with the everlasting past, and it is quite possible that some of you that have heard the Gospel preached here for some years, and have hardened your hearts, like Pharaoh, in disobedience to God, may, before the close of this year, be given up by God, as Pharaoh was, to the visitation of final judgment. I beseech you, believe in Jesus Christ to-day, no longer harden your hearts, and enter, by fulness of faith, into fulness of blessing for Jesus' sake.

THE CHRISTIAN'S CROWN-JEWELS.

SERMON VI.

THE CHRISTIAN'S CROWN-JEWELS.

“Unto you therefore which believe he is precious.”—1 PETER ii. 7.

WE shall now have a glimpse of the crown jewels of the Christian. Peter uses one adjective frequently and conspicuously, viz., the word “*precious*.” Seven times this word is found in these two epistles, and once we meet the same thought in other words—“of great price.”

Let us first get these seven texts before us :—

Chapter i. 7.—“The trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth,” etc.

Chapter i. 19.—“But with the precious blood of Christ”

Chapter ii. 4.—“A living stone . . . chosen of God, and precious.”

Chapter ii. 6.—“A chief corner-stone, elect, precious.”

Chapter ii. 7.—“Unto you therefore which believe He is precious.”

Chapter iii. 4.—“The ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price,” that is, very precious.

Second epistle, chapter i. 1.—“Like-precious faith with us.”

And, last of all—

Chapter i. 4.—“ Exceeding great and precious promises.”

The text, “ Unto you therefore which believe He is precious,” differs from the rest, for, in the original, we find not an adjective but a *noun*—“ Unto you therefore which believe he is THE PRECIOUS ONE,” or, “ THE PRECIOUSNESS,” *i.e.*, the one object of inestimable value. Among all this cluster of precious thing *one stands central*, that is, *Jesus*; and if these are crown-jewels in the diadem of the disciple, there is one jewel whose brilliance outshines all the rest—The Pearl of Great Price.

The text furthermore suggests, that all the precious things that belong to the child of God cluster about Him. They only serve to show us the different characters, or the relations, which Christ sustains to the disciple, the various sides and angles of this one priceless Crown-Jewel !

I. In the experience of disciples, first of all we come to the “ *precious Blood* ” which is the price of our redemption. Jesus Christ finds us slaves to the law and its penalty, to sin, guilt, and condemnation ; and the first thing He does is, to deliver the slave and captive. There was only one ransom sufficient for the slave, whose life was forfeited by sin, and that was to give another life for that forfeited life ; and, because “ the Blood is the Life,” Christ’s Blood was shed ; for the giving of His Blood was the giving of His life. “ He gave His life for us.” No other ransom would redeem the slave ; no other price would satisfy the demands of a broken law, would expiate the guilt of sin, would answer to the penalty of evil-doing ; and so this precious Paschal Lamb of God was slain for us, and his blood was sprinkled on the side-posts, and the upper door-posts of the house, that we might hide behind the blood-stained doorway. A wonderful

Ransom that was ! It not only delivered us from the bondage of the law and penalty, but from the power and dominion of sin ; it freed the slave, and made him a son ; it redeemed the victim and criminal, and set him in the high places of the family of God, reconciled and restored. So Jesus Christ is precious, first, because of the precious Blood He shed ; the first aspect of his " preciousness " is that which He presents as the Redeemer of sinful souls, who restores and reconciles us to God, and sets the slave in the household as a son and heir.

II. The second aspect of this preciousness of Christ is that He becomes the *chief corner-stone*. For, it is not enough for the slave to be redeemed, for the penalty of sin to be put away—beyond pardon, forgiveness, reconciliation, there must be the building up of holy character into the image of God. And so every redeemed slave that becomes a son of God is built up into the likeness of the Father. Every builder needs first a foundation and a corner-stone. " Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." There is no necessity for another corner-stone, for here is Christ, scoffed at and scorned by unbelievers, but the chosen, chief and only corner-stone, the *living* corner-stone. Deliverance from sin is not complete until you are made pure, for it is only " the pure in heart that shall see God." You must, as a new-born babe, feed on the sincere milk of the Word until you grow thereby and become a man, able to feed on the strong meat which alone befits a strong man, and develops him into his full stature and strength.

There is a peculiar expression found in connection with this corner-stone ; sometimes it is called, as by the old prophets, the head-stone of the corner, (Ps. 118 : 22, etc.) *i.e.* the chief corner-stone, or the stone of the angle. The head-stone

is manifestly not the corner-stone ; it is the stone laid on the top and not at the bottom of an edifice ; and the chief stone of the corner may refer as well to the chief stone of the *upper* corner as of the *lower* corner of the structure. If the figure be that of a pyramid, there is a corner-stone whose angles determine all the lines of the pyramid, and there is another head-stone of the corner which is laid on the apex of the pyramid to complete it. Possibly these mysterious expressions of Scripture refer to both. Jesus Christ is the corner-stone, laid beneath our character and life, but He is also the head-stone, laid at the apex of our life to complete and finish it. He is "the author and finisher of our faith, that is, He begins it and He completes it.

In the ancient Olympic games, the *stadium* was an ellipse or circle, and the starting point was also the goal ; instead of running from one end of the race-course to another, in a straight line, the racer passed round the curve and came back to the same point whence he started. Jesus Christ is the author and the finisher of our faith, because we start from Him, and we come back to Him. The same thought is suggested here. He is the corner-stone, because we begin to build on Him ; He is the head-stone because we finish building in Him ; and from the time that the first stone is laid at the corner till the last stone is laid, with shouts of rejoicing, it is Jesus Christ all the way from bottom to top, from beginning to end. So he is the preciousness to the builder of character, and life, and destiny, for he inspires and completes our effort. He lies beneath us as an everlasting rock, and when we have finished and done all we can do and the best we can do, he crowns and consummates and completes the structure as the very stone that lies at the top of all. What a beautiful

thought this is ! Christ is not content to redeem a slave or even to make him a son ; He will never leave him till He has made him perfect in the likeness of God.

III. The third aspect of the preciousness of Christ is His "*precious promises.*" He is the Promiser of all good. As His precious blood redeems ; as the precious stone of foundation and of completion regulates the building of character and life, so Christ is the source of our access to, and appropriation of, the precious promises of God.

Upon this head it is well to expand somewhat. The Word of God is here brought to our attention in the light of its exceeding great, glorious and precious promises. The promises present only one aspect of that Word, for there are in it precepts or commandments, warnings and invitations, instructions and admonitions ; but Peter takes this one particular feature of the Word of God and separates it for our special thought—"The exceeding great and precious promises." His mind was probably on the Land of Promise that was the type of the promises of the Word of God, and which God would have his people survey, enter into, and take possession of, as the present Rest of the people of God.

How are you to make these promises your own ? Keep before you the thought of a *land*. Suppose some poor man in this congregation should learn that there had been left to him a large and valuable estate. He had never seen it, or thought of its possession, but suddenly, by some legacy, this great tract of territory, with its buildings and its woodland and all its resources, becomes his own. How would he make that property practically his possession ? As soon as his title was established he would go and examine it for himself ; see what there was in the estate, where the wood-

land was, and what kind of wood grew there, and to what uses it could be put ; he would see where the garden spots lay for the culture of all sorts of fruits and of flowers. He would want to know what water there was to irrigate the soil and make it fruitful, and whether there were any mines of coal or metal, especially of gold and silver, to be worked ; in other words, there would be first an investigation of the land, and then there would be an attempt to utilize or make serviceable what the land contained.

In some such way we are to take possession of the Promises found in the Word of God. We are, first, to "search the Scriptures," to find out what is in them ; even to dig down into their depths for the precious hidden truths that they contain ; we are to turn over their soil that the sweetest fruits and flowers possible may be developed by the cultivation of our knowledge of the Word. We are to find out what there is in the Bible that is meant for us, and then make it useful in our lives, our character, our service.

Suppose an apothecary shop in which are gathered all the various remedies from the vegetable, the mineral, and the animal world, that can be applied to the treatment of disease ; suppose also a community cursed with all forms of sickness and bodily infirmity ; and that there is a remedy on these shelves and in these vials for every ill to which flesh is heir. He who is to use that apothecary shop to a purpose must first know what is there, and then how it ought to be applied to human disease, infirmity, and weakness. God's precious Word is the great apothecary shop of the universe, with the Divine medicine for every spiritual ill, need, and infirmity. Or it may be considered as God's great banqueting hall, with food and drink for every hungry and every thirsty soul ; or as God's great armoury with the full armour of

God—offensive and defensive weapons for the warrior in the fight ; or as God's great workshop with an implement for every child of God that would do effective work in the Master's service. The Bible is the great resource of the Christian. We need to know what is in it, and then lay hold on what it contains, and appropriate it.

In this way this Book of God becomes to a disciple the most precious book in the world. It is well to have *one Bible* for constant use, so well made and bound, that it will not easily come to pieces. Every believer needs one Bible as his constant companion, which may be filled with his own private, personal, marginal notes made by his own pen. Most precious will such a particular Bible become, because, in every circumstance of trial, temptation, sorrow, conscious guilt, conscious need, he will go to this one book, and find something in it that is exactly adapted to himself, and will note on the margin the date, the day, the month, and the year, when each particular promise has been sanctified to his good ; and if he gets into circumstances of peculiar trial and trouble, he will again search this dear Book of God and look at the entries on the sacred leaves, which indicate where God has enabled him to dig down and find mines of gold for his conscious poverty, or to appropriate some precious Word of God in times when his need was especially great. I would rather lose everything else I have in the world, than the one Bible which has been the companion of many years, and which is thus full of my own sacred memoranda. And the blessed thing about this is that there is not a man, woman, or child that cannot have one Bible that is just as precious, and for which all the wealth in England would not be a sufficient price.

In one's own Bible it may also be well to indicate the

texts that have been specially blessed to other souls. For instance, when George Müller was working to build up his orphanages in Bristol,—when he had the beginnings of his buildings, but very few orphans themselves—and afterwards when he needed yet larger buildings for the great work that he felt must be done, he was one day on his knees in prayer to God, and he opened at the eighty-first Psalm, and tenth verse, which may be marked as “Müller’s text”—“*Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it.*” And he says that from that time he has been asking great things from God, and expecting great things from God, and has not been disappointed.

When Mr. Moody began his work in America, timid, uneducated, opposed, maligned, and sometimes persecuted, he needed peculiar strength from God to help him meet his difficulties; and one day he was reading in the fiftieth chapter of Isaiah, at the seventh verse, and these words he took as the motto of his life from that time forth, “*For the Lord God will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed.*” That text is “Moody’s text.” When he started his great institutions in Northfield and in Chicago for the training of young men and women in Christian life and service, the whole undertaking was one of faith and prayer. He had no money back of him to sustain these great institutions, which cost in Northfield alone £100,000, and in Chicago about as much more; and he found in Isaiah xxvii. 3, another motto for those institutions, “*I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.*”

When Luther was in the midst of the Great Reformation, and the Word of God was assailed on every side, he found in the hundred and nineteenth Psalm at the eighty-ninth

verse, the words which have since been known as "Luther's text," "*For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven*"; i.e. far beyond the reach of all disturbing causes.

Paul found, in Habakkuk ii. 4, the text which he repeats more frequently than any other in his writings, "The just shall live by his faith." That is "Paul's Text."

"Carey's text" was, Isaiah liv. 2, 3, "*Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes; for thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left,*" etc. And so I might give you a thousand texts, that have been known as the texts of individuals, because they have supplied special the inspiration and the strength for their Christian effort.

Suppose you are in need of food and raiment, and you want comfort. You turn to Matthew vi. 33, "*Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall supply all your need* according to his riches in glory by *shall be added unto you.*" Or to Philippians iv. 19, "*My God Christ Jesus.*" You are in circumstances of temptation, and you turn to 1 Corinthians x. 13, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also *make a way to escape*, that ye may be able to bear it." You are in circumstances of peculiar trial through sorrow, and you turn to 1 Peter iv. 12, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but *rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings*; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." You are undertaking to preach the gospel in the midst of the

destitute and degraded of the earth, and you need help. You turn to Matthew xxviii. 19, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations," and, "*Lo I am with you alway even unto the end of the world.*" Perhaps you are discouraged and disappointed about your work—it seems to you to be vain—and you turn to 1 Corinthians xv. 58, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that *your labour is not in vain in the Lord.*" Or you are approaching the dying hour, and your heart gives way to anguish, and again you turn to Psalm xxiii. 4, "*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.*" And these examples could be multiplied by the hundred thousand.

Nothing is more astonishing than that, with such a land of promise which we are bidden to enter and take possession of, we do not even know *what is there*, much less appropriate it to ourselves. No doubt there are professing disciples even in this great congregation that spend more time over the daily newspapers than over the Word of God, and who know more of the current news than of the exceeding great and precious promises in this Book. May God help His believing children to understand that every word of promise here is for them, because the precious blood of Christ has been applied to their redemption, and they have chosen Him as the foundation stone and the capstone for the building of character and life. Find out what is in this land; dig down into its depths; explore its forests and timberlands; seek out its garden spots, well watered as the garden of the Lord; grow fruits and flowers for your table and your dwelling, and build the timber into your homes, and decorate your-

selves with the gold and the silver and the precious gems. Let us know what is in the Word of God, and compel other people to see that we do know what precious promises are in it. Think of having such a celestial treasure, and then going about, with heads bowed down as a bulrush, as though there were no riches of glory in the inheritance of the saints!

IV. Let us cast a rapid glance at the other "precious" things to which little reference has been made. "The *trial of your faith*," &c. In the Bible even trial fires are treated as precious; and yet, if there is anything from which a man shrinks, it is from contact with the flame. To be burnt represents as terrible agony as any to which a human being can be subjected, though happily it is often brief. One anguish may possibly surpass it, *crucifixion*, to which the Lord of Glory gave himself that he might show his love, in that He endured the most terrible suffering.

And yet trial fire is precious. Metals, that are not purified, are worth little for manufacture. The ore out of the great mines is worthless for ordinary purposes, until ground to powder, and until the metal has been separated from its alloy. God thinks so much of His children that He must get the dross out of their character, the pure metal separated and purified from all its surroundings and foreign admixtures, and so He kindles a fire and puts the disciple in the crucible and melts him down by those fires, which are sometimes very hot, until the dross is released and rises to the surface and is skimmed away. When he looks down into the crucible and sees in the metal His own face reflected, He knows that the dross is all removed; and he removes it from the fire, and moulds the metal for honourable purposes and makes it into chosen vessels. Malachi says of Jesus Christ, that, "He shall *sit* as a refiner and purifier of

silver." Why not *stand*? Because in the purification of metals by fire, the refiner sat by to watch for the precise moment when the metal is purified. In the great iron foundries, in making Bessemer steel, the process is watched through a spectroscope, in which the changing colours of the flames show exactly when the metal is completely ready for its uses.

When the flame reaches a certain shade of colour then the great crucible is turned upside down, released from the fires, and the metal is poured into its moulds. "*He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver.*" The Divine Refiner sits down by the crucible, watching intently to see just when the fire has done its full work and when the metal should be removed from the flames.

God puts you in the crucible because you are *so precious* in His sight. He sits down by His crucible, and watches the progress of your purification, and when He sees that you are made like unto Himself, He releases you from the fire. There will not be a pang, or a pain, not be an instant of sorrow or anguish after the perfect work has been accomplished.

V. "The ornament of a *meek and quiet spirit*, which is in the sight of God of great price." The inmost obstacle to holy character is the disposition, or temper, where envy, and jealousy, and malice, and uncharitableness hide. The great impulse which controls our tongues, our conduct, comes from our disposition. The word means that *to which we are disposed*, as fire toward the sun, or water toward its level.

To that inmost place no stranger penetrates; it is known only to ourselves and to Almighty God. Would you be precious in God's sight, and wear the only ornament that God cares for? It is not plaited hair, nor silks and satins,

nor broadcloth and doe-skin, nor gold and gems. For these He cares nothing. One gem alone is bright to God, and like His own Pearl, "of great price;" it is a spirit "*meeke*," *i.e.*, unselfish, and "*quiet*," *i.e.*, peace-loving and peace-making! the soul that has conquered all wrong dispositions, out of which has been rooted up whatever interferes with the peace, and the purity, of other souls! The disposition is the stronghold of evil. It is comparatively easy to shape the speech, to avoid falsehood, and malice; but the last thing to be changed is the disposition, or temper—the tendency to be easily provoked, to misconstrue the motives of others, to speak quickly and impatiently, to be despotic, and arbitrary, and overbearing, to be fault-finding and petulant—all the thousand forms of evil temper, that unhappily are often nourished and cherished, even in Christian bosoms!

VI. "*The like-precious faith.*" That forms a proper conclusion to this series. We have seen the precious blood that redeems, the precious corner-stone and cap-stone of the character, the precious land of promise, and the precious trial of faith, the preciousness of the meek and the quiet spirit. What is the "*like-precious faith*," but the faith that in all disciples is alike? How precious is that *bond of union* between all God's dear people, the world over. Jesus Christ is the hub of the wheel, and all the spokes, although separated at the circumference, meet in the hub. Christ is the Sun of righteousness, and all the rays, however dispersed, meet in the Sun. There are millions of believers on the face of the earth, that we never saw, but who hold the same precious faith with us, and if we met them to-day we should love them and they would love us, and we should feel that we were all bound to one Christ. Brought up in other lands,

their hearts would at once be knit to yours as though you and they had been reared in the same land, in the same house, and under the same father's care. There are Episcopalians, Congregationalists, Methodists, Presbyterians—disciples that differ from you in some things, but those things in which they and you agree are far more numerous and infinitely more precious than those in which you and they differ. When we all meet in the presence of God, alike redeemed, our differences will all have passed away, and our agreements will be seen to have constituted "*the like-precious faith*" of all true children of God. Believers sometimes, upon platforms, discuss matters that are very trifling, split theological hairs, and draw nice distinctions and discriminations; but when those very controversialists *get down on their knees together they pray exactly the same theology!* When true believers pray and praise their dialect is the same always, so that, if you should take the prayers and the hymns of true disciples from the Cross of Christ till now, you would find no essential difference as to the truths to which have been held and which have practically ruled the life.

Whatever may be the distractions that divide God's people, blessed be His name! we have "*one like-precious faith,*" for we hold to one redeeming Blood, one corner-stone and capstone, one inheritance of promise, one final Purification from sin, one Divine "ornament of the meek and quiet spirit," one Saviour who is the infinitely precious One. We shall come, by-and-by, where we shall see all truth in the same light, and the errors and the mistakes of this life will have passed away,

But, remember, He is the Precious One, only to those that *believe*. It is by faith that we are redeemed by that

precious Blood, built on that corner-stone, finished with that capstone, tried as by fire and made pure, made partakers of these promises, decorated with that meek and quiet spirit, and bound to all others who hold like-precious faith. How much hangs on believing! Who of you all will by faith accept this Precious One, and to-day begin to find out how all other precious Crown-Jewels become your own only by first possessing this Pearl of Great Price?

THE TRANSFORMED TEMPER.

SERMON VII.

THE TRANSFORMED TEMPER.

“And be renewed in the spirit of your mind.”—EPHESIANS iv. 23.

THE most subtle element in character is what is called the “*disposition.*” There is that about a fruit that we call its flavour or savour ; there is that about a flower that we call its odour or perfume : and the savour of a fruit, and the perfume of a flower, no natural science has been able to explain. You may have the fruit or the flower without the savour or the odour, but not the savour or the odour without the fruit or flower. This subtle element in character, the “*disposition,*” is as difficult to describe and define as are savour and odour ; but, though we can never have the sweet savour and odour without the character, we too often find character lacking this indescribable, undefinable charm.

The language of this text is very peculiar, nowhere else found in the Word of God. We find similar words, “renewed in your mind,” “renewed in heart,” &c. ; but here only do we find that peculiar expression, “Be renewed *in the spirit of your mind,*” as though the mind itself had some mysterious quality about it that might be called “spirit,” and this spirit of the mind needs renewal.

There is in nature that which reminds us of this strange

something, called "disposition," and it may be illustrated by plant-life. For instance, there is a disposition in a plant to seek the sunshine. Down in the cellars beneath our houses sometimes there will be a bulb or a germ of plant-life which begins to grow, and sends up a long, pale, unhealthy stem, not like the green stalk which is to be found in the open fields; and when this stem has grown, it may be to, many feet in length, it finds a window or crevice through which it winds itself and creeps out into sunshine, and then it begins to look green and healthy and put forth leaves. Because the plant has this disposition towards the light, it seeks and finds the light, even through the darkness. The apostle says, "Be renewed in the spirit of your mind," *i.e.*, made anew in the temper or disposition of your inward being and nature. Get the savour that belongs to God's fruit, the odour that belongs to God's flower, so that when others get a taste or scent of your spirit it will be not as when a bitter morsel or a foul stench offends us, but as when one plucks a fruit or smells a sweet odour from heavenly gardens. Not so much to duty as to delight, not so much to obligation as to privilege, does this Word of God invite us when it bids us be renewed in the spirit of our mind.

Before we go further, let us notice how this invitation, "Be renewed in the spirit of your mind," lies between two other injunctions: "That ye *put off*, concerning the former conversation" (or course of life) "the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts: and be renewed in the spirit of your mind: and that ye *put on* the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness." Here the figure is suggested of a man laying aside a filthy robe,—*"the old man,"*—and deliberately putting

on a white robe,—“the new man.” The garment stands for the outside life, and the mind or disposition for the inside life; and when the apostle bids us to put off this corrupt outward life, and put on this pure outward life in its place, between the two he imparts the real secret of this complete transformation in the external conduct. We must aim at a thoroughly renewed character; not content simply to change what is outward, we must be renewed in the spirit of our mind, for the inward disposition and inmost temper will determine, control, and give tone to the outward conduct.

Disposition, then, the spirit of the mind, is the theme to which our thought is now turned; and, out of God's own Word, we may get the clue to what is here meant. A most instructive passage is found in Luke ix. 46-56, which alone may suffice for the amplest illustration of the whole matter.

There are here accounts of three different occasions when our Lord was constrained to rebuke his disciples for indulging a wrong disposition, for manifesting a wrong spirit of mind. It is also very significant, that these three instances cover all vicious dispositions or bad tempers. The first evil disposition here rebuked is *ambition*; the second is *intolerance*, or *bigotry*; and the third is *vindictiveness*, or *revenge*. When our Lord dealt with these three wrong tendencies he embraced in them, as representative forms of unholy dispositions, all other evil tempers, for all others are wrapped up in those three. To consider these in order, and see how vicious, how depraved, how destructive they are, will help us also to see the contrast between them and a thoroughly renewed spirit of mind.

I. First, *ambition*. “Then there arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest. And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a child, and set

him by him; and said unto them, Whosoever shall receive this child in my name receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me receiveth him that sent me: for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great." Comparing Matthew xx. we get a fuller account of the occurrence here recorded. "Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him. And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, the other on the left, in thy kingdom. But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask." The vital matter about this interview lies in the ambition for the chief seats of honour and trust. The two brethren, James and John, had joined with their mother in the request for these seats on the right hand and the left in the kingdom. But Jesus taught them that he who would be chief of all must, as Mark says, be "servant of all," "even as the Son of man came not to be served but to serve others, and to give his life a ransom for many." The wrong disposition was ambition, whose motto is self-will, self-interest, getting up, and getting on, and getting ahead of others. James and John, with their mother, petitioned for the chief seats of honour beside His throne or His banquet-table. This was perfectly natural to an ambitious soul. But our Lord here taught them how evil the ambitious spirit is, and what evils are its offspring. This determination to get on, to get up, to get ahead of other rival claimants, begets jealousy and envy, which are counterparts of each other. Jealousy is envy, directed toward another's prospect of success; envy is jealousy, directed towards his actual success. We are jealous of others *lest they should* do or should get; and we are envious

of them *after they have* done or got. Ambition makes me jealous of my neighbour who bids fair to attain, accomplish, achieve, succeed; and makes me envious when he has accomplished and succeeded. Ambition also leads to covetousness, which is desiring what belongs to another, whether property, fame, intellectual gifts and attainments, or worldly success. The soul and secret of, perhaps, a third of all the evils that curse humanity, may be found in this one vice, ambition. It is found in the church of God:—in “Diotrephes,” who still “loveth to have the pre-eminence.” If there could be cast out of the church all that evil spirit that is ambitious of office, of power, of influence; that is jealous lest other people should attain the pre-eminence, or envious of those who have attained it, what a true brotherhood the church would become! Some there are who want prominence, and even pre-eminence, and are ready to rend the church of God in twain because they cannot have their way! Destructive influences are thus sadly at work in the assemblies of believers, as in worldly society. When a minister would be lord over God’s heritage, when a deacon or elder would hold a sceptre for the sake of power and the glory of self-advancement, what a mischief-maker he becomes! What incalculable evils come to the whole Body of Christ when any member seeks to be supreme! What a monster of selfishness one may grow to be simply through feeding ambition! In political life, a man aims to get some lofty position, to hold some honourable office, to secure his own advancement and emolument; and so he plots to get ahead, and even plans the ruin of other people, that, on the wreck of their fortunes, their disappointed plans, their blasted reputation, he may mount up to the throne of his own exaltation! That was the spirit of Napoleon,

willing to demolish all the thrones of Europe, that he might build up his own; that was the spirit of Xerxes and Alexander, willing to put a world in waste for the sake of the sceptre of a world-wide Empire.

What does Jesus teach us? He sets a little child in the midst of his disciples: he points them to the humility of the child-like spirit, and he says, "Whosoever would be great among you, let him be your servant; and whoever would be the chiefest of all, let him be the servant of all;" and when, in John xiii., we read, how Jesus, in the midst of the Passover feast, rose from supper, laid aside his outer garment, girded about him the long slave-apron or towel, and then took a basin and a ewer of water, and poured the water over the disciples' feet, and with the end of the towel-apron wiped their feet,—which the Jews thought was as menial an office as could possibly be performed, save one, the loosing of the latchet of another's shoe,—our Lord, in that visible posture of condescension and humility, illustrated how the greatest among them could be the "chief servant of all." When the Master thus stooped to the most menial act, He showed us that no deed can be drudgery when it is done in His name. We may dignify and glorify the most menial service by doing it for the love of God, and so redeem it from association with what is low or vile, or mean or servile.

II. The second of these malignant tempers, and unholy dispositions, is the "*intolerant*." "And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbid him, because he followeth not with us. And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us," and, as Mark adds, "No man can lightly speak evil of me who shall do a miracle in my name."

What is the essence of intolerance? As ambition says, "Myself;" intolerance says, "My way;" "No other way is right but that which I walk in; therefore if you want to be right, you must go in the same path where I tread. No other doctrine is right but that which I hold; so that if you would be a true believer, you must believe as I do. No other practice is proper but that which I pursue; so that if you want to be a proper man, you must follow my practices." That is the real way in which the intolerant spirit dictates to others. See how our Lord treats it. He says, "Forbid him not." They were going to forbid a man *to cast out demons* in the name of Jesus, because he did not follow in their train, did not belong to the twelve apostles, did not attach himself closely to their company. Here was one who was actually casting out demons, and honouring the all-powerful Name in so doing, and yet they would have said to him, "Have done with your casting out demons! You do not belong to our company! You do not walk in the same way with us! What right have you to be exorcising evil spirits!" Jesus *forbids them who would forbid him!* "He that is not against us is on our part." "There is no man that can cast out demons in my name that can lightly speak evil of me, or work against my interests." Our Lord has here given his disciples a lesson for all time to come. What is intolerance after all but the disposition to *compel uniformity in minor matters?* We often talk about the persecuting spirit of the Roman Catholics because they set up the Inquisition in Spain, and put people to the rack and various tortures, and even burned them at the stake because they did not bow to the Pope and worship the Virgin; but it is to be feared that there is not a denomination of Christians in the world that could be safely trusted with supreme power; human

nature is too frail to hold an absolute sceptre. There are probably those in the Anglican church, who, if they had the authority, would shut up every Nonconformist chapel; but are there none in Nonconformist bodies, who, if they had their way, would shut up every Episcopal church? Have any of us an ecclesiastical garment in which if He should closely examine, the Lord would not find at least a *scarlet lining of intolerance!* Human nature has never yet been entrusted with absolute power without abusing it, and this is as true in the Church as in the State, that the possession of a sceptre needs to be guarded by constitutional limits to prevent its despotic abuse. There remains much unsanctified territory, even in the hearts of professed disciples, and so it is that intolerance and bigotry are so common even in the Church of Christ.

And as ambition is fruitful of envy, and jealousy, and covetousness, and similar evils, so intolerance or bigotry begets a whole progeny of vipers. Has not this evil despotism been at bottom of the pulpit exclusion which shuts out faithful preachers because they have not been ordained in a certain fashion? And has it not been at the bottom of the exclusion of unquestionable believers from the Lord's table because they have not been able, in the matter of baptism, to see quite as others do? Whence came persecutions but from intolerance! There is no question, as Dr. Schaff says, that heresy is an error, but let us remember that intolerance is a vice and a sin, and persecution is a crime; so that not even in order to rebuke heresy must we cultivate a vice, encourage a sin, and commit a crime. The disposition to say to another, "*You must be like us,*" implies an immoral tone of mind!

Now, what is our duty? Four things are plain:—First,

hold your own views. There is no reason why, because we are bidden to be charitable, we should be without convictions. I honour a man who has an honest, earnest, intelligent conviction, and lives up to it. Hold your own views, tenaciously if you will, intelligently as you can, persistently as it is possible. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind, but at the same time, concede to others the right to be as fully persuaded in their minds and to hold their views as earnestly, intelligently and pertinaciously as you hold yours.

In the second place, whenever an error that is held by another is fundamental, striking at the foundations of the Christian system, come out from among those who hold and teach such error, and be separate from them; have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. If there is a man that denies the Lord Jesus Christ, the centre of your faith; who denies the Bible, which is the revealed Word of God, or takes out from its inspiration the supernatural element, you are under no bonds even of charity to recognize and hold fellowship with such a one. You are bound to be separate from such, otherwise how can you sustain the fabric of the Christian church, and the truth as it is in Jesus Christ?

In the third place, magnify the essentials, but comparatively forget those things that are indifferent. Remember what Augustine said: "In essential things, unity; in non-essential things, liberty; in all things, charity." The whole enemy of God is massed against the church of Christ, and stands in solid phalanx over against the truth; so much the more reason why we, who do love Jesus Christ, and stand for His truth, and for the majesty and glory of His Deity, should stand shoulder to shoulder in this great

war. If the regiments of the devil can possibly get parted, let us part them ; but let the regiments of God's army stand close by each other, and whatever may be the denominational flags that are raised, let them all be lowered when the blood-stained banner of the cross appears, for that is the standard of our common Master. After one of the most disastrous battles in the American War, Gettysburgh, a man went into the hospital bearing with him aid and comfort which Massachusetts had sent, and he went round from cot to cot, and inquired, "Any Massachusetts soldiers here?" Nobody answered. He continued going round, "Any Massachusetts soldiers here?" Not a word. By-and-by, one voice answered, "No! *Only United States soldiers here.*" What a blessed thing if, instead of talking about our denominationalism, we would forget that, in view of the great war of the ages, and say, "However proud I am that I am a Baptist, or a Methodist, or an Episcopalian, I am, after all, only one of *Christ's soldiers*, carrying on Christ's war."

And fourthly, "By their fruits ye shall know them." It has been well said that it does not make a donkey a horse, because he is brought up in a horse's stall, and fed on oats ; and it does not make a man a true child of God, that he has been brought up in a Christian family or a Christian church. What makes him a child of God is, that he has received of the Spirit of his Master. That is the only test. Now the Lord teaches us if we see a man casting out demons in His name, we are to remember that no man can cast out demons except by the Spirit of God, and we are to recognize the Spirit of God in that man, though he may not follow in our train. A man may differ from us in some minor points of doctrine or polity : the great test is this, Does he cast out

demons? Has the demon been cast out of his heart? Has the Spirit of God taken possession of his soul? Is he doing God's work? Are men brought to trueness and newness of life through him? Does he magnify the essentials of the gospel, and does the Lord crown his gospel labours with abundant success? Do not forbid any man who is obviously doing God's work. It is at the peril of your acceptance with God that you put a hindrance in the way of the man that is moved by the Holy Spirit, and is used by the Holy Spirit for service to God and souls.

III. The third of these evil dispositions is the *vindictive* or *revengeful*. He "sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem." That is, the appearance was that He was going by them, and they took offence at the apparent slight, so that they would not extend their hospitality to Him. "And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?" You remember how Elijah called down fire on two companies of fifty soldiers that were sent to arrest and apprehend him, and they said, "These people will not receive you, shall we revenge ourselves on them by calling down celestial fire to consume them?" And our Lord somewhat severely, though sadly, replied: "Ye know not *what manner of spirit* ye are of,"—you know not how malignant is the disposition you are indulging. "For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them."

You never, perhaps, wanted to call down fire from heaven to consume anybody else, but have you never indulged that

subtle, vindictive, revengeful disposition in other forms? What is the vindictive temper but the disposition *to return evil for evil*? A pastor asks one of his members to call on another who lives round the corner, and the sharp answer is, "I am not going to call on that party." "Why not?" "Because he passed me by in the street and did not speak to me, and I always pay people back in their own coin." Did you ever hear anything like that from fellow disciples? A man treats you with some indignity, and you wait the opportunity to pay him back with like indignity. He says a word against you, and when you have an opportunity you say a word against him. He has neglected you, you neglect him. He did not come to your house when he was invited, you do not go to his house when you are invited. What is that but a vindictive spirit, returning evil for evil; and there is not one of us, before God, who is not answerable to the charge, that over and over again we have indulged the vindictive spirit, even within the circle of the church of Jesus Christ. The most terrible disorders and divisions come to pass among disciples, from the spirit that returns evil for evil; and, as ambition leads to envy and jealousy and covetousness; and as intolerance leads to bigotry and persecution and malice; so vindictiveness leads to the violation of every command of the Decalogue; so that there is not a form of crime from lying up to murder, that revenge has not prompted, all through human history. There is a golden rule, "Whatsoever ye would that others should do to you, do ye even so to them." But there is a silver rule that men take instead of the golden rule, "Whatever *other people do to you*, do you even so to them." What is the Divine remedy for the revengeful temper? Paul says in the twelfth of Romans, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but

rather give place unto wrath ; for it is written, Vengeance is mine ; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him ; if he thirst, give him drink : for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head." "Do not avenge yourselves." God is the God of vengeance. "Give place unto His wrath," stand back and let the Lord God of holy vengeance repay the insults and the indignities of man. Do not burn your hand by putting it on the sword of vengeance, held in the flaming hand of Jehovah. "If thine enemy hunger, feed him ; if he thirst, give him drink." It is devil-like to return evil for good ; it is man-like to return good for good and evil for evil ; but it is God-like to return good for evil, and so, if you would be God-like you know how.

"For in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head." When the silversmith refined precious metals, in old times, he put the crucible on the coals, and when the metal was being reduced to a liquid form, he took some of the coals from beneath the crucible and put them on the top of the metal. In this way he put the metal *between two fires*. Now, when you do kindness to your enemy, you subject him to a *top-fire* ; his own conscience is already accusing him of wrong, and your kindly act intensifies the accusation. While conscience reproves him, your love adds its gentler reproof, and between the fire of his own moral sense and the fire of your charity, his heart is melted down. How often, when a man is wrong, we rather freeze him into greater hostility by our retaliation of his wrong-doing, by our reciprocal insults or slights.

The history of Jamaica furnishes a most wonderful illustration of holy vengeance on evil-doers. When the evils of slavery in the West Indies were exposed to the view

of Britishers they said, "This evil shall be wiped off of the escutcheon of our nation." On August 1st, 1834, the children of the slaves in Jamaica were set free. The whole Act of emancipation did not take effect till the first day of August, 1838, when all the adult slaves were also liberated. The night before that Act took effect there was not a coloured man or woman or child of any age in the island that went to sleep. The day of liberation was at hand, and so they kept that night as a night of prayer and praise. Fourteen thousand adults and five thousand little children met together in prayer, with William Knibb, the missionary and evangelist, leading them on. They meditated a terrible "vengeance" against their former masters. They constructed a large mahogany coffin, which was polished and trimmed after the best style by their best cabinet makers, and into this coffin they crowded all remaining relics of their former condition of slavery: they filled it with whips, with torture irons and branding irons, with handcuffs and fetters, with thumbscrews, the coarse frock, and all that pertained to their former slavery—they put all these in the coffin, and then screwed the lid down tight. Midnight came on, and when the great bells sounded out the hour of twelve, as the first stroke was heard thrilling through the air, William Knibb said, "The monster is dying!" another stroke, "Dying!" another stroke, "Dying!" until when the last stroke of twelve pealed out, he said, "The monster is dead! Let us bury him!" And they lowered the mahogany coffin into the grave. That was their Christ-like vengeance on their former masters, not insurrection, not massacre, not insult for insult, not injury for injury, not blow for blow, but burying out of sight all relics and remnants of their former bondage that they should be no

more brought to their minds or the minds of their oppressors.

Nothing can bring about a change of heart like this except we be born from above. No amount of self-reform can purify us of ambition, intolerance, and vindictiveness. We must be flooded with the love of God. The holy Dove must take his abode in our souls, and we must learn love from Him who is love. You cannot do that yourself. Come unto the Lord Christ, and unto the Holy Spirit, to be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and learn the beauty and the power of a disposition which is so transformed by God, that you are no longer ambitious to get ahead, except in serving; nor anxious to have your way, except so far as it is first of all God's way; nor disposed to avenge yourself, save with the holy vengeance that returns deeds of love for acts of malice! Nothing makes more manifest our need of the new birth, than the impossibility of re-making that most subtle heart and core of character, the disposition. But what is impossible with man, is possible with God. Let Him try His grace on your hard heart, and it shall be as soft as the clay on the potter's wheel. Let Him shine into your inmost soul, till His light becomes life to the spirit, and abide in His love till He imparts to you the secret of exercising celestial love yourself.

THE
HEIGHT OF TRANSFIGURATION.

SERMON VIII.

THE HEIGHT OF TRANSFIGURATION.

“Verily I say unto you, that there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.”—MARK ix. 1.

IN the famous Yosemite Valley, in California, there is a place, called “Inspiration Point,” because from it you command the entire valley. The bold rock, El Capitan, stands on your left; the Bridal Veil, the Cathedral Rock, the Three Brothers, Glacier Point, Eagle’s Nest, on your right; the Washington Arches, the North and South Domes in the distance. From no other point is the entire scene so completely spread before you.

It has been customary on Christmas day to study our Lord’s life from the point of His incarnation, or coming in the flesh. This is not the “Inspiration Point” from which to command the best view of the valley of His humiliation. There is another, far more exalted and inspiring, from which to study the true character and career of our Lord Jesus Christ, namely, His Transfiguration.

The Transfiguration occupies the central point in our Lord’s public life. If we follow Matthew, especially, we observe that Christ more and more manifests His glory in His words and in His works, until He reaches the Mount of Transfiguration. From that time miracles comparatively disappear; He utters no more great discourses to the multitude; there

is a gradual descent from that mountain height until He touches the lowest point in His humiliation, namely, His crucifixion between the thieves. Here then is the central point in His human history. From His birth, everything leads up to that ; from that, everything leads down to His death ; and there is, subsequently, but one real glimpse of His glory, and that is in His resurrection and ascension, which really lie beyond His mortal career, for He had then passed through the sorrows of death.

It is quite surprising that the Transfiguration is not more studied as the "Inspiration Point," from which everything about the life, and the character, and the career of Christ receives a new glory and a new illumination. Let us get this point of view, and so look at Christ ; not from His cradle at Bethlehem, not from His cross at Calvary, but from the summit of the mountain where He revealed His essential glory.

The significance of this event can be seen only by combining the accounts of the different Evangelists. In Mark ix. 1, we read : "There be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, until they have seen *the kingdom of God come with power.*" But in Matthew xvi. 28, we read : "There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see *the Son of man coming in his kingdom.*"

Uniting the two, the narrative would read : "Verily I say unto you, there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, until they have seen the kingdom of God come with power, and the Son of man coming in his kingdom." In these two statements we have the key to the Transfiguration ; it represents *the kingdom in its power*, and the *King coming in His power*. From this point, then.

we get both the glory of the King and the glory of the kingdom.

The value of this event lies in this, that it is the only glimpse of this double glory that has ever been given to the sons of men ; and therefore it is the most exalted point of prospect found within the pages of the Word of God. There is only one that can compare with it, and that is in the visions of the seer of Patmos in the Apocalypse, where we have what John saw on the Mount of Transfiguration unfolded in part among the "things to come."

Now, what is a kingdom? It is a territory ruled over by a king. There is a great distinction, however, between the kingdom in an individual, and the kingdom in relation to the whole community over which it extends. Every vessel on the high seas that bears the British flag is a part of the British kingdom, but a very small part, and very inadequate to represent the glory of that kingdom. Every soldier that wears the uniform of the British soldiery represents that kingdom, and yet again how insufficient to display the real grandeur of that empire on which the sun never sets! Again, there is a great difference between the outskirts of an empire and the centre, between a kingdom at its capital and at its furthest borders where civilization ends and barbarism begins, just as there is a great difference between the rays of the sun, scattered at the limits of the solar system, and concentrated in the glory of the shining orb itself. Again, there is a great difference between the subjects of the king and the king himself. They may, perhaps, be robed in plainest, coarsest and rudest attire, and living in the plainest huts or hovels ; but the king is invested with kingly raiment, and dwells in a palace such as befits royalty. There is also a great difference between the kingdom in its obscurity and

in its glory. The kingdom of Christ however real, is just now unseen. A veil stretches between us and the glory, so that we catch only as through a veil now and then a faint glimpse of its splendour, or seem to hear a voice speaking to us faintly, and scarcely audible in the distance. But when the veil is removed, as it was on this occasion, and the full blaze of the kingdom bursts upon us, we shall learn what Paul means in the Epistle to the Colossians :—"Ye are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God ; but when Christ, who is our life, shall appear"—when the veil shall be rent asunder—"then shall ye also appear with him in glory." We shall see Him then, and we shall see ourselves and the kingdom then as we never have before.

"Till they have seen *the kingdom come with power.*" Taking this Transfiguration scene as an exhibition of the kingdom, how wonderfully complete it is !

First, remember, that the two who met with Jesus Christ on the mountain of Transfiguration, Moses and Elijah, were two of the greatest characters that ever appeared in history—Moses, the leader, the lawgiver, the historian, the poet, the organiser of a great nation, one of the greatest generals of all history ; Elijah, perhaps the foremost of the prophets, a man who suddenly springs into existence, of whose early life we know nothing, who comes before us as a grown man, remonstrating against the iniquities of Ahab and his court ; and passing away as suddenly, with horses and chariots of fire, borne up to heaven without knowing the mystery of death. What do these two men represent ? Moses stands for a resurrection life, for Moses died, and was buried by God Himself, in the land of Moab : "The place of his sepulchre no one knows unto this day." Moses stands for saints who have passed through the ordinary experience of

death, who have been buried in the grave, but who, nevertheless, live, and live in glory with Christ, and shall hereafter be united with their own bodies in His presence, at His coming. Elijah represents those who have, like Enoch, passed through from one world to another without the experience of dying at all.

These two men belong to a period of history before Rome or Athens were founded—before authentic history began, twenty-five hundred years ago—for Moses lived fifteen hundred years before Christ; and Elijah lived at least nine hundred years before Christ. One of them died, and the other passed to glory without death.

You have in both these glorified saints the testimony to a continuous and endless life. We are told in the Epistle to the Hebrews that Jesus Christ is “made not after the law of a carnal commandment, or ordinance, but after the power of an endless life,” and the word translated, “endless,” means undecaying, undying, a life that knows no such thing as death. Elijah and Enoch were “translated that they should not see death,” in order to impress upon humanity that there is such a thing as life that knows no dying. The body itself dies and decays, but life itself cannot decay, and the child of God has the secret of life that is absolutely undying, undecaying, undiminished as the ages go forward. If you have lost a saint from your sight, whose body you have buried, Moses stands as the pledge of the present glory and existence of your sainted dead, as much so as Elijah is the pledge of a life that knows no death at all, into which those that remain at the coming of our Lord shall, like Elijah and Enoch, be translated without the experience of dissolution.

These saints appeared then with Christ in glory; they shared His glory: Their raiment was white like His, and

their faces shone like His, and they talked with Him about "His decease, which He should presently accomplish at Jerusalem."

If you ever ask yourself what is the condition of the saints in glory, these two men indicate the answer.

First : *saints retain their individual character.* Moses was not confused with Elijah, nor Elijah with Moses, nor either of them with anybody else. Moses remained Moses, Elijah remained Elijah, and they were recognised instantly and instinctively by the disciples. There was apparently no introduction of them as strangers, nor any mention of their names in conversation. Probably the disciples, by a kind of spiritual instinct, knew Moses and Elijah, as we shall recognise each other in the future life.

And yet saints in glory *have an associated life.* We shall remain individuals in the future life, but we are to form a society of saints and hold communion and converse with one another in the "general assembly and church of the first-born whose names are written in heaven."

Further, we learn that besides this individuality, this association, there is a *familiarity of converse* with regard to things which are going to happen. Knowledge on the part of immortal souls partakes somewhat of the character of God's knowledge. The future is probably unveiled and revealed before them, so that many of the present limits that surround our knowledge will there be removed. This coming crucifixion of Jesus Christ at Jerusalem was something that was on their tongues in glory, and they understood the purpose and the purport of it, and talked freely with each other and with Christ with regard to it.

What a complete picture of the future glory of the saints ! each one retaining individual character, all being gathered

together in holy association, instantly recognising each other in glory and conversing familiarly, their minds being open to a knowledge, even of the events that lie in the future and are to make more glorious to the universe the character of our God.

There was still another department of the kingdom illustrated on the mount. Here were three disciples looking up at this glory, dazed, dazzled, affrighted, by its splendour. Who were they? They represent another department of Christ's kingdom: Moses and Elijah and Christ represented the kingdom *triumphant*; Peter and James and John, the kingdom *militant*. Those are the saints in glory; these are the saints in suffering. Those are the saints crowned with exaltation; these are the saints going through the Valley of Humiliation for Christ's sake. But remember that John and Peter and James were just as much a part of that kingdom as Moses and Elijah were: here for a time, bound to be there by-and-bye; here, encompassed round about with ordinary bodies, in ordinary raiment, but destined to share the same lustre and glory as that which they beheld. Yes, this is a wonderful exhibition of the kingdom of God. It has not here come with power, but it has there come with power, and those poor saints that had to go through struggle and trial yet for a while, two of whom were for Christ's sake to be slain, and another to endure persecution and exile in Patmos—they were heirs of that kingdom, only waiting for the day when the glory of it should be revealed in them as it was then revealed to them.

II. This Transfiguration scene revealed the *Son of man coming in His kingdom*. All this glory would be incomplete without the person of Jesus Himself. That is an imperfect conception of Heaven, which does not make the King the

centre of its attractions: what would any kingdom be without its king?—his palace, court, throne are the glory of its capital. It was not Moses and Elijah that those disciples saw mainly, it was Christ; and when they came down from the mountain they forgot all about Moses and Elijah, and “saw no man save Jesus only.”

It is a very curious and suggestive fact, that, when the kingdom was represented in power, the smallest number of saints appeared which can constitute a company. Christ says, “where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” The smallest number that can gather in His name is two, and that is all that were gathered in glory there, because He would show to us that the kingdom of God comes with power whenever two glorified saints meet to hold glorified communion with each other and their Lord.

As to the King, as He prayed He was transfigured. It was not simply that His raiment became white and glistening, or that His face or countenance shone, but that the whole person became radiant. It was as though the prayers that were moving in His soul and breathing through his lips were a sacred fire within Him that the body ordinarily would conceal, but which, on this occasion, the body, becoming transparent, revealed, so that the glory of the holy affections and emotions that were burning in His mind and heart, shining through its body, made it radiant, so that it became lustrous like the sun. And then the raiment—coarse and common as it might have been—was likewise lit up with the inward glory, and shone itself like a garment of golden sheen or sunlight. When Jesus was transfigured, His whole person was glorified; and so they saw, for the first time, the King in His glory.

It will now appear why the incarnation does not furnish the true "Inspiration Point," from which to study the person of Christ. The babe in the manger cannot represent our King; nor the swaddling clothes in which He was wrapped, the royal raiment, the purple and ermine of the King and Judge. That stable was not a fit palace for the King of Glory, nor a woman's arms His fit resting-place.

The babe was the King in disguise. His infancy, and even His humanity, constituted that disguise; and, therefore, so long as we look at Christ in the stable at Bethlehem, or on the Cross between thieves, we see Him *veiled*; we cannot behold His glory. Neither at the cradle nor the cross, but on the Mount of Transfiguration the King is seen in His essential glory.

When we come to think of His "*essential glory*," we look down into unfathomable depths, or up into immeasurable heights. We are wont to think of Jesus Christ as leaving His throne in heaven and coming down to earth, and becoming a babe in Bethlehem; as passing through life on earth, poor, forsaken, despised, rejected; as suffering on the Cross as a malefactor between thieves; as buried in the tomb; and, then, as rising from the dead and returning to glory; in other words, His human life becomes to us a sort of a gap or gulf, or interval of thirty-three years, in His divine and eternal existence.

But is that altogether a true conception? If Christ, during His earthly life, wholly gave up His heavenly life, what becomes of His Omnipresence and essential Deity? We may readily concede that, during His humiliation, His essential glory was veiled to human eyes. But are we justified in supposing that His human existence was like the sheet Peter saw, let down from heaven and suspended

for a time, and then drawn up again into heaven? He said of Himself, "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man WHICH IS IN HEAVEN." Observe the present tense: "IS in heaven." While on the earth, as to His human manifestation, was He not, in another sense, also in heaven as to His essential divine nature?

His own words suggest an unfathomable mystery. What is omnipresence? Not simply an influence pervading the universe as the rays of the sun pervade all space; but a real presence of God, alike in all places at all times. If Christ were the Omnipresent God, then there is a mysterious sense in which, while, as to His humanity, He was in the cradle and on the cross, He was, in His essential Deity, still in heaven and on the throne.

I fear that there is a tendency so to emphasize His human manifestation and incarnation, as to lose sight of His essential glory as a person of the Godhead. Great as is the mystery, *essential* glory is something which may be *veiled*, but cannot be *surrendered* or left behind like a garment that may be laid aside and re-assumed. Let us ask ourselves whether, even in the days of His humiliation, He ever ceased to be "God over all, blessed for ever." We may not fathom the mystery. But it may help us to think of His incarnation as rather the veiling of this essential glory, so that men could not see what they could not have borne had they seen it; and that His Resurrection and Ascension was a partial unveiling of His true self, as the Transfiguration was a complete revelation of the hidden glory, so that for once it smote with its full lustre the eyes of His wondering disciples.

Possibly, in the Garden of Gethsemane, there was a

sudden flashing out of this glory for an instant when the soldiers, who moved forward to apprehend Him, suddenly "went backward and fell to the ground." There is no explanation given, but it seems as though, for a moment, the "glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth," shone out and dazzled and smote them, so that they scarcely knew what it was that, for the moment, overwhelmed them with awe.

If what has been said appears not only mysterious but contradictory, be it remembered that the Godhead will always be, to our feeble human comprehension, beset with apparent contradictions. Certain it is that for once the veil was removed. The earthly disguise was lifted, and the radiant star of world-wide empire was seen flashing from the breast of the King of kings. The glory that He had from the beginning and will have to the end, and which, being essential and not circumstantial, He must always have retained, was for once beheld by mortal eyes.

Do not His own words teach us, that, while on earth, He was also "in heaven?" and that, if at any moment of His humiliation, He could have been seen as He was, eternally and essentially, the glory would have shone out and dazzled those that saw it. Was not the Transfiguration meant to teach us that the King essentially glorious is always glorious? Is it altogether correct to speak of the coronation of Christ as a coming event? Is Christ, as the essential King of glory, not already crowned and reigning? If so, all that remains is for that coronation to be recognized. Is He still to ascend His throne, or is He already and eternally on that throne, so that it only remains for men to see that He is, and fall at His feet in homage?

Many events which, "because of the infirmity of our

flesh," are represented to us as yet awaiting accomplishment, are *real present facts to God*, for whatever has taken place in God's purpose is to Him a reality. The everlasting future is for ever present to Him and everything that to us is yet to be, is to Him as that which now is. He already sees Christ swaying the sceptre of the universe with undisputed authority.

This vision showed "the Son of man *coming* in His kingdom." That word "coming" is so linked with His Final Advent at the end of the age, that to many it has no other meaning. Possibly this is an error. "The coming of the Son of man in His kingdom" certainly in this case must refer to the Transfiguration, not to His final coming. It was not true that there were "some standing there that should not taste of death" till they saw the *Second Advent* of the Son of man. Even if by His "coming" the destruction of Jerusalem was meant, the only one of the three who could have witnessed that event was John. Perhaps we have too limited notions of the phrase "the *coming of Christ*." "Coming" means a personal presence (*παρουσία*), and wherever Christ manifests His personal presence He may appropriately be said to "*come*." Dr. F. W. Upham suggests that the coming of our Lord is a progressive event, having its steps or stages. One was the Incarnation, when He became a babe at Bethlehem: one was the Transfiguration when He disclosed His glory to His disciples: one was His Resurrection and Ascension, when He went up to the glory that He had with the Father before the world was: one was His coming in judgment on the City of Jerusalem and on the Jewish nation, for their rejection and crucifixion of Him: one coming of our Lord may have been at the destruction of the Roman empire, which was responsible

for His crucifixion—when the Goths and Vandals and Huns swept down from the north. Every time Christ exhibits His personal presence to a praying saint in answer to prayer, is there not a “coming of the Son of man?” And so, in the 18th of Luke, after a parable on prayer, he says, “Nevertheless—although God does surely hear and answer prayer—when the Son of man cometh shall he find faith on the earth.” It is most natural to refer this, not to His final Advent, but to His speedily avenging his saints in answer to their entreaties. When He does come to them to give them their hearts’ desires, will He find them *expecting His coming?*

The Lord’s coming has then its steps and stages, and this may be illustrated familiarly. Suppose that there was in some very remote part of the earth a great universal king, who was proposing to come to these shores and here set up his visible throne. There would be many different stages in his coming or approach. Suppose him to set sail from the ports of Japan. When he touched at any port on the way, it might be said “He is coming!” If he landed at Calcutta, or one point after another in the homeward journey, at Port Said, Brindisi, Calais, Dover, till he came into the River Thames and landed on the quay at London, at every point it might be said “He is coming,” and it would be so. But when he came to take possession of the Imperial Palace prepared for him and his, and actually to sit on the throne erected for his reception, that would be the *final coming*, and would be the end of the successive and progressive comings. Now, is not it so with our Lord Jesus Christ? He always has been coming since the foundation of the world, and every single step and stage of His coming is only an advance towards the last great advent when He shall sit

upon the throne, and the whole world shall be brought beneath his benignant sceptre. To Him universal dominion belongs. He has long been on the way to take possession of His rightful throne, moving towards its ultimate and perfect possession; and every time He has displayed Himself to the sons of men, as the babe in the manger, in the synagogue at Nazareth, on the cross, by the rent tomb, but especially in this transfiguration, it has been a new stage in His coming. The ages are the pathway of the Son of God, and the centuries are His strides forward; and when He comes at the end of the age that will be the complete manifestation of His glory, when to our eyes He is seen to ascend the throne that in God's eyes He has occupied ever since the foundation of the world.

We see the nature of the kingdom of Christ. It is as yet an unseen kingdom. The carnal eye cannot behold it; it must be seen by the eye of faith. Its capital city is not in this world, it belongs to another. Its throne is not of marble, its pillars are not of silver, or of ivory, like the famous throne of Solomon, in Jerusalem. It is the "great white throne," with pillars of light; and the robe that He wears is the very glory of God.

The kingdom is unseen, but it is *real!* How little those disciples thought, when they went up to the Mount of Transfiguration, that the kingdom of God in its glory was so near. Their Master felt weariness and faintness, and hunger and thirst, like the rest of them, but in a moment they saw the being that had been clambering up the mountain side with them, wearing the glory that no man can approach unto or behold with unveiled eye. If the veil were torn from our eyes we should find the King in the midst of us, and the saints in glory holding converse with Him. There is a

Presence here grander than any presence of man, and all that is necessary is for our vision to be perfect, and we might see what they saw on the Mount of Transfiguration.

“Lord, open his eyes, that he may see,” said Elisha, and immediately his servant saw the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire round about the prophet. Our eyes are holden that we should not know Him, but He is in the midst of us, and that is the only warrant for our being here. We have come to meet the unseen Lord, and though we cannot behold Him now, we can hold converse with Him by the way, and rest in the sweetness of His presence.

It is a sad thought that even here, in this place of worship, there are some that have no share in the kingdom. Christ the King is waiting for new accessions to His kingdom. Every time a rebel against God lays down the weapons of warfare, puts his hand to the solemn covenant with God, and signs and seals it with his own name, the Lord's kingdom extends over a new soul; there is an added province of that kingdom represented in that penitent believer. The only way you can enter into that kingdom is that that kingdom shall first enter into you. If Jesus Christ becomes to you to-day your King, you become a part of His kingdom, and when the glory of the Lord the King is revealed you shall be revealed with Him sharing His glory. And that is the reason why the gospel is preached: it is a humble effort on the part of one who undertakes an embassy for God to tell men how they may become subjects of His kingdom, and sharers of His glory. To-day the King comes in humiliation, as a babe in Bethlehem's manger, a crucified Saviour on Calvary's tree: He comes and says, “Will you let me reign over your hearts? will you open the little territory within you that has been in rebellion and

raised the black flag of revolt against Me? will you let into that territory the King of kings?" And if you will open your heart to Him to-day and say, "Lord Jesus Christ I am Thy servant and subject, take the throne in my heart, reign in me, rule over me, be my King, let me be Thy subject and Thy servant, Lord," to-day Christ may take His throne in you; and by-and-bye you shall see Him seated upon His throne over the universe, gathering you round about Him in His court and presence, making you the sharers of the glory that He had with the Father before the world was.

AWAKING, ARMING, ACTING.

SERMON IX.

AWAKING, ARMING, ACTING.

“And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.”—ROMANS xiii. 11, 12, 13, 14.

IF there be, in all the Word of God, a message appropriate for the Sabbath which ushers in the New Year, certainly it is this.

To study it intelligently, we must first inquire as to the figure here employed and its meaning. Paul was familiar with the customs and manners of the Roman soldiers, for, when he was himself a prisoner in the City of Rome, he was chained to a new soldier every morning, and it is probable that this Epistle was written subsequent to his first imprisonment. The Roman soldier appears to have been permitted to lay aside his armour when the night came, and spend the night as he would, but in the morning he was required to assume his armour again, and, with the dawning of the day, appear at the barracks or at any post to which he was detailed. It would frequently happen that a soldier, after laying aside his armour, and spending the night in riotous carousing and drunken revelling, would fall asleep as the day came on, and sleep very heavily after his sensual

excesses ; then, as day began to dawn, he would awaken or be aroused, hurriedly put on his armour, remove from it the mud or filth that might have accumulated upon it during the previous day, and then march off to the post where he was expected to appear, or to the barracks where the soldiers assembled to receive their rations and enter upon their duties for the day. Familiar with these customs and habits of the Roman soldiery, Paul adapts his language to these well known facts : " Knowing the time, that it is now high time to awake out of sleep : for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand "—is even now upon us. " Let us therefore put off the works of darkness and put on the armour of light : let us walk honestly, as in the day ; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." We shall see how beautifully and how closely the figure fits the life of a disciple, for this is not a message to the ungodly but to God's own people, and its pertinency will appear as we come to consider it more carefully.

Paul uses the words " day " and " night," " darkness " and " light," in three marked senses. Sometimes the word " night " expresses the period of past sinful experience and indulgence, and the " day " would then mean the time of our acceptance of Christ, and our conversion unto Him. Again, he uses the word " night " in the sense of the past of our entire life, and, in that case, the " day " would mean the time of our entrance into glory, our passage from this life into the scenes of the life beyond. He also uses the word " night " in the sense of the period of the withdrawal of Jesus Christ from among His disciples, and the " day "

would then mean the reappearing of Christ in His second coming, without a sin-offering unto the full salvation of His people. It is possible that he uses these words in all these senses in this passage. There is a sense in which the "night" of our sin is spent, and the "day" of our conversion has dawned. There is a sense in which the "night" of our past life is far spent, and the "day" of our ushering into the presence of God is fast approaching. There is a sense in which the "night" of our Lord's withdrawal is very far spent, and the time of His return and glorious appearing is drawing nigh. Perhaps we shall most honour the truth of God if we are not particular to discover which of these three senses Paul especially adopts in this passage, but rather look at its general trend and import as pertaining to the child of God. We shall observe two things here: first, a command or injunction; and, second, a reason or consideration. Paul first puts a duty before us, and then assigns a ground for the performance of that duty.

The duty is expressed in several forms—"Awake," "Put on the armour of light," "Walk honestly, as in the day," "Make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof."

The reason is mainly this—"The day is at hand: and our salvation is nearer than when we first believed."

There is an important double injunction which claims special consideration: first, the duty of awaking, and, secondly, the duty of clothing ourselves with the full armour of God. As to the duty of awaking, disciples are supposed to have passed the time of their carousing, their fleshly indulgences, their riots and revelries; but how often it comes to pass that, even after we have given up the open sins of our evil life, we fall into lethargy, and apathy, and indifference, into carelessness, and sluggishness, and sloth. In the Church of

God to-day, professed disciples are rarely drunkards, extortioners, adulterers, blasphemers, revilers, and idolaters. God be thanked, the time when it was common for professing Christians to commit such awful, flagrant, and criminal iniquities is past; only now and then do we find even a nominal child of God guilty of transgressions of the ten commandments, and standing before men as an open violator of the law of God. But the great evil, especially of this age of ours, is that so many who have put off these "works of darkness" are yet asleep as to all responsibility, activity, duty. What is sleep? A period of unconsciousness, when the whole mental as well as bodily powers are sluggish; a period of sloth, of idleness, of inactivity; a period when we are unclothed, and defenceless, so that our foes have us at an advantage. During sleep time is passing without the recognition of the fact that it is passing—slipping through our hands as the water passes through the hands of statues in our public squares, where the stone or the iron is unconscious of the outflow. How many disciples of Christ there are who are not flagrantly wicked, not open violators and transgressors of God's commandments; but who have never been roused as yet to the full sense of their responsibility and duty to God or man. "The day is at hand," the night is gone by, the sun has risen above the horizon, the world is waiting to have the message of salvation carried to it, the Church of God is waiting to have its young converts strengthened and trained into noble-hearted disciples and effective workers for God; waiting for the contributions of Christian people to be poured into the Lord's treasury; waiting for the self-giving of disciples, who offer themselves willingly unto the Lord, as the messengers of salvation to the ends of the earth. And

yet in the opening of this year, 1893, the great proportion of professed disciples of Jesus Christ are asleep, some of them dead asleep, some of them just awaking, half asleep and rubbing their eyes, and recognizing the fact that the day is upon them, but turning over like the sluggard and saying, "A little more sleep, a little more folding of the hands in slumber, a little more indulgence of the spirit of sloth and of sluggishness."

We have just been celebrating the centenary of that wonderful era of modern missions, that was inaugurated by William Carey's offering of himself in 1793 as the first English missionary to India. The greatest obstacle that Carey met with, during the ten years that he was seeking to awaken interest in foreign missions, was found not in the open and flagrant iniquities of his brethren of the Baptist denomination, but in the dead sleep in which whole Churches were abiding, rocked in the cradle of their indulgence, swung in the hammock of ease, one end of which was fastened to the cross of Christ and the other to Mammon, fanned into a delicious slumber amid the intoxicating odours of this world. He found it almost impossible to arouse even his brethren in the ministry, to the fact that a thousand millions of human beings had never heard the gospel of Christ, that the missionary of the Cross had never gone forth into the major part of the regions beyond to carry the gospel to the dying; and was he not told even by one of his Baptist brethren, to "sit down," and that "if God wanted to convert the nations he could do it without him"? It almost seems as if that famous rebuke of John Ryland belongs to the myths of past ages, so impossible does it seem to us in these days ever to have been an historical fact. But let us not suppose that the periods of sleep in

the Church lie away back in the past centuries. This very day, in January, 1893, the vast proportion of the nominal Church of God lies in the slumber of apathy and the sloth of indifference. There is no design to be offensive to Christ's disciples in this great congregation, when I say that, after preaching here the major part of an entire year, it is quite plain to me that even here the large proportion of members give little evidence of doing any actual systematic work for the Lord Jesus Christ. That a considerable number of people here are engaged in holy activities for God there can be no doubt ; but that many others are simply sanctified sponges that imbibe all that they can possibly receive, having no proper conception of their duty to distribute the benefits and blessings of this gospel to a dying world, is a fact of which a careful observer is likely to be sadly convinced. And what is the case here, is true in all Christian congregations the world over. The major part of those who confess Christ as Saviour, have never yet awakened to the fact that He is their Lord also,—Master of their lives, that He owns their purse, their properties and their possessions, that He owns their hands, their feet, their ears, their eyes ; that they are His, that their children are His, that their homes are His, that their business is His, that their treasures are His, that all that they have they hold as His stewards and trustees ; that they owe a debt to the dying world that can never be paid, however diligent they may be, but that they are also trustees, put in trust with the gospel as the only riches by which that debt can even in part be discharged.

To this beloved people, this morning, the Spirit of God is saying, " Knowing the time, it is now high time to awake out of sleep ; the night is far spent, and the day is at hand."

Still a thousand millions of people have not Christ, still more than one half of the population of this earth have never even seen a missionary or a Bible, or heard the first proclamation of the gospel; and as every pendulum stroke of the clock beats a second, a soul passes into the other world, and the greater proportion of those dying people have never yet been told that there is a Saviour for them. Let everyone of us, in the secrecy of the heart, solemnly look back over the year 1892, and ask, how many souls have I spoken to with regard to salvation; how many homes have I visited in which are sickness, sorrow, and suffering; how large a proportion of my income have I given to the Lord Jesus Christ for the service of dying people the world over, and the distribution and dissemination of the Holy Scriptures; how many days have passed in which I have offered no intelligent and devout prayer to God for a soul that is lost without Christ; how many days have passed in which I have prayed and worked for my Master, or have actually asked myself what work He had for me to do? On the other hand, how often I have been absorbed in the treasures and the pleasures of this world, given myself to that mad pursuit of riches or almost equally insane pursuit of what I shall eat and drink, and wear, as if the things of this world were all that had any interest for me, or any importance for me! How many days are there that I have passed almost without a whispered prayer to God, or perhaps, behind the formality of prayer, disguising a heart that had little interest in spiritual things; into how many shallow joys of this world have I plunged, as though they could satisfy me; after how many fleeting baubles have I run, as though if I grasped them they would not burst in my hand, leaving me only the agony of disappointment!

I saw a picture once, "La Chasse de Bonheur"—the chase of fortune—which represented a man as moving, as it were, through the air, after a fleeting vision, a woman, with a golden ball representing boundless wealth and treasure. On he is plunging, with his eye on the golden bait and the seductive female form. He is passing just over a bridge that is broken in the middle, and the chasm opens and yawns just before him. Down beneath his feet there lie the wife and the children, dear to him by natural ties, whom he is rudely trampling down in the mad pursuit of that which he is bent on reaching. That allegorical picture represents human life—a parable in action. In every street in London there is that Chase of Fortune, that insane pursuit of a bauble or a bubble, that subservience to the seductive forms of pleasure, that trampling under foot of all that is dear to God and man, in the vain ambition after personal gratification and selfish advancement. God says to us, "The day is far spent, the night is at hand. We know the *season*, that it is now the high *hour* to awake out of sleep." The very sun itself smites our eyeballs with its brilliance while we turn over in bed for another morning nap, another indulgence of sloth and sluggishness. And if the trumpet voice of God might call some nominal child of God, some sleeping disciple, out from sloth and inactivity, out of unconsciousness and indifference, out from the idleness and waste of time of a life that pretends and professes to be God's, but is as yet half-wedded to the world; if these words of the Spirit could rouse some of you to take up the work of Christ, to have a new zeal for God according to knowledge, and to expand unto new activities of service for men, what a blessed year this would be! If everyone in the membership of this Church of over five thousand souls,

should resolve in the strength of God to be the means in 1893 of adding at least one new member to the body of Christ, would three hundred and sixty-five days of prayer and labour pass without at least one soul being so gathered to Christ? And that would mean more than five thousand sinners converted in this congregation alone during the year to come, instead of two or three hundred, which is the average of the forty years that have preceded. Nothing more needs to be said to prove that the major part even of a great Christian congregation like this have never been fully aroused yet to the idea, "I am God's, my labour is God's, my witness is God's, my money is God's, my time is God's, my strength is God's," all to be poured without measure into the open treasury of the Lord for service and sacrifice in the cause of Jesus Christ.

Permit a word of personal confession and testimony. Two years ago to-day, in solemn meditation and prayer, I was led to see that I had been, in a sense, embarrassing the plans of God all my life long, by scheming for myself, by laying out work that I had called work for Him, but which was really largely work for myself and my own interest. These personal schemes reached sometimes a year and more into the future, so that, if God opened to me a new work to do with wider promise of usefulness and service, I found myself bound hand and foot, so that I could not enter into the open door. It was made clear that it was unwise, henceforth, to have any plan that reached far into the future, and that a servant of God should hold himself open to the leadership of God, day by day, to follow as He might guide. It is a privilege reverently and thankfully to bear witness that the last two years of my life, left thus without any human plan, have been blest in the abundance of service and in the

abundance of joy in God, beyond any ten years that preceded. Some of you may be led to make a solemn new year's resolve, that this shall be the best year of service, of entire consecration, of devout praying, of intimate communion with God, of absolute self-surrender for His service; and surely this is one way to awake from sleep, and arouse ourselves on the morning of this new year; one way to consider how the day is far advanced and the night is far spent, and to obey the challenge found in the very dawn of day, calling us to new holiness of life!

The other part of this injunction is, "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ," or, as it is elsewhere expressed in the same passage, "put on the armour of light." When the Roman soldier awoke in the morning, before he put on his armour he first cleansed it from everything that had defiled it, or obscured its brightness, on the day before. It so became an "armour of light" or a shining armour. So the Apostle says, "Let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light." The figure is plain. What is expressed in one verse as putting on the armour of light is expressed in another verse as putting on the Lord Jesus Christ; but there is no contradiction between the two. When the Roman soldier put on his armour, in a sense he put on Rome; for you might have seen on the various parts of that armour the signs of the empire and Caesar, whose soldier he was. On the helmet were the silver eagles spreading their wings as if for a flight, the signal and symbol that floated from the standard that was unfurled over Rome's battalions; on the breast-plate you might have seen the coat of arms of the Roman Empire with the mark of the Cæsars, and, just as in the cordage of the British Navy if you cut it at any part you see the

scarlet thread running through which marks that cordage as the property of the Crown, so you might on any part of the armour of the Roman soldier have seen some mark or stamp of the Roman authority and ownership.

In every part of the Christian armour there is something that reminds us of Christ. The breast-plate reminds us of faith in Christ and love towards God, and the helmet, of the hope of salvation; and every part of the armour is impressed with Heaven's "coat of arms." God's golden eagles are on the helmet to indicate the soaring of the soul after God; the Cross is stamped on the breast-plate to show that our faith is in Jesus; there is a burning heart on the armour to indicate the yearning of the soul after God, so that when you put on the armour of light you put on Jesus Christ. In every part of that armour He is remembered, signified and signalized.

What does the Apostle mean by "Casting off the works of darkness"? He tells us what the works of darkness are—"rioting and drunkenness, chambering and wantonness, strife and envying. Here six forms of sin are arranged in three couplets or pairs: rioting and drunkenness belong together because they have to do with the indulgence of bodily appetite; chambering and wantonness belong together because they have to do with the indulgence of carnal lusts; strife and envy belong together because they have to do with the indulgence of evil tempers and malignant dispositions; and so these "works of darkness" cover the whole range of iniquity, for all the sins to which men are given may be reduced to one of these three classes. They are either sins of bodily appetite, such as intemperance and gluttony, or sins of carnal lusts such as lead to sensual indulgence, or they are sins of disposition, that exhibit

themselves in strife and envy, covetousness and jealousy, anger and malice, contention and disorder, breaking up peace, and bringing war on a small scale or a large scale. All these belong to the past life of a child of God. He has nothing to do with them henceforth, and is but half a disciple until he has learned to put these things for ever behind him. He should be ashamed when he sees in himself any remaining tendency to gluttony or to sensuality or the indulgence of evil tempers. What if every Christian man and woman would let strong drink alone, let carnal lusts alone, let alone all strife and envy! What if we had the body in such subjection that no appetite could ensnare us: the lusts in such holy control that no carnality or sensuality could ever betray us: the disposition under such rule that nothing but love should reign in our hearts and govern in our lives, what days of heaven on earth would be brought down to earth! Paul could say—"I keep my body under and bring it into subjection." The body is the residence of the soul. Reason and conscience were meant to occupy their double throne and sway their benign sceptre over the body, and the Holy Spirit was given to occupy His imperial throne over even the reason and the conscience; so that there should be restored the true and normal order of a human soul—God's Spirit ruling the human spirit, and the human spirit ruling the body, so that the whole body is brought into subjection to the divine law. That alone is "casting off the works of darkness"; that alone is putting away revelry and rioting and drunkenness and gluttony, chambering and wantonness, sensuality and indulgence; that alone is truly putting away covetousness, envy, jealousy, malice, and all uncharitableness; that alone is being a whole man in God because

God occupies the whole man; that is being a saint indeed among saints, a promoter of godliness and of God's glory among men.

One must never attempt to put on the Lord Jesus Christ without first putting off the works of darkness. I met Rev. William Haslam at Melchet Court, the residence of Lady Ashburton, and, speaking to him about this text, which then occupied my mind, he said, "Yes, dear brother Pierson, tell the people they must not put on the new man without putting off the old man." There are too many who are trying to put Christ on without putting off the old Adam. It may do in conversion to sing, "*Just as I am* without one plea, but that Thy blood was shed for me," putting the garment of an imputed righteousness over our old self, but we are not to *let the filthy rags remain there*. In *sanctification* the rags are to be put away, and the Lord Jesus Christ is to be the true garment that robes the soul. We should not be satisfied only to be justified by faith, and still permit any filthy thing to remain under the garments of our imputed righteousness. God says to us, "Be ye holy, for I am holy!" and we should not be satisfied to have a wrong lust, an ungodly passion, an unholy temper, or any other form or remnant of evil, to defile the body and the spirit, and so dishonour our blessed Lord. Not until we find out that the fulness of our salvation demands this entire transformation of soul and spirit and body into the image of Jesus Christ, and that sanctification implies a growing and daily progress in divine things so that we are not only invested with Christ but come to represent Christ in the reality of our personal character, will the Church of God be what it ought to be, harmless, blameless, undefiled, separated from sinners.

When the newly-fallen snow has covered the face of the earth, there are pools of filth and accumulations of all kinds of refuse underneath the snow, but its white mantle covers over and for the time obscures all else. That snow white robe of nature may represent to us what Christ does for us in conversion when His pure mantle comes down over our filthiness and hides it, so that for Christ's sake God sees only the pure whiteness of His Son's infinite vicarious merit. But when the snow disappears the filth remains, and so even this imperfectly represents Christ's work. On the other hand when the sun is left free to shine he purifies the filth, dries up the marshes and the stagnant pools, and changes the very nature of the soil on which he beams; so that, as Ruskin says, the clay and sand and soot that may be found everywhere on the outskirts of our manufacturing towns, the sun, if he has only time enough, will so transform, as that the clay becomes the sapphire, and the sand becomes the opal, and the soot becomes the diamond. Even this feebly represents what Christ, as the light of the world, does for a soul that he first covers over as with the white mantle of His snowy purity. Christ is not satisfied to cover your sins; He must purge them away; and if you found in Him the covering of your sins in conversion, in sanctification you may find Him now purging your sins by His refining and purifying power, by the Light, the Love, and the Life of the Sun of Righteousness.

II. The reason or ground of all this exhortation is, "The night is far spent, the day is at hand: now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." We shall best interpret these words if we remember how often in the Bible the "day" is used to represent the *progress of our salvation*. The night is the period of our past life when

we groped in the ignorance and darkness of sin; the day-dawn is the acceptance of Christ, when the Light of the world first shines upon us for our salvation; and then, as the sun mounts towards the zenith till it stands at the height of the heavens at the noon-tide, so there is to be progress in our salvation, from one degree of glory and grace to another, until the sun reaches its zenith, when the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ completes our salvation, and He receives unto Himself those who first received Him into themselves.

Here, then, are two great suggestions :

First, *the day is come, and therefore we ought to put on the armour that belongs to the day.* How beautiful is the association of the Lord of Glory with the child of God. We are told as, in the first Epistle of John, that God is light; so we are the children of the light; our armour is the "armour of light," and the day in which we work, is the day of light. All must be consistent and harmonious. When the Roman soldier polished his armour and put it on and went out into the sun, every part of that burnished armour became a reflector of sunlight and shone with the sun. So the Apostle would have us burnish our armour and clothe ourselves completely with it, so that when we go out into the world, that is still in darkness, they who have never seen the Sun of righteousness shall see the shining of His beams in the reflection of our armour; so that, wherever we go into the midst of the deep night-shade men's eyes shall be dazzled with the brightness of our god-like character. In other words, put on Christ's image and likeness; for the day is already come, and it is no time now to carouse or to sleep. Now the high hour is come to put on your armour, and in it march forward to the barracks, to

the post of duty wherever it is, accept as your rations the provision that God gives you for your spiritual life, and for ever cease to make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

Secondly, the day of our life is passing, the day of our opportunity is passing, we are drawing very near to *the coming of our Lord*.

“Now is your salvation nearer than when you believed.” There is no doubt what is meant. When Christ went away He said, “Yet a little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me;” and because he had never communicated to them the day nor the hour wherein he should come, the early Christian Church stood continually as on tip-toe, watching for the appearing of the morning star which heralds the day, when, after the night of Christ’s absence, the Sun shall arise with healing in His wings. Two thousand years have nearly swept by, since Christ ascended. The time of His coming is drawing nigh, for it must be at least nineteen centuries nearer than when He first went back to the Father. There would seem to be wanting *not one of all the conspicuous signs* foretold in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, and in the Epistles to Timothy, the second Epistle of Peter, the Epistle of Jude, and the book of the Revelation, as those that indicate the coming of the Lord as drawing nigh. For though Christ did not tell the day nor the hour wherein He is coming, He gave certain indications that should serve to show when the day-dawn was nigh, as the signs in the eastern sky indicate the rising of the sun, although we may not know the exact moment of his mounting above the horizon. Look round the historic horizon to-day, with eyes cleared of carnal prejudice, and see if there be no signals that the coming of

the Lord draws nigh. One of those signs, indicated in the Word, is that there should be a *widespread apostasy in the Church*, especially with regard to the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, the inspiration of the Scriptures, and the coming of the Lord. May not that apostasy be now a fact? There are many desiring to be teachers that know not whereof they say nor what they affirm, blind leaders of the blind, going into the ditch themselves and dragging their pupils with them. Certainly there is a widespread and alarming defection from the faith. Another sign that was given of Christ's coming was the deceptive "peace and safety" which men should feel from the *uniform order of nature*; sneering at the idea of any great revolution or change in the world's condition, and the condition of human society, because, as they say, "all things continue as they were from the foundation of the world." What is the conspicuous doctrine of science in these days, but the "uniformity of nature"? We are told that, so uniform are nature's laws and operations that they have continued ever since the foundation of the world the same, and shall continue to the end of time the same; that there is no use of any Creator because this "clock-work" of the universe carries everything on without the need of a regulating hand. Another great sign of our Lord's coming was given, namely, evangelistic activity such as was never known in the earth before, the *world-wide witness of the gospel*; casting, into the sea of the world, the drag-net, the universal net-work of missionary endeavour reaching into every part of the world, and gathering of every kind. What do we see now? Never was such missionary activity known from the beginning of Christian history, never such widespread missionary organization, the drag-net borne into all parts of the world-sea, with seven

thousand labourers to draw it towards the shore, and so many fish gathered within it.

And what is that "full salvation"? Six great words, all of them beginning with the same letter, are, in the Bible, used to indicate what this full salvation of Christ's people is. These words are Refreshing, Regeneration, Revelation, Restitution, Redemption, and Resurrection. These words will prove of unspeakable help to any believer in the study of the Scriptures.

The first is the word "*Refreshing*." "Times of refreshing" are to come "from the presence of the Lord and the glory of His power." These are to be the Days of the "Regeneration," or making of all things new. This Day is to be one of "Revelation," or the perfect unveiling of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. These are to be "Times of Restitution," that is the full accomplishment of all the prophecies spoken since the world began; also the Times of our full "Redemption," or the entire release of the soul from the bondage of sin and of death; and of "Resurrection," or the final release of the body from the bonds of corruption, and its introduction into the glorious liberty of a resurrection life. All these are necessary to our full salvation. By "Times of Refreshing," we understand that the Spirit of God shall be outpoured on "all flesh," as it was before poured out on the Christian Church at its beginning. In the "Times of Restitution" not one unfulfilled prophecy shall remain in Scripture; the predictions, so long delayed, as to the literal regathering of the Jews into their own land, or at least a portion of them, representative of the Jewish nation, shall be accomplished. There will be "Regeneration,"—even this world is to be renewed—a new heaven and a new earth wherein

righteousness is to take the place of the present order of things—and it may be God's purpose that, in the very world in which we now live, glorified, purified by fire, redeemed saints may tread over the very scenes of previous service and sacrifice, and recall their labours for Christ in the very spots which have been dignified by association with the Saviour in His work. Then shall come the "Resurrection," when this body is to be made like unto His glorious body with all its powers, with eyes that see things that no carnal eye can see, ears that can hear things that no carnal ear can hear, with organs and faculties, glorified and sanctified, enlarged and strengthened, and made susceptible of pleasures and service to which we cannot even in imagination now attain or aspire. The word "Revelation" suggests that Christ came in disguise when He first came, but there will be a glorious unfolding of His perfect character when He comes with the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. The word "Redemption" indicates absolute and final release from all bonds of corruption, and introduction of soul and body into the wondrous participation of the divine nature and presence.

This text has a peculiar connection with the conversion of St. Augustine, who had been through the round of human philosophies as well as of human pleasures, trying to find something, like Solomon, that would satisfy the unsatisfied cravings of an immortal soul. And one day, while sitting down in a little arbour in the garden and meditating upon his dissatisfied state, he had a scroll of the Epistle to the Romans on his lap, and had been looking in it to see if he could find there what he had never found in any heathen philosophy, something to content his long un-resting soul. He fell asleep, and it seemed to him in a

vision, that an angel came near and touched him, and said, "Tolle, Lege!" "Awake, and read in the thirteenth chapter of Romans, eleventh verse." He sprung up from his sleep, so vivid was the vision, and opened the scroll and read. "And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light." By the seat in his arbour, Augustine knelt and poured out his soul to God, that he might then awake to the full conception of his need and the greatness of the redemption that was in Christ Jesus, and there began that day the marvellous career of that man who, with Chrysostom at Antioch and Constantinople, and Origen in Africa, and with Athanasius, head of the great council of Nice, with John Calvin in Switzerland, John Knox in Scotland, John De Wycliffe in England, Savonarola in Italy, and Luther in Germany, became the great advocate and apostle of the new faith in Jesus Christ, the faith of the New Testament, and the reformed Church of God.

APPOINTED AND ANOINTED FOR
SERVICE.

SERMON X.

APPOINTED AND ANOINTED FOR SERVICE.

“But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.”—I CORINTHIANS xii. 7.

When Paul began this first Epistle to the Corinthians, he wrote, in the second chapter, “I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified.” These words have been pressed into a narrow mould of meaning, which it is plain the writer never intended should confine and limit them. For instance, there are those who infer from them that every sermon should be a distinct and literal setting forth of Jesus Christ on the cross as the only hope of sinners, and that it is incomplete if it does not deal directly with His atoning work. Whatever prominence is to be given to the great central doctrine of Christ’s vicarious sacrifice, it would seem that Paul never could have meant that he would confine himself to this one theme. The same Epistles in which this sentence is found, present the greatest possible variety in the discussion of all topics pertaining to Christian faith and life, conduct and service; and among them many themes that do not bring to the front the atoning work of Jesus Christ as the hope of sinners, as in the eighth and ninth chapters of the second Epistle, where he discusses the great

question of Christian giving. In the passage also which is now before us, in this twelfth chapter of the first Epistle, we have a full treatment of the subject of service as rendered to Christ by disciples.

This most important theme is opened with a sentence that reveals Paul's sense of its value: "Now, concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I wish you not to be in ignorance." If Paul regarded it as of the utmost importance that a sinner should understand that there is no salvation without Jesus Christ, it was equally necessary for a saint to understand that every saved man is a servant of Jesus Christ, and has positive work to do for his Master.

We are apt to think that the spiritual gifts here referred to, were peculiar to apostolic days. Many who profess to believe in Christ have no conception that they also, like Paul, Peter, John and James, have spiritual gifts. Spiritual gifts are here treated as the fruits of the Spirit in every believer, as also in the twelfth chapter of Romans. Paul says these Corinthians had been the servants of Satan, led by him into the worship of idols; they once said of Jesus Christ, "Let him be anathema," or "accursed of God." But when they turned to Christ as a Saviour, the Holy Spirit taught them to serve God, and led them to call Jesus Christ, Lord or Sovereign—Master of their lives.

This *Mastership of Jesus Christ*,—not simply *Saviourship*, but *Mastership*,—lies at the basis of all service. He was crucified to bring to men atonement sufficient to save, but He was glorified to send to men equipment sufficient to serve. And no gospel is complete that shows Christ's atonement as sufficient for salvation, that does not show the Spirit's equipment as sufficient for service. And to this latter half of this double truth I call attention because

it is the neglected half, namely, the Mastership of Jesus Christ. Have you accepted Him as your Saviour? Accept Him as your Lord. Have you looked to Him for salvation by faith? Look to Him now for service by the power of the Holy Ghost. Spiritual gifts are distributed to every believer—special spheres for service are appointed to every believer, and certain operations or definite workings are manifested in and through every believer. That is the truth taught in this chapter.

There are many obscure references to the Trinity, which the careless reader will not notice, and these three verses (fourth, fifth, and sixth), contain one of those references. "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same *Spirit*," that is the Holy Spirit. "And there are diversities of administrations," or forms of service, "but the same Lord," that is *Jesus Christ*. "And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all," that is *God the Father*. So that the different gifts bestowed upon disciples, are here traced to the Spirit as their bestower, to the Lord Jesus Christ as Him to whom the service is offered, and to God the Father as Him through whom all power works in believing souls.

Let us fix in mind, then, this great fact, that the Holy Spirit never calls a sinner into the kingdom of God without giving to him his share of the gifts by which he is made serviceable; that the Lord Jesus Christ never saves a man without appointing to that man a sphere of special service; and that God never works by His grace in any believer without working in him fitness for service. The Mastership of Jesus Christ implies spiritual endowment and enduement, or the gifts of the Spirit's bestowment, and the equipment of power for the service to be rendered.

To refer all this back to the apostolic age, as though it has no reference to us, is to commit a great wrong both to our Saviour and to ourselves. We must learn the Divine principle of distributing spheres, and energy to work in those spheres, and call our Saviour our Sovereign Master; and begin at once, if we have not already begun, to render service to this Master as a grateful recognition of salvation freely given to us. Turning from all the idols that we have served, we must recognize the Holy Spirit as residing in our hearts and presiding over all our activities.

As already said, spiritual gifts were not confined to apostolic days. Nine of these *charismata* are here mentioned. "For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another, the word of knowledge; to another, faith; to another, healing; to another, miracles; to another, prophecy; to another, discerning of spirits; to another, divers kinds of tongues; to another, interpretation of tongues"—nine different spiritual gifts or endowments. It is not necessary, however, that spiritual gifts should in all ages be bestowed precisely in the same *form*, or to the same *degree*, as then. There may have been reason, then, for very marked gifts of the Spirit, because the Christian religion was being introduced among mankind, and needed the seal and sanction of God upon it; but, when once God's seal was broadly and plainly put upon this gospel message, as upon a document, it was not necessary that the seal should be repeated. There is not, however, one of all these spiritual gifts, bestowed upon apostles and disciples in the first age, that has not some closely corresponding gift, in the age in which we live, differing not so much in kind as in degree.

Can we see, for instance, any signs in our own age to the bestowment of the word of wisdom upon disciples? What

is wisdom? Spiritual wisdom is insight into truth with power to apply that truth to the wants and needs of others. Wisdom differs from learning, for a wise man is one that knows how to use knowledge, but many a man may have knowledge who has no wisdom. Spiritual wisdom implies this power both to see into a truth and into the wants and needs of souls, and the sagacity and skill to apply to them that truth. We may take as a single example of spiritual wisdom, John Wesley, one of the most remarkable men that ever lived. There was not one among the apostolic twelve that had more spiritual wisdom than he—insight into God's truth and insight into the needs of human souls and the methods by which spiritual life might be cherished and nurtured. The influence of John Wesley lasts to-day, and is growing every day, not only in the denomination of which he was the founder, but in every other body of disciples.

Have we nothing that corresponds to spiritual knowledge—knowledge especially of the Bible and of Christian truth? Take John Bunyan as an example. Let anyone read Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress," and note how, from the beginning to end, this man shows himself a master of the Word of God. See with what deftness and skilfulness he brings in the dialect of Scripture to describe his characters, their doubts and difficulties and trials and triumphs! See also with what marvellous power he uses the key of Holy Scripture to unlock all the conditions, perplexities, mysteries, and experiences of the human soul.

Have we nothing in these days that corresponds to the faith that wrought miracles? Study the work of George Müller, in Bristol; see those five orphan houses with their two thousand seven hundred windows looking out on Ashley Downs! Think of the millions of pounds sterling

that have been gathered and expended there without ever an appeal being made to a human soul directly for any aid whatsoever,—all in answer to prayer!

Is there in these days that which corresponds to the gift of healing? Follow Florence Nightingale in the Crimea and see her system of ministry to wounded and suffering soldiers, the like of which for efficiency and serviceableness has perhaps never been known in the ages of the Christian era; under her supervision a revolution took place in the condition of those soldiers which can be appreciated only by those who witnessed it.

The gift of miracles has its counterpart still, especially in that department of supernatural power that is exhibited in the preaching of the Word of God when the preacher is invested with that strange nameless charm which is called "unction." None of you ever heard George Whitefield, but when that mighty evangelist gathered 20,000 souls on Boston Common, in the United States of America, and that vast audience was bowed before him as reeds are bowed by heaven's winds, or as waves are swayed by a storm at sea, the American people felt, as the English people had felt long before, that such a man represented as much spiritual power or unction as any man who had lived since the days of the Apostle Paul.

In apostolic days there was the gift of prophecy. What was prophecy but insight and foresight and the faculty of teaching divine truth? Take a single illustration from many in modern times. Francis Wayland, an American, and one of the most remarkable men whom that country ever reared, a man, who not only saw into the state of things in the Church of his own day, but with mysterious forecast of the perils before it, uttered prophecies which are even now being fulfilled in the Churches of this generation.

Is there nothing in our age that corresponds to the gift of tongues? Think of William Carey, the humble cobbler of Hackleton, going forth one hundred years ago, this very year, as the first missionary from England to India; and who was the means of translating the Bible into forty languages and dialects, and making it accessible to 200,000,000 of the human race.

Is there anything in these days that corresponds to the interpretation of tongues? Think of the great work of such a man as Matthew Henry, whose volumes are on the shelf of every theological student. Look at that man's power of interpreting the Word of God, and bringing out its hidden meaning to thousands upon thousands of God's dear saints!

How nearly correspondent to the discerning of spirits is that power of discerning or discovering the motives of people, of reading their inner disposition and temper, and of detecting in the suggestions, made even by nominal disciples, the marks of the Holy Spirit or of the spirit of evil. When you find a man, for example, like Charles H. Spurgeon himself, who never met an enquirer after the new life in Christ, or a disciple who was searching himself for spiritual growth, for whom he had not instinctively the very word of Scripture or revelation of Christian experience which met the case,—what have you but a marvellous instance of the modern gift of discerning of spirits?

These few examples might be multiplied almost indefinitely, to illustrate the corresponding spiritual gifts of Christ's disciples in the very day and generation in which we live. But let us remember also that all the *graces* of the Spirit, when truly enjoyed by us, become also gifts of the Spirit; and it is quite remarkable that, as there are nine spiritual gifts here, there are just nine graces spoken of in

the Epistle to the Galatians, in the fifth chapter,—“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. These are the nine graces corresponding to the nine gifts.

Examples abound in modern history of these graces. For an instance of *love* take Coleridge Patterson, the missionary Bishop to Polynesia, the man who won the very savages themselves, through the intensity of his devotion to Christ and his devotion to the souls of men. *Joy* is exemplified in Count Zinzendorf, giving up everything for Christ,—fame, position, social rank, and wealth, and willing to go anywhere for his Master; and yet so jubilant in God that he said, “I feel as if I were walking on air,” even when treading through the most difficult and dangerous paths of self-sacrifice.

Peace was marvellously illustrated in Pastor Schmolke. With his parish burnt up, his wife and children in their graves, his own body afflicted with palsy and blindness, yet such was his peace that he dictated on his bed:—

“ My Jesus, as Thou wilt,
Oh, let Thy will be mine,
Into Thy hands of love,
My all I would resign.”

We read of Captain Allen Gardiner, at Tierra del Fuego, dying of starvation, with a piece of chalk writing on the rock, over the place where he fell and died, “Wait, O my soul, upon God, for all my expectation is from Him.” Even death by starvation could not break up the joy of that wonderful saint!

Longsuffering is illustrated in all the martyrs. Think of John Huss, of Bohemia; Jerome, of Prague; Savonarola, in Italy; David Livingstone, thirty-nine times scorched in

the furnace of African fever, going on with his work of exploring, and making a pioneer path for missionaries, dying on his knees in the little grass hut at Ilala. *Gentleness* is a special grace of the Spirit, and reminds us of Fenelon, the Archbishop of Cambray, whose gentle spirit was so winning that even unbelievers could scarcely abide in communion with him without yielding themselves to Jesus Christ, and one infidel actually fled from his presence because he could not endure the light of his kind, mild, beautiful eyes. *Goodness* finds modern example in John Howard, going on that "circumnavigation of charity," as Burke called it, visiting the prisons and the lazzarettos of the world, and dying himself from the infection of a fatal fever, and refusing to have a monument put up to his memory. Such goodness has had rare illustration in human history. *Faith*, as a grace, found in Martin Luther a unique illustration, bringing to resurrection the doctrine, which had long been buried,—justification by faith—and standing before the whole world as the apostle of faith in his own generation. Hudson Taylor is as remarkable an example of faith as Martin Luther was, and perhaps there was none in apostolic days that exhibited more of the charms of this grace than this modern apostle of missions. *Meekness* makes us think of Archbishop Usher, a man who had no superior in the history of the Irish Church, and yet whose whole soul was absorbed with a sense of unworthiness, and who died with this exclamation upon his lips, "Oh, my God, forgive me my sins of omission." *Temperance* is simply the bringing of the body under control, holding its appetites and its passions in absolute surrender to Jesus Christ. General Gordon, in the Soudan, has given us one of the grandest and most illustrious examples in history, of

such complete keeping of the body under, and bringing it into subjection to God.

Thus we have spiritual gifts, corresponding to those of apostolic days, differing not in kind but only in degree ; and spiritual graces, corresponding to those mentioned in Galatians, exemplified before our eyes by men and women of our own generation.

But, what shall be said about *natural* gifts, qualities, faculties, acquisitions and attainments ; natural endowments and studious attainments ? If the Bible teaches anything, it is that any gift which God has bestowed, or anything acquired and attained by study and effort and industry, may be made *the equivalent of a spiritual gift*, provided it is baptized with the Holy Spirit and consecrated by personal holy self-offering to God.

We might perhaps mention nine natural gifts which may thus all be turned to the uses of spiritual gifts. First, the gift of *speech*. What a marvellous thing is the human tongue and the human voice as the vehicle for the conveyance of ideas ! How grand, when a man like Robert Hall consecrates to God the powers of utterance, and uses the years of his human life in testimony to the gospel of his Master ! Is not such consecrated speech a spiritual gift ?

Take *song*. Many can sing who cannot make a speech. Philip Paul Bliss, the famous singing Evangelist, was the finest singer of gospel songs I ever heard. He fell in the great catastrophe at Ashtabula in Ohio, but he had for years given his entire self to the singing of the gospel, and reminds us of Frances Ridley Havergal, who said, "I will henceforth never sing but for my Master," and the echo of her song is yet in our ears.

Musical composition is another gift. Whenever you hear Handel's oratorios of the "Messiah" and "Creation," remember that those oratorios were consecrated on the same principle as a true preacher prepares a sermon; and the glory of the "Hallelujah Chorus" was the especial outburst of a devout soul when meditating on the final triumph of Christ and His gospel.

Even *handiwork* can be made of service to God. Christian women sometimes think that they can do little or nothing for Jesus Christ; but one of the most remarkable of all miracles in the New Testament was performed on Dorcas or Tabitha, that saint of Lydda. Peter was called to raise her from the dead, and all we know about her is this, that she had *used her needle* to make garments for the poor. She may have been a bed-ridden cripple, unable to lift her feet or her head, but she could use her hands. God has left upon the needle of Dorcas the stamp of divine approbation through all the ages. If you cannot do anything else, wield a needle for the Master—your needle work may be used by Him as a spiritual gift.

As to *invention*, God gives to some men power to find out new truths, invent new arts, organize new sciences, as He gave to Sir Isaac Newton, Sir Humphrey Davy, and Michael Faraday, three great Christian discoverers and inventors, to do their important work both for the Church and the world.

Then as to *learning*. When a man studies books, and digs into the roots of ancient tongues, that he may be the means of helping the missionaries of the Cross to master foreign tongues, and to prepare grammars and lexicons and translations of the Word of God for the use of various native peoples, is that no spiritual gift? Dr. Riggs, of

Constantinople, as he stood on the bridge at that city of the Golden Horn, heard some twenty different languages spoken by the men that crossed that bridge, and he understood all those tongues. Such learning as that, consecrated by a beloved missionary of the Cross, becomes a spiritual gift, used by the disciple for the glory of Christ and His kingdom?

Some men have the faculty of *teaching*, like Thomas Arnold of Rugby, who, on English soil, set up a school the fame of which has reached round the world, so that Arnold's school at Rugby became the model school. Was not that a service rendered to God, and was not the power of such teaching thus used by the Spirit, a spiritual gift?

Suppose a man has *leadership*, like Gladstone, the greatest statesman, and perhaps the greatest genius of the century—is not such power of leadership something that may be so hallowed as to be turned to the purposes of God's kingdom? Dr. F. E. Clark, the originator of the Society of Christian Endeavour, out of whose little organization in his own rural church in America have grown thousands upon thousands of societies of the like character, the object of which is to lead young Christians into a holy service for the Master, has made his faculty of leadership and organization a spiritual gift blessed to the whole church of God.

If you have not learning, the gift of speech or the gift of song, could not invent or discover, and have no acquisitions of any large character, and are not fitted for leadership, still remember that you may at least be a *helper* to those who can organize and can lead. Blessed be God, there is no service so small, no tribute to Christ so insignificant, that it has not a record on the book of God's remembrance. The humblest child who, by seeking simply to help in the least

ministries to saints, or promote the kingdom of God, turns such faculty of helping into a spiritual gift.

In the seventh chapter of this same Epistle a like doctrine is taught. The seventeenth verse reads thus:—"But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk." The twentieth verse reads:—"Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called"; and the twenty-fourth verse reads:—"Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called therein abide with God." Combine these verses, and what have you? "As God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. Let every man in the same calling wherein he is called therein abide with God." This shows us that anybody, anywhere, in any honourable business, calling, trade, or profession, if he will bring God to his help and make Jesus Christ the partner of his toil and the Holy Spirit the inspirer of his effort, may *in that calling abide with God* and fulfil the work of God. Here are hundreds of working men and women who could not aspire to what in human eyes is a large and important and influential sphere of service, but who from this teaching of God may gather this great lesson: "*All I have to do is to stay where I am, to bring God into my work, and glorify Him in my service.*"

May God write these five principles on our hearts and minds!

I. *Every lawful employment may represent a calling of God.* Observe the vast variety of human needs, and of the corresponding gifts, adaptations, and spheres. All this exhibits a divine arrangement, as in the body there are no two members exactly the same, even the two hands and the two eyes and ears being different; and yet there is not a

member, faculty, or organ of the body that is not contributing to the full strength and health and usefulness of the body. There are little capillaries, as they are called, or blood vessels, so small that it takes a microscope to see them, but if one of them does not do its service the health of the body is impaired. When I put my thumb over the palm of my hand I am covering thousands of little vessels which have to do with perspiration. Each one of these little vessels is like a drain, with its entrance and its exit, and the drain has to be flushed at times to get rid of impurities. So minute are these that one square inch will cover thousands of them, and yet if one of them does not do its service the health of the body is hindered. The body of Christ also consists of many members, organs, and faculties, and all that God asks you to do is to stay where He puts you and do the very best you can for Him and for the whole body.

II. *Every human faculty and acquisition may be construed as a gift of Almighty God distributed to us by the Holy Ghost.* In Exodus xxxv., from the thirtieth to the thirty-fifth verses, we are told, "The Lord hath called by name Bezaleel, the son of Uri, and Aholiab, the son of Ahismach, and hath filled them with the Spirit of God, to work all manner of workmanship in gold and silver, and brass and wood-carving, and embroidery." Think of that, that the Lord called a man to work in metals and in woods by His Spirit, endowed him by His Spirit to apply carving instruments to wood, to beat metal into shape, and embroider and weave. Think of that! a man may be just as much called to work in metals and in woods, as Aaron was called to officiate at the altar.

III. *Every sphere of honest and honourable work is a*

possible sphere of service to Almighty God. God may call you out of one sphere into another, but, in the absence of such a distinct call, the presumption is, that you are to abide just where you are, and instead of changing your sphere, bring into your sphere the Spirit of the living God. In the Baptist Churches of Great Britain are men, engaged in business, who undertake the charge of a mission hall, and, without leaving their business, preach there, administer the communion, and look after souls. They go to their place of work and spend a portion of their time in gathering that which is needful to supply temporal wants, and then go to minister to God's poor and sick and suffering ones. Why might not many more of the Churches at home be administered to by converted business men, who would preach the gospel as God gives them grace; while the trained men from the colleges and universities, might go to other countries, where we cannot depend as yet on the native labourers to do the work of God, but must have scholars, and teachers, and organizers, to translate the Bible and plan and conduct the missionary campaign. Conversion implies no necessary change of sphere, but only of the spirit with which the work is done—a new principle: all for God and all with God.

IV. *Every tool of trade is a possible weapon or implement with which to serve God.* When God saw Moses in the wilderness he had a crooked stick in his hand, for he was a shepherd, and had his crook; and God said, "*What is that in thine hand?*" He said, "A rod." God answered, "With that rod thou shalt do signs." God comes to you, a carpenter, to-day, and says, "What is that in thine hand?" "It is a plane, a saw, a chisel." "With that thou shalt do signs." "What is that in thine hand?"

You are a mason. "It is a trowel." "With that thou shalt do signs." "What is that in thine hand?" "It is a shoemakers' last, or awl and thread." "With that thou shalt do signs." "What is that in thine hand?" "It is a clerks' pen." "With that thou shalt do signs." "What is that in thine hand?" "It is a scrubbing-brush, or a broom." "With that thou shalt do signs." There is nothing that you have in your hand which is a proper implement or tool of your trade or calling, that God is not ready to sanctify by the Holy Ghost, and make it a means of service in His kingdom. And happy is the Church or the individual believer, that learns that great truth of the New Testament.

V. *Every gift and sphere must be consecrated, and then every lack will be supplied.* God never makes a mistake. When He called Moses to go to Pharaoh's court, with his stammering tongue, He knew what He was doing; He who could make Moses' stiff rod flexible as a serpent, could have made Moses' stiff tongue as flexible and fluent as that of Aaron. And if God calls you to any service all you have to do is to obey Him to the very best of your ability, just as you are and where you are. If you have not even accepted Jesus Christ as Saviour, much less as Lord, see what you are losing. You are not only forfeiting salvation, but you are forfeiting service. Begin to live, and to live for God. Accept Christ, to be saved by Him, first of all; and then ask the Holy Ghost to anoint you for your work for God. So shall the whole of your life hereafter be consecrated to His service; your workshop shall be your pulpit; the very tools of your trade shall preach His gospel; and however humble and commonplace the sphere in which the Lord has placed you, it will be blessed to abide therein with God!

RENUNCIATIONS AND COMPENSATIONS.

SERMON XI.

RENUNCIATIONS AND COMPENSATIONS.

“Rejoice in the Lord alway : and again I say, Rejoice.”

PHILIPPIANS iv. 4.

THIS verse sounds the key-note of this entire epistle : “Rejoice in the Lord alway : and again I say, Rejoice.” Three words may be written over this letter to the Philip-
pians, and they will explain everything in it : “*Satisfied in Christ.*” This is the disciple’s profit and loss account, and the key-word of the epistle is the word, “GAIN.” “But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ” (iii. 7). “I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (iii. 14). The prize of the high calling is the highest form of gain, the ultimate reward of the disciple. Add to these the text, already quoted, “Rejoice in the Lord alway : and again I say, Rejoice ;” and we have the scope of the apostle’s thought : all renunciations for Christ have abundant compensations.

You will see that on one side, as is customary in an estimate of losses and gains, Paul puts all that had been gain to him, and which he counted loss, and refuse, to be trodden under foot for Christ ; and, on the other side, he

puts down all that he has gained or won by the surrender of himself to Christ, and all that he will yet know and attain when the final sum of his gain shall reach its completion. After having thus put on opposite sides of the account the two classes of items, he strikes his balance, and the result is a showing of infinite enrichment; he is, beyond expression, the gainer by the excess of what he receives over all that he surrenders, so that he forgets everything that has been forsaken as of no value in comparison, and presses on toward the mark for the prize of the high calling. The motto of Paul is also found in this epistle: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (i. 21).

This is a letter to the Church at Philippi, founded by Paul, as we learn from the sixteenth chapter of the Acts. That Church was linked inseparably with the conversion of Lydia, a woman of Thyatira, and of the cruel jailor, whose hard heart was softened "that same hour of the night," so that he began at once to exhibit all the graces of a Christian disciple.

When God presents before us in the Holy Scriptures, a locked door which He intends we shall open and enter, so as to explore the riches of His glory and His grace, He always hangs the key very close to the lock of the door; and he who will only search a little will find the key, and opening the door, enter into God's palace of Truth, and be free to roam through all its glorious apartments and fill himself with its contents. It is the more pity that so many should read this Epistle to the Philippians, and not have seen that in the sixteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, God has hung the great key that unlocks all its doors. Paul wrote this epistle while a prisoner at Rome. He could not think of Philippi without thinking of Lydia, and the women

at the riverside ; without thinking of the mob and the riot, and the apprehension, and scourging by the magistrates ; without thinking of the jailor, of the stocks, of the prison, of the praises and the prayers of the midnight hour ; of the earthquake, of the conversion and baptism of the jailor and his household ; of his own assertion of the rights of a Roman citizen, and the servile manner in which they that had beaten him came and besought him to leave their city without making a disturbance, alarmed because they had inflicted on a Roman citizen an unlawful scourging. If the reader will bear in mind these experiences of Paul in Philippi, as he reads this epistle, upwards of fifty references to those experiences may be traced in the course of this letter ; and it will have a new charm and a new beauty for every reader who will take this key, and with it open and enter these chambers of truth, where so much instruction, promise, comfort, and consolation are stored for disciples.

Before we go further, it may be well to note a few of the references in this epistle to that experience at Philippi. Take, for instance, the twelfth and thirteenth verses of the first chapter : “ But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel.” He came to the city to preach the gospel, yet he meets a riot, is thrown into prison, and his feet put into stocks ; and it seemed as though the whole purpose of his coming to Philippi were frustrated by the power of the devil ; as though Satan, the hinderer, had gone before the apostle to make it impossible that he should accomplish the end for which he had been called into Macedonia. And yet, the very things that happened unto him were rather, in the end, unto the furtherance of the gospel, for the jailor that thrust him into

prison was, next to Lydia, the first convert in the City of Philippi, and he and his household were baptized that same hour of the night, believing and rejoicing in God. When Paul was a bondman, a prisoner at Rome, chained by the hand to a soldier of the Prætorian Guard every morning, to have another soldier take his place as guard the next day, he recalled this experience in the Philippian gaol, so that he says: "My bonds in Christ are manifest *throughout the whole Prætorian guard*, and in all other places; and many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear." How plain it is that this prisoner at Rome wrote these words, thinking of the imprisonment at Philippi, and how God there made his bonds in Christ to turn unto His glory. Then, again, in the twentieth verse: "So now also Christ shall be magnified in *my* body, whether it be by life, or by death." In this epistle, over and over again, reference is made to the condition of things when he was in that city. In the third chapter, twentieth verse: "For our conversation is in heaven." The Greek word means: "Our *citizenship* is in heaven." It was at Philippi that he asserted the rights of a Roman citizen, and he could not write to Philippian Christians without remembering that fact, and reminding them that it was not in his *Roman* citizenship that he took most joy and pride, but in his citizenship of that city, the heavenly Jerusalem, the capital of the Kingdom of God; and that his final appeal and allegiance was not to Cæsar as his lord and master, but to Jesus Christ Himself.

So when, in the fourth chapter and fourth verse, he says: "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice," he must have thought of those praises and prayers offered when he and Silas were held fast in the stocks in that inner

prison ; and, when he adds, in the eleventh verse : " For I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content," was he not thinking of the pain of his scourged back and fettered feet, and how the peace of God still filled his heart, in the midst of this most trying experience ? In the words of the twenty-third verse of the first chapter, he may refer to the confinement in the stocks : " For I am *in a strait betwixt two*, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ ; which is far better : nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you." A man with his feet in the stocks yearns to get them out of their wooden fetters and be a free man, and yet he is bound fast. May not Paul have had those stocks in mind when he wrote of the strait in which he was, fastened to this world by the decree of God, while yearning to get up yonder, where the " lame man shall leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing." But let these brief examples suffice to call attention to the way in which that experience, narrated in the sixteenth chapter of the Acts, opens the door to the understanding of this epistle.

Let us now catch more clearly the key-note of this whole anthem of joy, as found in the words of the text : "*Rejoice in the Lord alway.*" You cannot always rejoice in man, nor in yourself, or your external surroundings ; but you can always rejoice *in the Lord*. In this epistle, twenty times at least Paul uses such words as "rejoice," "joy," "peace," "contentment," or some other of similar import. Even his heavy cross was forgotten in the crown, and the crown was anticipated even in the earthly experience of suffering and sorrow. And so the supreme idea of this epistle is seen to be the idea of GAIN. Paul's zealous love for the Philippian Christians brings him gain, for it makes

him magnanimously forget even his bonds in Christ Jesus for their sakes. The supremacy of Jesus Christ in his heart brings untold gain, for it lifts him into the regions of boundless joy if only Christ be preached, if only Christ be magnified, if only Christ be glorified. His very self-denials are turned into joyful triumphs, his crown of thorns blossoms into roses, and the cross on which He is crucified becomes the tree of Life and Glory, like that which John saw on the banks of the river of life; privation ceases to be privation and becomes privilege; death is not death but the doorway of life, and therefore of infinite gain.

No less than twelve of the fruits of this self-surrender are referred to in this epistle, and they seem to present to us in one view the sources of his confidence and the grounds of his rejoicing.

1. First, as we have already seen, Paul *rejoiced in his bonds* in Christ Jesus, because, being chained to a soldier, he was enabled to speak the gospel message to that soldier; and, having a new guard chained to him every day, he was enabled in the course of due time to speak in turn to the whole of the Prætorian Guard. What a blessed triumph it is, when a man rejoices in fetters, thanks God for his bonds! The very clanking of the chains of the apostle Paul had a voice for his Master! When Dober, the Moravian missionary, first went down to St. Thomas to labour for the blacks, and was told that he could never get a chance to reach and teach the slaves there because he was not a slave himself, he said, "We will sell ourselves into slavery and work by their side." Dober rejoiced in bonds for Christ Jesus if those fetters could be the means of telling the gospel story. Paul and Silas rejoiced in the

stocks if the stocks could be the means of a wider preaching of the gospel; and Paul writes that his own imprisonment, and his own boldness in preaching Christ notwithstanding his imprisonment, became the means of inspiring courage and confidence in more timid souls, so that many other brethren were waxing bold and confident to speak the Word of God in the face of opposition. Here, then, are the first fruits of the joy in God that filled his soul. Bonds could not bind such joy, fetters could not restrain the exuberance of such rejoicing in God; he thanked God for chains that preached the gospel, for a prison that echoed with his testimony, and for permission to set an example of suffering, that made other timid souls bold to bear the cross.

2. Observe, secondly, how he rejoiced *in the fact that Christ was preached*. Here we meet one of the strangest paragraphs in the whole of the New Testament. He says, in the first chapter and fifteenth verse, "Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will. Some indeed preach Christ of contention—in a contentious spirit—not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: but the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice." We can understand how a true disciple will rejoice when Jesus Christ is preached by some who do not believe exactly as he does; as a Baptist may rejoice in the testimony of a Methodist, or a Presbyterian, or a Congregationalist, or an Episcopalian. Any charitable, godly man, would be glad to have the gospel preached by a brother of another denomination; but Paul's charity goes farther. There were those who were not preaching Christ sincerely, but in

a jealous spirit, an envious spirit, an ungodly spirit; yet this devoted man was so glad to have Christ proclaimed that he could still rejoice even when Christ was preached by his own enemies, by those who were insincere, or even hypocritical. Of course he did not rejoice in their insincerity or hypocrisy, but he was glad to have the gospel message go forth even from unanointed lips. No doubt God has used some men who have never been themselves converted, to bring home the gospel message to other souls. We would by no means encourage an unconverted ministry, but we thank God that He has sometimes used men that have not been themselves regenerated to tell the story of the gospel to others that needed that gospel; and we ought to rejoice when, in any way, or by any means, Christ is preached, even though God may please, for the time, to use those that have a contentious and an insincere spirit. Did not Leigh Richmond preach the gospel, when yet an unconverted man, and awake people to a sense of sin when, as yet, he himself had not been awakened? No doubt, in some cases, the spiritual progress of the hearers has greatly exceeded that of the preacher, and God has used His own Word to lead them to the Saviour, and then to a sanctified life, when the preacher himself had not as yet found salvation and sanctification. Chalmers used to say that, before his great sickness at Kilmany, he had preached the gospel without being a converted man; he had at least grave doubts about his own saved state up to that time. It is certainly a marvellous triumph of grace in any man that he can rejoice in any method by which the grace of Christ is made known and sinners brought to the acceptance of salvation.

3. Again, Paul rejoiced in *Christ's being magnified* through his own suffering. "According to my earnest expectation

and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (i. 20, 21). Whether by life or death, he resolved that Jesus Christ should be glorified. His words here are often carelessly misquoted:—"For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." He does not say, for me to live is to advance the cause of Christ, or Christ's glory is the object of my life and of my death; but he says, "*for me to live is Christ,*" as though his life were a sort of continuation of Christ's incarnation; as though Christ were to be so embodied and represented in the life of the true disciple as that there should be a practical perpetuation of the life and ministry of Jesus among men. In a sense that is true, for the Church is called "Christ's body," and the body is the incarnation of the spirit. So far as you represent Christ in your temper, your disposition, your spirit, your affection, your conduct, so far is Christ incarnated in you and you become a manifestation of God to the world, somewhat as Christ was God manifest in the flesh. If the disciples of the Lord lived in God and lived for God as they should, there is a sense in which Christ would still be manifest in this world, and manifested to the ungodly, for He would be seen in the disciples somewhat as God was seen in Him. Paul was so thoroughly united with the Lord Jesus Christ that for him to live was a practical perpetuation of Christ's presence among men, and he rejoiced in anything that happened to his body—imprisonment, fasting, scourging, death—it was all one to him if it thus magnified and glorified his dear Master.

4. Paul rejoiced also in *the mind of Christ*. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (ii. 5). What

was this "mind"? It was the mind of self-renunciation, which was most of all exhibited in Christ Jesus in His self-surrender for the salvation of men. He exchanged His throne for the manger, the crown of glory for the crown of thorns, the royal raiment for the swaddling clothes, the worship of angels for the mockery of persecutors and revilers. The Lord of Life came down to die, and He who held the keys of death went through the grave for our sakes. That was "the mind of Christ." It is called in this same epistle, Christ's *emptying Himself*, for such is the force of the expression, "made Himself of no reputation." The same word could be used of a vessel that, having been filled with some precious substance, was turned upside down and so emptied. "He emptied Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Paul rejoiced to partake of that mind. From the hour that he became a disciple he was entirely given up to God; he ceased to love himself and live for himself and seek his own ends. On the way to Damascus he lost his life for Jesus' sake, and found his life anew in serving Christ and saving souls. That mind which was in Christ was the innermost secret of Paul's joy. As long as we seek anything for ourselves we forfeit real bliss, but as soon as we stop all self-seeking and seek everything for our Master, we attain unto that felicity which is the forecast and foretaste of heaven.

5. Paul rejoiced in *being offered for the sake of men*. "Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all" (ii. 17). What is the difference between "sacrifice" and "service"? The ceremonies of worship in the tabernacle or temple consisted of two things; there were bloody offerings or sacrifices, and there were unbloody sacrifices; the former signified the

expiation of sin by blood, and the latter, like certain peace offerings and thank offerings, were an expression of gratitude to God. In the ancient ritual of the Levitical dispensation, the priest, after slaying the bullock or kid, and pouring out the blood beside the altar, carried the blood and sprinkled it on the table of shew bread, the golden candlestick, the altar of incense, and the mercy seat; and this activity of the priest, who thus passed from altar to altar, and from one to another of the sacred furnishings of the Holy place, was known as *service*, as the offering of the victims was known as *sacrifice*. Paul therefore says, "Yea, and if I be offered upon the *sacrifice and service* of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all." He could rejoice to be a slain victim on the altar for the sake of developing faith in unbelievers; or to spend his whole life in service for the sake of other souls; to be both priest and victim, both officiating minister and sacrificed offering. Can there be any higher joy in God than that? The ancient Moravian seal which seems to have been originally taken from pagan Rome, had upon it, an ox standing between the altar on one side, and the plough on the other; and the motto underneath was, "Ready for either." The true disciple is ready to toil at the plough in service, or ready to bleed on the altar in sacrifice. Paul lived out the whole meaning of that motto, which he may have seen on old Roman seals, and could say, I rejoice with you all if I am permitted to be offered as a sacrifice, like a bullock on the altar, or to toil, in the service of your faith, like an ox at the plough.

6. Another element of his joy was his *knowledge of Christ*. "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count

them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith : that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death ; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead " (iii. 8, 9, 10). The knowledge of Christ here is a very large term, and includes four things : justification by faith in His blood ; the fellowship of Christ's suffering ; the power of his resurrection life ; and the literal resurrection from among the dead.

Let us tarry a moment to consider these four things. First, if I am in Christ Jesus I stand before God justified and accepted ; nearer to God and dearer to God I cannot be, because in Christ I am as near and as dear as He is, since God for Christ's sake loves me as He loves Him ; and, as a member of the body of Christ, I am loved, for the whole body, head and members, stand before God as one. Again, Paul was a " partaker of Christ's suffering." Christ gave up the crown of glory for the crown of thorns, and the throne for the cross. Paul's fellowship with Christ was found in doing as Christ did, emptying himself of all that he counted gain—worldly glory, fame, riches, power, influence—for the sake of his Saviour and Lord. So he writes to the Colossians, first chapter and twenty-fourth verse : " Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the Church." If those words are a mystery, let us ask ourselves, " How are souls saved ?" Of course you will reply, by the blood of Christ, by His atoning death. But how does the *knowledge* of that death

and of the blood shed by Him reach the sinning soul? Some human teacher proclaims the Word, the tract distributor goes with his tracts, the Bible distributor with the Bible, and the worker for Christ with his witness, into the midst of misery and poverty and sin; and so disciples tell others of the Lord Jesus Christ. The believer in Christ Jesus is the ordinary, if not the indispensable link, between Christ on the cross and the soul in bonds; between Christ on the throne and the sinner in the poverty and misery of sin. The believer, who carries the tidings of salvation to the unsaved, is "filling up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in his own flesh for His Body's sake, which is the Church." Just as a hand, stretched out and grasping another hand, may become the link between some fallen one and a new life, the believer stands between the Saviour and the sinner and becomes the link of connection between the two. And so Christ permits us to partake of His self-sacrifice and join Him in uplifting souls into a saved state. That is "the fellowship of Christ's suffering." What is "the power of His resurrection?" In His resurrection Christ left the elements of corruption in the grave and rose never more to know death. In resurrection life you leave the old man of sin in the grave, and put on the new man of holiness, renewed in the whole nature as that life is created anew in Christ Jesus. The term here used, *resurrection from the dead*, is the translation of a Greek word, used nowhere else in the Bible, which is a compound word. To the word which means resurrection is prefixed another word which makes it mean an *elect resurrection, from among the dead*. We are taught that there is to be a first resurrection, referred to in the fourth chapter of first Thessalonians, and fifteenth verse, and which in many other parts, both of the Old and New Testament, is

more or less clearly indicated or anticipated. What is a resurrection *from among* the dead? When Christ rose, the dead did not all rise, but some saints rose, after His resurrection, and went into the holy city and appeared unto many. In the twentieth chapter of Revelation we are taught that there is coming a day when the *dead in Christ* shall rise, while the rest of the dead shall remain sleeping until the general resurrection; and that those who rise in that first resurrection are to be associated with Christ in the manifestation of His glory, and the exercise of His power. Paul knew he should have a resurrection, for all the dead are to be raised; but he wanted a part in the *first* resurrection from among the dead, that elect resurrection, when the bodies of saints, which sleep in Jesus, waiting for His appearing, shall rise to meet Him, and be for ever with Him. And so Paul says, "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection from among the dead," the elect, first resurrection. This, then, is the knowledge of Christ: to know Him as my righteousness by justification, to know Him as my sanctification in the power of a new life, to know Him as my companion in fellow-suffering, to know Him in the fellowship of His resurrection from among the sleeping dead.

Paul hints six other grounds of rejoicing, all of which are in this fourth chapter: such as the peace that passeth all understanding, the thoughts of God, contentment with God's dispensations, the strength which Christ supplies to all His servants, and the fulfilment of the assurance that we shall be with Him at last. "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Four

things express the sentiment of those verses : careful for nothing, thankful for anything, prayerful for everything, peaceful at all times ; carefulness is gone, and prayerfulness, thankfulness, and peacefulness, take its place. We seem to see the imprisoned apostle, his feet fast in the stocks, smarting with recent scourgings, in the darkness of midnight, in the foul air, fasting, yet praising and praying ; careful for nothing, thankful even for the prison, the stocks, and the scourging, prayerful in everything, and filled with the "peace of God, which passeth all understanding."

Paul hints that he found joy in thoughts of God. "If there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, *think on these things.*" The highest object of reading books is not to gather a little information, or store a few facts and truths in the memory, or even to have communion with authors, or to acquire through literature culture and refinement of taste. The highest object of reading books, or of communing with men, is *to leave in the mind a precious deposit*, as a stream flowing over its bed leaves its residuum on the very sands and pebbles over which it flows, the red of iron, the green of sulphur, and the glitter of gold. The object of holy thoughts is to grow like God. Chalmers once asked a little boy who was absorbed in thought, "What are you thinking of?" "I was thinking of how God can be eternal," said the boy. "Go on thinking, my boy," said the great Scotchman, "many a man has grown great by thinking of God." Blessed are they, who, banishing from their minds the frivolities and pleasures of this world, the intoxicating vanities of time, open their minds and hearts so that God pours into them the stream of everlasting life that leaves in its very channel the precious deposits of Heaven.

Paul enjoyed perfect contentment. "For I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." How few know anything of such satisfaction! Paul's content came from his confidence that God was *his God*. I thank God for one sweet lesson that He has taught me in the last few years, for which I would not take all the fabled riches of the Indies. When I came to see that I had been doing work *for myself*, He taught me how much sweeter and better it is to work *for Him* than to work for myself; but there was another lesson still sweeter yet to be learned: *to think of Him as doing the work, and of myself as only the instrument that He uses*. It is quite enough to be a rod that He shakes, a saw that He moves to and fro, an axe with which He fells a foe, a sword with which He pierces a conscience, a vessel of earth which He fills. If it is God who does all the work, and you are nothing but an instrument, you are rid of all care and worry and anxiety; surely the Lord can take care of His own work; and if He chooses to lay down the instrument He once took up, you may glorify Him just as much when you are silent as when you are speaking; if He who chose to fill the vessel, chooses to empty it again for another filling, let Him choose His own way in which to use you, and in any way seek to glorify Him. If He sets you aside, and you seem to be imprisoned and in the stocks, still praise Him, and learn, in whatsoever state you are, therewith to be content.

How stands your profit and loss sheet? Is there anything you count gain? Then count it loss! Is there anything you count as of particular value? Bring that to the Lord! What costs you most to surrender and renounce will give you most satisfaction and compensation. Have you been working for self? Cease all selfish work at once,

and come to Christ as your Master, and take His yoke upon you. What things you counted gain count as loss, and tread under foot as the refuse of the dung-hill, that Christ may come and fill your soul ; so shall you know what it is not only to be justified in Him, but to be sanctified in Him, and satisfied in Him ; and so at last you shall know also what it is to be glorified with Him !

DUTY, A DELIGHT.

SERMON XII.

DUTY, A DELIGHT.

“I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.”—PSALM xl. 4.

THE sign given to Hezekiah was that the shadow went backward on the dial Ahaz. The Psalms show that they are inspired because on their dial the shadow goes forward: that is, they foreshadow or forecast conceptions of divine things and attainments in divine life far beyond the age in which they were written. The most advanced saints find in these breathings of holy men of old, marvellous spiritual maturity. Their standard or index was set up in faint light of dawn, yet the shadow on their dial marks the full glory of noon. The religious development of centuries discovers no blemish in their beauty, no flaw in their spirituality; we are amazed at the aspirations they breathe, the aims they inspire, and the truths they unfold.

Upon a closer study of the Psalm, whence these words are taken, the first thing which arrests our attention is the true and clear view here found as to the Jewish sacrifices. The whole course of Hebrew history shows us that the drift of the Mosaic ritual was toward formalism. Through the perversion of a sinful nature, men laid stress on the

sacrifice but passed over its real significance. Now and then, an Abel's altar with its expression of faith in the lamb that should be slain; but over against it, many a Cain's offering which corresponded to no inward flame of pious love. While men burned their victims, their sacrifice could not be accepted because sin lay at the door. With eyes strangely blinded by depravity they saw not the spirit beneath the letter, but vainly thought that the blood of bulls or of goats, or the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, could in some way suffice to cleanse moral guilt; and so when to God's altars they led the firstling of their flock, with a narrow literalism they persuaded themselves that duty was done, independent of their state of heart.

But the writer of the Psalm before us reveals a deeper insight into the true spiritual significance of these rites. "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire: mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required." He, who thus writes, saw and recognized the real import of smoking altars. His ears had been opened to hear, beneath the letter of the command, the whisper of its spirit. He saw that it was not the outward sacrifice which God desired, but a sincere sorrow for sin: not the offering of a victim which He required, but a holy self-dedication: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit." "Then said I, Lo I come!" The pious soul, whose holy emotions find language here, feels that in themselves all mere oblations and libations and ceremonial rites are useless when divorced from habitual obedience. Instead of contenting himself with presenting a victim, with a sublime spirituality, he says: "Lo *I come*"! He becomes himself the victim, offers himself a living sacrifice, to drag at the plough, to bleed at the altar; and, lest it should seem that

even this were but an unwilling, constrained service, he adds: "I delight to do thy will, O my God." In other words, God's pleasure is his pleasure. "Yea, thy law is within my heart," the object of choice and love.

I. We instinctively recognize here an expression of the *highest type of piety*. This marks the Psalm as Messianic, since it was fulfilled only in Christ. He, above all who in heaven or on earth ever sought to do God's will, manifested a *habit* of obedience, a *choice* toward obedience, and a *delight* in obedience; and when we remember the peculiar relation he sustained to those rites and sacrifices as himself the sacrifice of which those rites were figures, we cannot but apply especially to Him the language of this Psalm.

We must not, however, limit its application to the Messiah; for, though this ideal became perfectly real only in Him, the piety here breathed is not to be thought of as beyond the imitation of every disciple. Jesus stands as the divine model and pattern of a believer's life. He may well take the first rank and place in the van while holy hearts march onward: yet he goes before us as Leader: we are to come after as followers.

Let us then endeavour to grasp and bring home to ourselves the thought of the text. The days of the old ritual have passed away; but the days of heartless sacrifices have not passed with them. How often do we bring to God's altars the offerings of our service, goaded on simply by a sense of obligation? How often do we give our money to benevolent ends without any benevolent impulse, seeking to silence conscience rather than to satisfy a craving to do good! How often do we outwardly discharge some duty under no nobler impulse than a cold, hard necessity! How many have no heart in their sacrifices:

feel no interest in their offerings ; find no joy in doing right ; and are glad when right is done only because they have got out of the way of a claim ! Dr. Watts, in his hymn, wrote that

“ God abhors the sacrifice
Where not the heart is found.”

Yet what is a constrained and unwilling obedience but a heartless sacrifice ? Is an outward, or even a conscientious, compliance with God’s commands all that He asks and has a right to expect of us ? When the Jew brought his bullock to the altar, if it was merely to meet the letter of God’s requirement, the flame of his sacrifice bore no incense to God ! And how can we expect our offering to yield the savour of a sweet smell unto Him if He looks down upon us only to see that, behind all our outward compliance, there lies a real reluctance !

The text suggests a sublime contrast to all this : it represents a phase of obedience so far in advance of this that the two cannot be placed upon a level, even for a comparison. These few words reveal a profound sympathy between a human soul and God. Why does *He* do right ? Not from any constraint of duty. There is no law, back of himself, to which He conforms : He is a law unto Himself. In being good and doing good, he cancels no debt save that which he owes to His own character. He is holy in his sympathies and in His administration for the same reason that the sun shines, because *it is His nature !* When a holy soul can therefore say, “ I delight to do thy will, O my God,” it reveals a holy affinity, a profound sympathy with God.

Noah and Enoch walked with God. “ Can two walk together except they be agreed ? ” It is not passing over the

same path which makes us true companions in travel ; there must be an inner agreement, a sympathy of soul, a fellowship of feeling. To walk with God, then, is not merely to follow a right course, to live a life of moral rectitude ; many a moral man is blameless in his outward conduct : there must be secret harmony of thought, and love, and life, a oneness of desire and purpose between man and God, before one can ever become worthy of so grand a record as that which is written of those holy men of old. He only has true fellowship with God to whom duty is delight. The text expresses therefore the highest conception of life, and lifts us to the loftiest level. No child in piety ever uttered this rapt exclamation. The maturest manhood in Christ gets no higher than where duty is delight ; and Heaven itself promises no nobler maturity—no riper godliness, than to bring such fruit to perfection in a complete union of obedience and happiness ; and, therefore, the nearer we come to finding a true, sure, positive and permanent joy in doing right, the closer we approach in spirit to those gates of pearl, within which no desire is known, save the will of God.

The highest type of obedience is never assumed by a soul till its purest happiness is found in a full surrender of itself to God, to serve or to suffer. When we bring *ourselves* to the altar, then there floats up to God, an odour of sweet incense.

When we look at the believer's experience we find in it three stages. First, a sense of *danger*, when fear rouses him to flee from the wrath to come ; then a sense of *duty*, when conscience urges him to do that which he feels to be right ; and last, a sense of *delight*, when choice impels him to do and bear God's will. Then it is that perfect love casts out tormenting fear as a motive to obedience, and we obey God's

law, not because we are in terror of its penalty, but rather because we love and choose to do it. Duty has become delight. This last stage of experience is the highest, and heaven only is higher. We assume this without argument ; it is beyond argument. Like an axiom it proves itself ; our instinct tells us it is true. We can see in our own children the contrast between these three motives : fear of punishment, constraint of filial duty, and that love towards us that, by a secret sympathetic union of heart, makes our wish their will. And we know this last to be the noblest impulse to obedience, for it implies no constraint. It is not submission but sympathy ; it is scarcely obedience, so much as a simple harmony of wills : and to just such a Christian life as this Our Father would have all His children aspire. He tells us, He "loveth a cheerful giver," and what does He mean ? Think with yourselves how we commonly give, "grudgingly and of necessity," not because we yearn to bestow but because we dare not withhold. Conscience acts like a force-pump within us, and our benevolent offerings, so-called, come drop by drop into the cup of God's thirsty poor ; whereas love, rather than duty, should, like springs of water in a dry place, pour forth our charities, naturally and spontaneously, in obedience to a law of our inner life, plentiful and constant, yet leaving fulness of joy and love, behind.

Indeed, what we call spontaneity is, everywhere, a law of the highest life. What principally distinguishes God's work from man's work is this : Man never makes anything which sustains or supplies itself ; what God has wrought He seems to have endowed with a life of its own. Man makes a lamp : however brilliant its light, he must feed its flame every instant, or it goes out in darkness. God lights a million lamps in the sky and they shine on for ages. Every product

of human skill has a forced mechanical life, while what God creates has a life to all appearance spontaneous, natural.

Facts correspondent to these exist in the spiritual sphere. The man who tries to make himself better reaches no higher than a life of outward morality. His conduct may be blamelessly correct, but it is a forced development. His education, ambition, selfishness, self-righteousness, and a hundred other motives, are called in to prompt and prop up propriety of deportment. When God makes a man better, He begins *within*: He changes his moral sympathies: plants the germ of a new principle whose growth is to develop hatred to sin which he once loved, and love to holiness which he once hated. All this is the preparation for a spontaneous life of obedience which is the fruit of a new nature. He means that the germ shall root itself in us; that we shall choose to do right, so that, were there no law, we should be a law unto ourselves. Then, if every outward condition changes: if society grows so corrupt that religion is no longer popular or respectable; if education is so perverted that vice is crowned instead of virtue—if every outside motive to a correct deportment is gone; then, while the worldly man, whose moral life is the result of expediency, shapes his conduct and his creed to suit the change of outward conditions, the Christian still chooses what his new nature recognizes as the will of God, delighting to do what may bring upon him hatred, persecution, martyrdom.

With the Psalmist he exclaims: "Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in His commandments." Or, with Jeremiah: "Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart," or, with St. Paul, who from the holy company of the apostles responds to the goodly fellowship of the prophets: "I delight in the law of God

after the inward man." Or, with Job, he can say, even amid deep darkness, "I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food." How elevated such a life! Jesus could say no more than this: "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me." Thus the spirit of the old and the new dispensations is one. Holy men of all ages affirm the same law as regulating the highest life of piety. Prophets and apostles, saints of old time and disciples of latter days, sympathize with each other, and with Him whose delight it was to do God's will.

II. To delight in God's will supplies the *noblest motive*. It is quite common to hear the idea advanced, that he who acts from a sense of duty is controlled by the noblest of motives. Is this so? Where duty and delight seem opposed, a commendable self-denial will give up the delight and take up the duty. But he who thinks duty and delight are opposed, lives a comparatively low life. If he gets high enough up for a true view, he will see that all opposition between happiness and holiness is only apparent. The roads of duty and delight never cross each other. "Her ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace."

Does he command a true prospect of life, who does his duty only as he pays any other debt? If God had given His only Son to die, so as to pay a debt He owed to the race, the sacrifice had lost nearly, if not quite, all of its moral sublimity. It was because it cancelled no obligation, but sprang from the impulses of pure pity, that it transfigures His character with perfect glory, and vindicates His claim to that highest of titles, Love!

The *godlike* life is swayed by the same golden sceptre. It acknowledges no constraint but that of love, and knows no unwillingness whatever. You and I cannot deny that to do

God's will because it is our delight is nobler than to do it because it is our duty. Duty is often the dictate of a moral or religious education and may be accepted as a yoke. Thousands read the Bible, pray to God, go to church, keep the Sabbath, simply yielding to the pressure of early training: a mother's lessons or a father's prayers have built up barriers which fence them in, leaving open no other road but that which from the force of habit they follow. Does it index no higher life to find such happiness in God's word, and day, and house, as that we should seek our delight amid such surroundings, even were there no command to compel, no duty to urge, no conscience to constrain? If we act simply as a beast of burden obeys the goad, because we would silence the voice of duty, is there not something selfish in such action? Can we claim anything noble or magnanimous, in an obedience whose main object is to give us ease of mind? Is there not an element of meanness in doing right only because conscience will lash us if we do wrong? Is it not possible to do some things, "consulting only a sense of *duty*, which a magnanimous *love* to God and man forbids"?

Piety is not so much any conformity of outward life, as it is a disposition toward the divine, which in a growing Christian will become more and more habitual as a law of life, and in a sense unconscious. It will become less a struggle and more an impulse of the new nature to love divine things, and duty will thus change to delight, till it will be almost involuntary to do right, so little hesitation will there be in choosing the path of duty. A young disciple is thus like the musical pupil, who, in playing his exercises, keeps thinking how he is sitting, holding his hands, and managing his fingers. The mature disciple is more like the master in whom practice

and habit have made it possible to lose sight of what is merely mechanical in what is spiritual about music, till he forgets the instrument in the inspiration of musical enthusiasm, and becomes no longer merely a practicer of scales or an imitator of others, but a creator and composer of musical harmonies. It may be that this spontaneous life of obedience is an elevation to which but few ever attain, this side of heaven, yet it is not because it is beyond practical reach. He who makes it his habit to aim after true holiness will find more and more that it ceases to be an effort to be good and to do good, as he rises to real and almost unconscious sympathy with goodness. And this unconsciousness therefore is another mark of the highest life.

III. The text expresses also the *highest spiritual liberty*. In civil government, the nearer we get to a true idea or ideal of liberty the less does government seem to exist at all, for the highest freedom involves unconsciousness of restraint or constraint. The law sits upon us like a perfectly fitting robe; so unfettered are all our motions that so long as we are loyal subjects we forget we are subjects: in a sense we are not restrained. St. Paul wrote, as a philosophic statesman, "The law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient." Perfect law in a perfect government never makes itself felt until it is transgressed. Under God's administration both legislative and executive powers are exercised with such perfect wisdom and goodness that a holy subject in His kingdom should be wholly unconscious of any pressure of external control, free from every rein of government, a law unto himself. How is it? Gabriel never asks himself whether he is acting in conformity with the law of God. He is in complete subjection, yet unconscious of restraint or constraint. Obedience is

natural because delightful. But one path is open to his choice, and he knows no other. The orbit of duty is the perpetual circle of delight. I do not believe the unfallen angels ever knew such a thing as law with regard to themselves. In perfect sympathy with God, they choose the right independently of its being His will. They are drawn into the same line of direction with His life without feeling controlled by Him!

That this is the highest estate of liberty no one will deny. On earth we may not reach a perfect obedience, but our freedom will be directly in proportion to the completeness of our subjection. The divine government will be a burden or restraint only so far as we violate the rule of right. The 119th Psalm, a splendid monument to the law of God, abounds in such raptures as these: "Thy testimonies are my *delight*," &c. Is it strange that he who could so enthusiastically and repeatedly say this should also exclaim, "I will walk at *liberty*, for I seek Thy precepts!"

It seems strange to us that so many unconverted people, when they speak frankly, confess that they "have not the slightest interest in religious things." Yet, aside from the general effect of a sinful nature, there is a special reason: they have never learned the consistency between law and liberty. They think of religion as bringing an irksome round of tasks, as hedging them in with stern restraints, as offering a life not of self-advancement, but of severe self-denial. They think if they become disciples of Christ they can no more do what they *wish*, but only what they *ought*; they have never imagined that a human soul can rise to a stage of experience where one shall wish to do only what he ought; or if they dream of such a harmony of choice and duty it is as of something far beyond their own reach.

And do not some disciples give the world too much reason to think that living unto God is at best but voluntary acceptance of irksome servitude, instead of delightful service? We betray dislike toward duty, and talk of what we *ought* to do as though we yearned to shirk it. But what if we should delight to do God's will—what if when we impress others with an idea of the new life, we should lead them to feel the truth that it is in every sense the only real good, the highest spiritual liberty—would others then feel so little interest in religious things?

“If the Son therefore shall make you free ye shall be free indeed.” The Christian is the Lord's freeman: it is the sinner who is wearing a yoke of bondage; and he who has escaped the obedience of fear and learned the subjection of love enjoys the highest liberty of the sons of God. And we misrepresent and belie Christianity before others whenever we lead them to suppose that it rules by the iron sceptre of duty. We may not have known its golden sceptre of love, but it is the fault of our narrow, selfish worldliness. He who will surrender himself completely to its sway, shall find the Christian experience such a blending of God's life with man's life, as maketh His will our will, and His service perfect freedom!

IV. The text expresses the truest preparation for a *life of service* to Christ. When duty becomes delight we are fitted for our highest usefulness, for that is inseparable from the highest piety, the noblest motive, and the truest liberty.

It takes us needlessly long to discover or realize that to serve God successfully we must serve him spontaneously. Those who most win souls are those who delight to do God's will. If others see that it makes us happy to be disciples of Christ, that we are under no constraint, galled by no

fetters of conscience, confined by no severe restrictions ; that we are simply walking at liberty because we love to do God's will, we become to them living epistles. They learn to think of our religion as lovely and winning. So, in direct effort to be of service, he who acts under pressure of a sense of duty to another soul becomes formal and mechanical in attempting to do good. His approaches are coldly intellectual, not emotionally fervent. They chill others.

Let it once be seen that duty is delight ; that, like Jeremiah, one feels the word of the Lord like a burning fire shut up in his bones, and that he cannot hold his peace because he is aflame with love to Christ and souls, and how will all he says thrill with new life, and power, and inspiration ! It becomes a two-edged sword, keen at the edge, burning at the point. Men may feel little interest in hearing another say what he is forced to utter because he feels that he ought ; but no man will lack attentive audience who speaks from a full heart, which would burst if denied expression.

Here, perhaps, lies one point of difference between the "righteous man" and the "good man," of which St. Paul speaks. The righteous man acts from a sense of duty. His outward life is blameless, yet it is coldly mechanical in its compliance with God's commands. His rigid adherence to the maxims of virtue and religion challenge respect without winning love. And "scarcely for a righteous man will one die."

The good man acts from love to God and man ; while his outward life is no more exemplary, its impulse is nobler and grander. He delights in doing good. Always in the way of duty, there is a naturalness, a spontaneity in his obedience, which makes his life a centre of attraction. He tests his sense of duty by the law of love, lest under a mistaken

abstract idea of right he should be gratifying some really ungenerous feeling. His conduct is shaped, not only upon the principle of building up a fine character, which is kindred to selfishness, but upon that nobler principle of exercising the best influence. The righteous man goes about doing *right*; the good man goes about doing *good*; and "peradventure for a good man some will even dare to die." For he wields the noblest influence, and wins the strongest love of others, who delights to do God's will.

The text finds its ideal fulfilment only in Jesus. Yet mark how natural were his efforts to do good. In fact, he made no effort; not a word was forced from him; nothing was by constraint; everything was of choice. Holy influences flowed out from his soul into others. So natural were all his approaches that they took others captive as by surprise. Without knowing how or thinking why, they found themselves won alike to hear his words and lay bare their own hearts. His conversation at the well of Samaria is perhaps the most remarkable instance on record of a purely religious talk with an entire stranger. Yet nothing can be more easy, natural, graceful, than His approaches to her inmost soul. And his words to her tell us the secret of his own success, and how we may secure a similar influence. "Who-soever drinketh of the water that I shall give him . . . it shall be in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life." There is the secret: a heart gushing up and running over with its own full life, knowing no force but from within.

Ordinarily a sculptor does not himself work the marble: he fashions the clay model, leaving to the mechanical workman to work out in stone what he has not the imagination to invent, or think out in mind. What a wide

difference between them! The workman, for a certain sum, undertakes the task of giving to the creation of the artist's genius simply a more enduring form. He feels, perhaps, but little interest in his wearisome work. His aim at most is to be rigidly accurate and correct in copying the model. Everything is done by rule. How different the experience of the sculptor! He finds in his work a rest, a relief. An image is stamped upon his mind, his brain burns, his heart throbs! Yearning to realize his idea, and give it a tangible shape, a rapture thrills him. The consciousness of a power to create fires his soul and stimulates his energies. The Greeks called such a state of mind "*enthusiasm*"—an inspiration from God.

We are too often only the mechanical workmen when we ought to be sculptors of life. We aim to shape our lives after the pattern showed us in the word of God, without aspiring to intense sympathy with Him who wrought out the only model of a perfect life! He did not design that we should simply imitate His life: that makes a righteous man; but rather that we should resemble Himself: that makes a good man. In one case we are the mechanical workmen aiming after an outward conformity to a divine pattern: in the other case we imbibe the spirit of Christ, catch the inspiration of His purpose, become His disciples, pupils in the art of holy living, and He the great Master; we are learners not of the letter, but of the Spirit. Then we are prepared to work out a result which is in a sense, our own, original. The principles which underlie all true life appear in our own, but in new combinations. It is the likeness of similarity rather than of sameness—of inward sympathy as well as outward conformity. The disciple, like the Master, delights in duty, and that delight is his inspiration.

Ask yourself, then, whether you would do right from choice, even in the absence of a law of right. Had God not said, "Thou shalt reverence my house," could you say, "A day in Thy courts is better than a thousand?" Then do you in so far delight to do God's will. By such tests try every act of obedience, and if you find that any act done from a sense of duty is essentially an unwilling act, rest not content until you can say, "Thy word have I hid in my heart: I delight to do Thy will." Then will you be conformed more and more to the image of His Son.

But, perhaps, you ask, how may duty become delight? And all that has been said finds its practical value in the answer. What then are the secrets of such divine attainment?

There are at least four great helps to attaining delight in duty.

1. First, we must habituate ourselves to *think of God's law in its true light*. We do great injustice to Him when we construe the rule of duty as an arbitrary regulation. God has, in Himself, infinite will-power; yet His perfect goodness forbids the framing of a code, without consulting the best good of His creatures. His perfect *law* is the expression of His infinite *love*, and is designed to promote the highest happiness of His subjects. If we accustom ourselves always to think of His law in the light of His love, we shall see more and more clearly the perfect consistency between obedience and happiness. The more we learn to interpret His commands by His benevolence the more shall we delight to do His will.

2. Secondly, there must be *holy fellowship with God*. No unregenerate man can know such experience of delight in duty, for it is born only of the Spirit. It is not a fleshly

product, and to it the carnal mind is a stranger. Except a man be born from above he cannot enter into, or even see, this truth. Only so far and so fast as the Holy Spirit of God possesses, controls, and transforms our spirit, can we delight in doing God's will. There must be a new creation, new appetites, and tastes, and longings. Nor will it do to be merely a child of God, unless there is actual and growing sympathy with God. This must, therefore, be distinctly *sought in prayer*.

3. Thirdly, there must be a *full surrender to God*. No half-hearted disciple can ever know this bliss, which is at once the fruit and crown of self-oblivion. God can reveal His supreme joy only to those whose whole being is open to His incoming and indwelling. One unbarred shutter may keep a room dark, and one unsundered idol may keep out the light of God's presence. To lay at God's feet one's whole self, like an un mutilated victim laid on the altar, is to know the descent of that fire from above, which is the sign of an accepted offering, and the foretaste of heavenly glory. No man delights to do God's will whose whole will is not given up to God.

4. But, most important of all, duty will become delight in proportion to our *faithful discharge of duty itself*. If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine we have now taught. Experimental proof transcends all argument: it is the irresistible logic of life! The more perfectly His will is done, the more delightful will it be to do it. The more complete your obedience, the more positive your happiness. Heaven alone has perfect bliss, for heaven only has perfect obedience. And if you will never let the voice of duty speak in vain, if you will obey every holy impulse, if you will cheerfully take up

every cross, it will become a second nature to you to do right. The ways of heavenly wisdom will seem more and more the paths of pleasure and of peace. You will desire no other, and a growing attachment to the right will be the certain fruit of increasing adherence to the right, till at last you will be able with truth to say, I delight to do Thy will, O my God!

We are reminded once more of the beautiful myth about the "wingless birds," who first took up their wings as burdens to be borne, but found them changing to pinions, which, in the end, bore them. We are the birds without wings. God puts our duties before us to be patiently assumed for His sake. But, though at first they are loads, we shall be able afterward to say, with dear Rutherford, "The cross is the sweetest burden that ever I bore: such a burden as wings are to the bird," that help it to soar; "or, as sails are to the ship," that help it to catch the breeze that wafts it to the desired haven.

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