



Bodleian Libraries

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

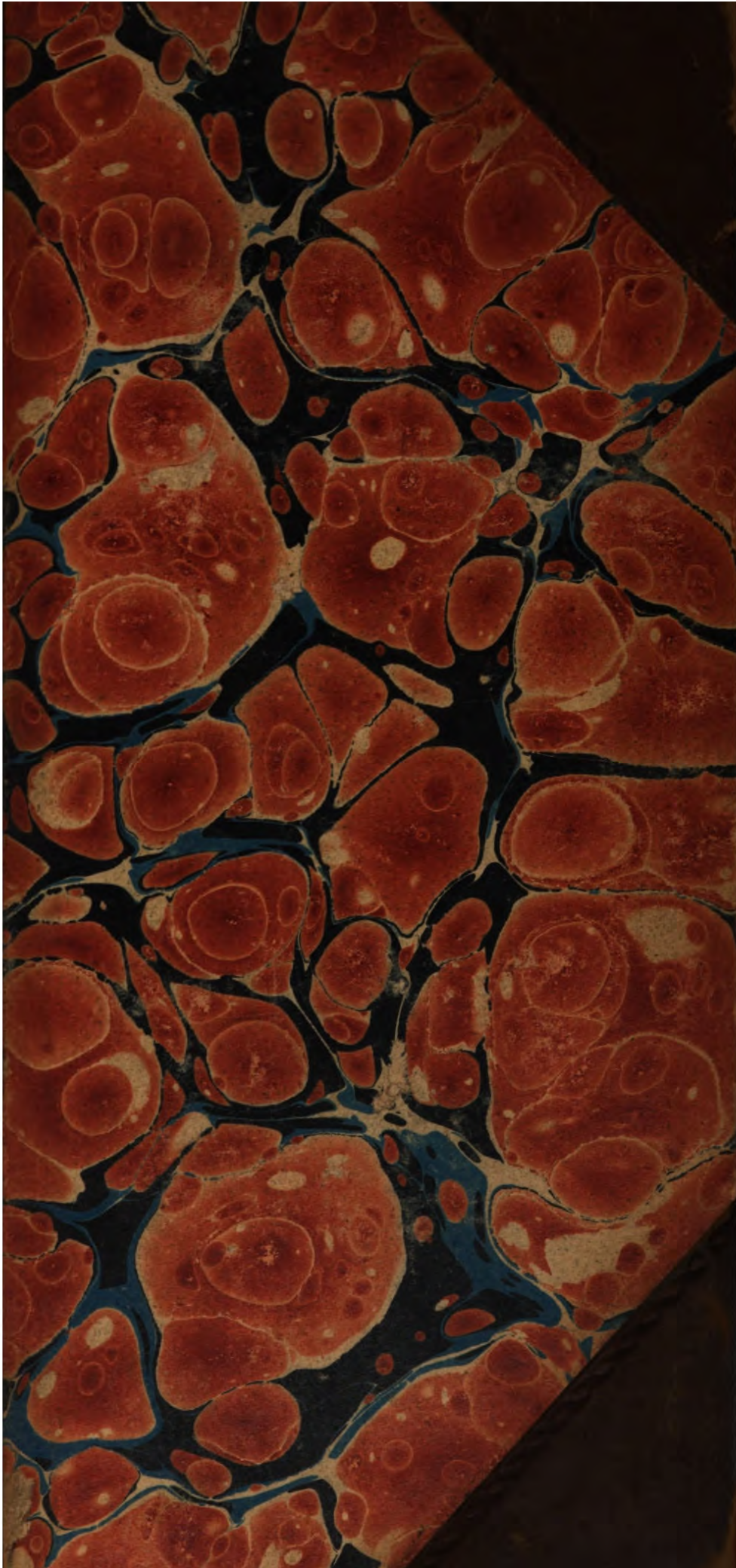
This book is part of the collection held by the Bodleian Libraries and scanned by Google, Inc. for the Google Books Library Project.

For more information see:

<http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/dbooks>



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 2.0 UK: England & Wales (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) licence.





600034076Q

41.

310.







SERMONS.

PRINTED BY
L. AND G. SEELEY, THAMES DITTON, SURREY.

SERMONS

PREACHED IN THE CHURCH
OF
THE UNITED PARISHES
OF
ST. ANDREW BY THE WARDROBE, AND
ST. ANN, BLACKFRIARS.

BY THE
REV. JOHN HARDING, M.A.
RECTOR.

PUBLISHED BY R. B. SEELEY AND W. BURNSIDE:
AND SOLD BY
L. AND G. SEELEY, FLEET STREET; HATCHARDS, PICCADILLY;
AND PORTER, SLOANE STREET, CHELSEA.
MDCCCXLI.

Handwritten scribbles or marks in the center of the page.

CONTENTS.

SERMON I.

LUKE XIX. 41, 42.

AND WHEN HE WAS COME NEAR, HE BEHELD THE CITY,
AND WEPT OVER IT, SAYING, IF THOU HADST KNOWN,
EVEN THOU, AT LEAST IN THIS THY DAY, THE THINGS
WHICH BELONG UNTO THY PEACE! BUT NOW THEY ARE
HID FROM THINE EYES *page 1*

SERMON II.

JEREMIAH III. 22.

RETURN, YE BACKSLIDING CHILDREN, AND I WILL HEAL
YOUR BACKSLIDINGS. BEHOLD! WE COME UNTO THEE,
FOR THOU ART THE LORD OUR GOD *page 14*

SERMON III.

JOHN XIV. 6.

JESUS SAITH UNTO HIM, I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND
THE LIFE *page 26*

CONTENTS.

SERMON IV.

HEBREWS XI. 6.

WITHOUT FAITH IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO PLEASE GOD
page 37

SERMON V.

GALATIANS III. 21, 22.

IS THE LAW THEN AGAINST THE PROMISES OF GOD? GOD
 FORBID, FOR IF THERE HAD BEEN A LAW GIVEN, WHICH
 COULD HAVE GIVEN LIFE, VERILY RIGHTEOUSNESS SHOULD
 HAVE BEEN BY THE LAW. BUT THE SCRIPTURE HATH
 CONCLUDED ALL UNDER SIN, THAT THE PROMISE BY FAITH
 OF JESUS CHRIST MIGHT BE GIVEN TO THEM THAT
 BELIEVE *page 51*

SERMON VI.

EPHESIANS I. 6.

ACCEPTED IN THE BELOVED *page 64*

SERMON VII.

EPHESIANS II. 4—6.

GOD, WHO IS RICH IN MERCY, FOR HIS GREAT LOVE WHERE-
 WITH HE LOVED US, EVEN WHEN WE WERE DEAD IN SINS,
 HATH QUICKENED US TOGETHER WITH CHRIST; (BY GRACE
 YE ARE SAVED,) AND HATH RAISED US UP TOGETHER, AND
 MADE US SIT TOGETHER IN HEAVENLY PLACES IN CHRIST
 JESUS *page 77*

SERMON VIII.

EPHESIANS v. 25, 26, 27.

CHRIST LOVED THE CHURCH, AND GAVE HIMSELF FOR IT,
THAT HE MIGHT SANCTIFY AND CLEANSE IT WITH THE
WASHING OF WATER BY THE WORD, THAT HE MIGHT
PRESENT IT UNTO HIMSELF A GLORIOUS CHURCH, NOT
HAVING SPOT OR WRINKLE, OR ANY SUCH THING, BUT
THAT IT SHOULD BE HOLY AND WITHOUT BLEMISH

page 90

SERMON IX.

HEBREWS VIII. 10.

THIS IS THE COVENANT THAT I WILL MAKE WITH THE HOUSE
OF ISRAEL AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAITH THE LORD ; I WILL
PUT MY LAWS INTO THEIR MIND, AND WRITE THEM IN
THEIR HEARTS *page 104*

SERMON X.

ROMANS VII. 22.

I DELIGHT IN THE LAW OF GOD, AFTER THE INWARD
MAN *page 117*

SERMON XI.

ROMANS XV. 3.

EVEN CHRIST PLEASED NOT HIMSELF *page 130*

SERMON XII.

1 SAMUEL XVII. 50.

SO DAVID PREVAILED OVER THE PHILISTINE WITH A SLING,
AND WITH A STONE *page* 142

SERMON XIII.

PSALM LXXIII. 1.

TRULY GOD IS GOOD TO ISRAEL *page* 155

SERMON XIV.

MATTHEW XV. 23.

BUT HE ANSWERED HER NOT A WORD *page* 170

SERMON XV.

PSALM XXXI. 14, 15.

I SAID, THOU ART MY GOD: MY TIMES ARE IN THY
HAND *page* 183

SERMON XVI.

PSALM XLVI. 1.

A VERY PRESENT HELP IN TROUBLE *page* 197

CONTENTS.

ix

SERMON XVII.

PSALM xc. 1.

LORD, THOU HAST BEEN OUR DWELLING PLACE IN ALL
GENERATIONS *page 209*

SERMON XVIII.

GENESIS xxii. 14.

JEHOVAH JIREH *page 223*

SERMON XIX.

JOSHUA xxiii. 14.

AND, BEHOLD THIS DAY I AM GOING THE WAY OF ALL THE
EARTH: AND YE KNOW IN ALL YOUR HEARTS, AND IN
ALL YOUR SOULS, THAT NOT ONE THING HATH FAILED OF
ALL THE GOOD THINGS WHICH THE LORD YOUR GOD
SPOKE CONCERNING YOU; ALL ARE COME TO PASS UNTO
YOU, AND NOT ONE THING HATH FAILED THEREOF.
page 238

SERMON XX.

REVELATIONS xxi. 5, 6.

AND HE THAT SAT UPON THE THRONE SAID, BEHOLD I
MAKE ALL THINGS NEW. AND HE SAID UNTO ME, WRITE,
FOR THESE WORDS ARE TRUE AND FAITHFUL. AND HE
SAID UNTO ME, IT IS DONE. I AM ALPHA AND OMEGA,
THE BEGINNING AND THE END. I WILL GIVE UNTO HIM
THAT IS ATHIRST OF THE FOUNTAIN OF THE WATER OF
LIFE FREELY *page 252*

TABLE OF SUBJECTS.

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| 1. THE PUNISHMENT OF UNBELIEF. | Luke xix. 41, 42. |
| 2. THE PENITENT COMFORTED. | Jeremiah iii. 22. |
| 3. CHRIST THE WAY TO HEAVEN. | John xiv. 6. |
| 4. THE NATURE AND NECESSITY OF
FAITH. | Hebrews xi. 6. |
| 5. THE LAW AND THE GOSPEL. | Galatians iii. 21, 22. |
| 6. ACCEPTANCE IN THE BELOVED. | Ephesians i. 6. |
| 7. BELIEVERS SAVED IN CHRIST. | Ephesians ii. 4, 5, 6. |
| 8. THE FRUITS OF CHRIST'S LOVE
TO THE CHURCH. | Ephesians v. 25, 26, 27. |
| 9. HOLINESS A NEW COVENANT
BLESSING. | Hebrews viii. 10. |
| 10. THE LAW OF GOD A CHRIS-
TIAN'S DELIGHT. | Romans vii. 22. |
| 11. CHRIST AND HIS PEOPLE PLEASE
NOT THEMSELVES. | Romans xv. 3. |
| 12. THE FIGHT OF FAITH ILLUSTRAT-
ED. | 1 Samuel xvii. 50. |
| 13. DIFFICULTIES IN PROVIDENCE
EXPLAINED. | Psalm lxxiii. 1. |
| 14. UNANSWERED PRAYER. | Matthew xv. 23. |
| 15. CONFIDENCE IN GOD. | Psalm xxxi. 14, 15. |
| 16. GOD A VERY PRESENT HELP IN
TROUBLE. | Psalm xlvi. 1. |
| 17. JEHOVAH THE SAINT'S DWELLING
PLACE. | Psalm xc. 1. |
| 18. JEHOVAH JIREH. | Genesis xxii. 14. |
| 19. DIVINE FAITHFULNESS ACKNOW-
LEDGED. | Joshua xxiii. 14. |
| 20. THE FUTURE BLESSEDNESS OF
CHRIST'S PEOPLE. | Revelations xxi. 5, 6. |

SERMON I.

LUKE XIX. 41, 42.

AND WHEN HE WAS COME NEAR, HE BEHELD THE CITY,
AND WEPT OVER IT, SAYING, IF THOU HADST KNOWN,
EVEN THOU, AT LEAST IN THIS THY DAY, THE THINGS
WHICH BELONG UNTO THY PEACE! BUT NOW THEY ARE
HID FROM THINE EYES.

THAT Jesus should weep at the sight of Jerusalem doubtless did appear to many in the crowds surrounding Him most strange and unaccountable: that as soon as the magnificent city and her temple broke upon his view, He should burst into tears, must have seemed a mystery indeed.

All Jews were wont to triumph in the sight. Jerusalem! the joy of the whole earth! the city of God! it was their pride and their delight. Yet when Jesus beheld it, He wept! But not long did He leave those who observed this to question the cause. His heart was full, and out of the abundance of the heart his mouth must speak.

His heart was full of grief. The throngs of people attending his steps all were shouting their

hosannas : “ Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord : ” and loud were the voices “ rejoicing and praising God . ”

Still the settled melancholy on the Saviour’s brow shewed no sympathy in these exultings : and the tears which quickly followed told that his holy soul was far from joy.

No, that soul was burdened with a heavy load of woe. The thought of Jerusalem’s then condition, and of her impending trouble, weighed down his spirit : and as He wept He poured forth this lament, explaining in affecting terms the mystery of his distress, “ O that thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong unto thy peace : but now they are hid from thine eyes . ”

Brethren, let us bear in mind that these things have a relation to ourselves. Jerusalem, her sins, and her sufferings, are beacons held forth in the word of God, a warning to us. So may we this day fix our thoughts upon them.

The words of the text will be found to yield three important matters for our consideration.

I. A GRIEVOUS SIN OF WHICH JERUSALEM WAS GUILTY.

II. A FEARFUL JUDGMENT WHEREWITH GOD VISITED THAT SIN.

III. AN AFFECTING DISCOVERY OF THE SAVIOUR’S FEELINGS IN REFERENCE TO BOTH.

I. In the text we note the SIN OF WHICH JERUSALEM WAS GUILTY. It is expressed in the words, “ if , ” or would that, “ thou hadst

known the things that belong unto thy peace." Here was her crime: she did not know, she wilfully neglected and refused the things in which her peace, her happiness, and safety were involved.

And what things were they? They were the things of God's truth and will: the things which in olden times Moses had taught, and the Prophets had spoken, and in later days the Baptist had preached, and above all Jesus Himself, in his own person and ministry had set before them.

Had the Jews as a nation listened to the things which in these various ways Almighty God had revealed, then their peace should have been secured to them.

But, alas! Israel had all along been miserably blind to their own interests. In Isaiah's day we hear the Almighty's expostulation with them: "Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go. O, that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments, then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea."

And so it was still. God had now spoken unto them even by his Son. The Lord of glory, clothed in human form, had come with messages of grace, to guide the feet of sinners to the way of peace and bliss. But the Jews rejected him. "His own received him not." The multitude did indeed at times, excited for a moment by the wonders which He wrought, begin their hallelujahs to his name. And some few there were

who did in truth believe his word, and love him as their Lord.

But the nation at large would have none of his counsel. The things which He taught, and which, had they received them would have led them to all blessedness, they heeded not. Jerusalem had not known, and would not know, the things belonging to her peace : and this was her sin.

Brethren, the same sin may perhaps be lying this day on some of you. Do not hastily put the thought from you, and say it can never be. Think awhile.

Are none of you giving more heed to the things of this life, than you do to the things of the life which is to come? You rise early, and late take rest, and eat the bread of carefulness, but as to the making your salvation sure, has it cost you any real anxiety, any heartfelt concern? Are none of you following the vanities of earth, and the pleasures of sense, and the indulgence of wilful sin, while as you well know, Jesus and his love have been unheeded and undesired.

Now consider, I beseech you, what is your situation. Are you better than Jerusalem? Ye who give all your care to the business of this life, the gains of commerce, the joys of the world, the indulgence of your lusts ; ye who have never felt your sins, have never turned to God, have never with seriousness and earnestness of spirit craved pardon through the blood of Jesus, nor sought the renewal of your hearts by the

Holy Ghost ; ye who stand convicted in your own souls of having neglected the very things which God in his word, and by his Son, has taught you are the things belonging to your peace ; I do ask you, is not Jerusalem's sin *your* sin ? God speaks, and you will not hear. Christ comes, and you heed him not. You put from you the grace of God, just as did Jerusalem.

O that we could open sinners' eyes ; O that they could see what it is they do ; O that God would now put forth his power and make all hitherto heedless, impenitent, unbelieving souls among us to feel their state, and tremble to think upon their crime—a crime no words are equal to describe, that of sinful and perishing men, treating with indifference, negligence, yea, with contempt and refusal, the word of their God, the word his Son has spoken, the word which would tell them how they may have peace with Him, his favor, his love, his glory.

The Lord of his mercy forbid that the sentence of judgment should go forth upon any of us on the same ground as was alleged against Jerusalem, "*because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.*"

II. We mark in our text the awful nature of THE JUDGMENT WHEREWITH JEHOVAH VISITED JERUSALEM'S SIN. How is it expressed ? "The things that belonged to her peace : now," said Jesus, "they are hid from thine eyes."

'The things thou *wouldest not* know, thou *shalt not* know : thou shalt be left to thy hard-

ness and impenitence of heart, so “treasuring up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.”

This then was Jerusalem’s punishment—to be abandoned to her own unbelief and its inevitable consequences; surrendered of God to her own wayward will in rejecting his truth, so bringing ruin on herself and her people.

Mark then here the just severity of God. Jerusalem said, ‘I will not see.’ What is God’s sentence? ‘Thou shalt not see: the things that belong unto thy peace shall now be hidden from thine eyes.’

There is a passage in the twelfth chapter of St. John’s Gospel, placing this awful but equitable dealing of God towards the Jewish people in a most clear light. There you read how that though Jesus “had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on Him,” fulfilling what Esaias said in prophecy, “Lord, who hath believed our report, and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?” What then follows? “Therefore,” St. John proceeds, “therefore they *could not* believe;” they were given over to darkness and ignorance, and a spirit of unbelief, “because that Esaias said again,” that is, in pursuance of another prophecy where it was declared, “He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, and be converted, and I should heal them.” Healed and saved they could not be so long as they continued impenitent, unbelieving, unconverted.

And, therefore, because God had resolved that He would not heal and would not save them, He gave them up to their blindness and hardness; his sentence was, let them alone; I leave them in their sin: unbelief has been their *crime*, unbelief shall be their *punishment*.

A very short time and the tremendous consequences of this sentence of the judgment of God began to appear. The whole body of the Jewish people proceeded, but a few days after the words of our text were spoken, to fill up the measure of their sin, crucifying the Lord of glory by the hand of their Roman governors. Then, after his resurrection, when his Apostles went forth in his name, teaching his truth, declaring the fact that he was risen, and asserting that Jesus was Lord and Christ, notwithstanding all the evidence which proved the truth of the Apostles' words, and in spite of all the miraculous witness which on the day of Pentecost, as well as afterwards, God Himself so abundantly gave to the testimony of the Gospel, the Jewish people still refused to believe, they "contradicted and blasphemed." Thus they continued in their sin, given up to judicial blindness. A few years more, and their most terrible calamities began. Titus came and besieged their city, and ravaged their land. Jesus himself had foretold it, and every letter of his warning was fulfilled. "The days shall come upon thee that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children

within thee : and they shall not leave one stone upon another." Exactly as the Saviour predicted, so it came to pass. Josephus, the Jewish historian, gives us the account. He tells us how Titus built a wall all round the city, imprisoning its inhabitants within it. Thousands upon thousands, crowded as they were together, perished by famine. After this, eleven hundred thousand of Jews, he states, fell by the sword of the Roman soldiery. The temple was plundered and fired ; the city completely sacked : and its walls levelled with the earth, a few towers only being left as monuments of the victory gained. " The rest of the wall," I quote the words of Josephus, " was so thoroughly laid even with the ground by those who dug it up, even to the foundation, that there was nothing left to make those who came thither believe it had ever been inhabited." A singular testimony from one, himself a Jew, an enemy to Christ, yet so minutely verifying all that Christ had spoken.

From that day what has Jerusalem been ? A wreck ! a very wreck, and in the hands of infidels and enemies.

And what have Israel been ? Even what God said they should be. He said it more than three thousand years ago, and we now witness the fact, " a nation scattered among all people, a proverb and a by-word." See then, brethren, the punishment of Jerusalem and her children, for refusing to know the things that belonged unto their peace. First, their eyes are blinded, they are left to their impenitence, and so they go on adding sin to

sin ; and then, when they have filled up the measure of their iniquity, wrath comes upon them to the uttermost.

Sinner, look at Jerusalem, and read thy warning there ! Read there the way in which God deals with those who trifle with his word, who treat with carelessness the Gospel of his Son, who will not heed his warnings, who care not to enjoy his love, who know not, and will not know, the things that belong unto their peace.

Have any of you who hear me been thus indifferent and negligent respecting the Lord Jesus Christ, and the truth and grace of God revealed in Him ? Then let me beseech you to beware. It is a possible case,—God may say of you as he did of Jerusalem, ‘ let their eyes be blinded, and their hearts hardened, let them have their own way, and go on in their unbelief, and worldliness, and sin, so shall they remain unconverted, unforgiven, unsanctified, unsaved : they shall never awake from their slumber, they shall never be concerned about their souls, they shall never seek salvation, they shall never know Christ, they shall be left to multiply their sins, my Spirit shall never restrain them, or strive with them, or turn them to me ; day after day, year after year, they shall as they list add to their crimes, and at length the day of death shall come, the day of their perdition ; their souls, imperishable, never dying souls, shall go down to hell, laden with guilt, and crushed beneath the fierceness of that wrath which must abide on them, and that for ever, the wrath due to their sin,

and all because they would not know the things that belonged to their peace.'

O sinner! the case, I say, is possible; it may be yours, to be thus given over to impenitence and to destruction. You will feel no fears, you will have no alarms, for the truth will be hidden from your eyes: you will remain as you now are, thoughtless,—it may be even confident: but ere long, death, judgment, eternity, and the worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched, all these will come on you as in a moment, and you shall be "utterly consumed with terrors."

Take warning then. Be assured there is a meaning in those words of the Apostle, mark them I entreat you, "because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved, God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believe not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

These are awful words indeed, but they are true. They tell us, just as our text does, how God deals with men that will not hear nor see the things of their peace. He seals their eyes, He closes fast their ears, they are under a strong delusion; "peace, peace," they cry, "but there is no peace" for them; and so they die, and are lost.

Then, sinner, we repeat it, be warned in time. Provoke not God thus to sentence thee to thine own impenitence. That sentence once passed, thy doom is fixed: thy judgment is already begun.

III. Having noticed thus Jerusalem's sin, and Jehovah's judgment on that sin: it remains to observe what were the FEELINGS DISCOVERED BY THE BLESSED JESUS IN REFERENCE TO BOTH.

We cannot but be struck on the one hand by the pity, compassion, and grief, which the Saviour manifested toward the guilty city and her people: on the other hand by the tone of inflexible justice and truth, with which he foretold their doom. On both these particulars, let us offer a few remarks.

Note the pity of the Saviour, the compassion which he evinced towards a hardened unbelieving people, and his grief in contemplating their guilt and their condemnation. Abhorring *sin*, how does He mourn for the *sinner*. Frowning on Jerusalem's impenitence, and threatening Jerusalem's fall, He weeps, weeps bitterly at the prospect of her suffering. "O that thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong unto thy peace!"

It was no joy to Him, that Jerusalem should be condemned to woe. His very soul melted within Him at the thought. Most truly had He rejoiced, could He, consistently with the claims of eternal holiness and truth, have spared and rescued her from ruin. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not."

Brethren, I would that sinners could but see a Saviour's pity for lost souls. Alas, how many of them are prone to regard the warnings and

threatenings which they hear from the Gospel of Christ, and from the ministers of Christ, as only so many outbursts of harsh severe vindictiveness; they think it savours of no tenderness, to speak as we do of judgment and damnation and eternal woe, and secretly their hearts revolt against the truth of God, and they deem it all uncharitable and unkind.

O would, I say, that they could see the Saviour's heart, even while judgment is on his lips, all full of grief for such as are in their sins! And would they could understand how pity and compassion for them can dwell in christian hearts, even while, knowing the terrors of the Lord, we lift the warning voice.

Nay, brethren, think not, when we speak of your guilt, and tell you of danger, and warn you of the wrath to come, that it is in harsh unfeeling pride. We trust we have not so learned Christ. We mourn for you, in some measure we would hope, as Jesus wept for Jerusalem. We look at you, and think of you as fellow creatures and fellow heirs of eternity: we know that sinners dying unpardoned and unchanged, must spend that eternity in woe beyond all expression terrible: we fear lest *you* should so die: we know not how soon your day may come: we feel sure that if death seize you as you are now, there is no hope, you must be lost: you are yet in the world, in sin, afar from Christ and from God: and we cannot but mourn over you. O the agony of the thought that you, with whom we have lived, and conversed, and whom we have

seen every day around us, and it may be, have had cause to love and esteem as friends in this world, should ere long be numbered with the lost, the hopeless, the condemned ; shut up in the prisons of endless misery, eternity rolling ever on and on, and you still wretched, still unrelieved, weeping and wailing in anguish and despair.

Believe me, sinner, Jesus weeps, and his ministers weep, and his people weep, all weep for you : even though they speak the words of warning as they do. But can they speak otherwise ? Glance again at the text. Mark the Saviour's unhesitating declaration of a coming judgment. Why did Jesus so inflexibly pronounce, in the midst of his tears, Jerusalem's doom ? Because truth compelled Him. He could not do otherwise. And why does He speak by his word, and by his ministers, so awfully to you ? For the same reason. Truth requires it. It is no matter of *opinion*, but a matter of certainty, that if you will not know the things that belong to your peace, the consequence must be your ruin for ever. No being in earth, or heaven, can save you. God's own truth and justice demand your condemnation. God cannot save the man that dies in sin.

Then, sinner, now, at least in this thy day, be persuaded. Consider thy ways. Pray God to pardon and convert thee. Who can tell, this day may see thee saved ! The Holy Spirit touch and turn thy heart !

SERMON II.

JEREMIAH III. 22.

RETURN, YE BACKSLIDING CHILDREN, AND I WILL HEAL
YOUR BACKSLIDINGS. BEHOLD! WE COME UNTO THEE,
FOR THOU ART THE LORD OUR GOD.

THE prophet Jeremiah had a painful task to perform; he came to his people with heavy tidings. Their sins had long cried to heaven for vengeance; their judgment was at hand; and it was the prophet's most distressing duty to foretel the sore calamities which were impending.

Yet it was not of judgment only that he had to speak. No, he was the messenger and minister of a God who in wrath remembers mercy. And hence in the midst of all the denunciation of Israel's sin, and the threatenings of almighty vengeance, which Jeremiah had to deliver, we yet continually meet with the most tender and touching appeals and expostulations, and the most gracious assurances of mercy encouraging their repentance. The words of our text are an instance of this. They belong to a portion of the prophecy in which Jeremiah is predicting the time of Israel's contrition; and in reference to it, the verse before the text gives this description

of the people's humiliation: "A voice was heard upon the high places, weeping and supplications of the children of Israel: for they have perverted their way, and they have forgotten the Lord their God."

Then follows our text: "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings." It is the voice of a tender Father addressing a once rebel, but now penitent, sorrowing, and supplicating family, bidding them to cast away their fears, and assuring them of his goodwill towards them.

And what is the effect of this? You hear the reply—the reply of their thus comforted and grateful hearts,—"Behold! we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God."

And thus it is that our God is ever wont to bring back wandering sinners to himself. As with Israel so with us, the same is his most gracious method of recovering the fallen sinner to his love and service. "I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins; *return unto me for I have redeemed thee.*"

Let me proceed, dear brethren, to make the words before you, as God shall enable me, profitable for your instruction, by grounding upon them some reflections in reference to our own spiritual state.

You will observe that they contain two things:

I. THE ALMIGHTY'S MESSAGE TO HIS PEOPLE ISRAEL, "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings." And

II. THE EFFECT PRODUCED BY THAT MESSAGE, AS EXPRESSED IN THE PENITENT PEOPLE'S REPLY, "Behold! we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God."

I. WE HAVE THE ALMIGHTY'S MESSAGE. To whom is it sent? It is sent to his "backsliding children." And what does it bid them do? It bids them to "return." And what is the promise that accompanies the call? "I will heal your backslidings." How shall we apply these things to ourselves? Israel were the party first concerned. But is there not much that comes home, my brethren, to you and me?

For notice,

1. *The characters* to whom this message of God is sent: "backsliding children." Such at that time were Israel; and surely such are we. Let us for a moment consider how the term belongs to us, even as it did to them.

Israel was a nation in covenant with God. They were pledged to Him as his people. But they had broken the yoke and burst the bonds: they had set at nought their vows: they had revolted from their God. As the Psalmist testifies, "their hearts were not whole with Him, neither continued they stedfast in his covenant."

Now you and I, brethren, are also pledged by a solemn vow to be the Lord's. Our baptism sealed us as his. We have been given to Him. Unless we have formally renounced his service, and told our Maker that we will not have him to reign over us, if we have not distinctly and

deliberately cancelled the bond, then most clearly the vows of God are upon us, and He has a right to require that we yield our hearts and lives to Him. And why are we here this day? Is it not an acknowledgment on our part, that the Lord is the God we are bound to serve? But the question is, have we kept to our engagement? Or, while yet outwardly acknowledging its obligations, have we not in truth thrown off its claims?

What was Israel's sin? Did they give up the name of God's people? No, they boasted in it. Did they pull down his sanctuary, destroy his altars, abolish his worship altogether out of the land? No, these were their pride. "The temple of the Lord," they cried "are we." Where then lay their sin? How was it they revolted? In what way had they become backsliding children?

Their sin was this, that while yet calling themselves the people of the Lord, they had worshipped other gods. "According to the number of thy cities, are thy gods, O Judah." Idolatry, *idolatry, mingled with a profession of worship to their own true God*, this was Israel's sin, and here was their backsliding.

So it is with us. True, we do not set up altars to Baal: we do not sacrifice to graven images; but there are other kinds of idolatry beside these. There is a setting up of *idols in our hearts*; the loving of any thing whatsoever in preference to God. That is idolatry. Jehovah is then dethroned. His claim is denied.

Sin, self, the world, gain, honour, pleasure, these are elevated into his place. Under ten thousand forms how have we chosen these, and other things, as objects to be loved, to be trusted, to be counted our portion, rather than God our Maker.

Yes, brethren, it is thus we all have broken God's first and great commandment—the command which requires that we should love Him with *all our hearts*. Here has been our revolt. It is thus we have backslidden from the Lord. We have made mention of his name, as saith the Prophet, “but not in truth and righteousness.” No, we have mocked our God, have trifled with his honour, and in heart have departed from Him.

O, for a deep conviction of this in all our breasts! We have owned indeed that it is so. We have this day confessed, how in the wayward folly of our wills, we have done that which we ought not to have done, and have left undone that which we should have done, going astray as lost sheep, and following the devices and desires of our own hearts.

May the Holy Spirit make us to feel grieved and pained and humbled at the thought of our iniquity. Ah, brethren, let your own hearts be really laid open before you in the sight of God, let your lives be examined under the light of his holy law, let all your secret sins be brought out to your view, your evil desires, your unholy lusts, your earthly affections, your bad passions, your pride, your vanity, your forgetfulness of God,

your neglect of his will, your disregard of his grace: O, let the sin of your hearts and lives, the black and foul rebellion and ingratitude there exhibited be seen and felt, and with Job you will cry out, "Behold I am vile:" with the Publican you will entreat, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

Now we have said that in the passage to which our text belongs, the prophet is foretelling Israel's repentance: and that it is to a people mourning over their sin, and crying for mercy, that the message before us is sent. The voice heard upon Israel's high places, is "a voice of weeping and of supplication." And then it is that the words of the text are addressed to them.

Brethren, I do believe that God, who seeth not as man seeth, who trieth the hearts and reins, does behold at this time not a few in this his house who thus are mourning and supplicating as true penitents are wont to do. The Lord, the Holy Spirit, has opened their eyes to see their sin to be "exceeding sinful;" and they loathe themselves in their own sight on account of their iniquities.

I cannot know,—but there is One who does know at this moment how many among us are in this state of mind. Our text will lead us now to turn to them. Let me speak to those before me who feel that theirs is the character described. They have come to the house of God this day, with a remembrance of sin that is grievous unto them, a burden too heavy for them to bear, and perhaps they almost hesitate

to come before their God, they dare not lift their eyes to heaven: 'Can it be,' they are ready to ask, 'Can it be that God will look on creatures so vile?'

Let such note well,

2. *The command*, conveyed in the message of God to Israel; it is this, "Return, return ye backsliding children."

'Stay not at a distance. Hesitate no more. Fear not to draw nigh. It is guilt that makes you tremble. It is guilt that makes you dread to approach. It is guilt that suggests the doubt whether your God will look on you again. Away with these guilty apprehensions and suspicions. I bid you return. Come, come back, unto me; your God I am still; yes your compassionate God. I am waiting to be gracious: "I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you, for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever." So speaks Jehovah to his repenting Israel. And so, thou burdened, contrite, trembling, penitent, He speaks to thee. "I will arise and go to my father," said the poor weeping prodigal when he came to himself, "and I will say unto him, father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But while he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him," and restored him at once to his home. What means this beautiful picture familiar to all our minds? What is it but Christ's own illustration of the blessed truth that to every

backslidden, but now repenting soul, this is the word the Lord hath spoken, "Return, fear not, I will in no wise cast thee out."

And it is needful to cherish in our minds this feature in the character of our God, this readiness on his part to receive again those who had forsaken him. For a guilty heart is full of suspicion, and full of fear: and that liar, the devil, always will whisper, aye, more than whisper to the heart of an awakened sinner who would fain come home to God, that it is a fruitless hope: 'No,' saith that foul fiend, 'the door is shut, thy sins have been too great, mercy there is none for thee.' And the trembling conscience is too ready to believe this.

Brethren, is any one of you harassed by such thoughts as these? Resist the devil. It is the devil, not thy God, that bids thee fear. 'Tis Satan saith "despair." God saith "return." Which wilt thou listen to?

Come then, sinner, come at thy Father's call. Own to him all thy sin. Cast thyself upon his faithfulness. Open thy heart to Him in prayer. Implore of Him pardoning mercy and renewing grace. He commands thee to draw nigh, and He cannot, would not send thee now away. But hear again his own words. Notice,

3. The *promise* accompanying the command to return: "I will heal your backslidings."

'I will restore you,' and how? How does God recover sinful souls? How does He remedy the evil which sin has wrought? We answer that it is by a *full and free forgiveness*. This it is

that heals. Let a sinner know indeed that God, for his dear Son's sake, hath put away all his sin, and given him peace and everlasting life, will that man go back to sin? Can he love it? Will he find delight in that which his merciful Father abhors? On the contrary, will he not rather henceforward desire to yield up himself to the service of that gracious Lord who hath so loved and saved him?

Most beautifully is this recovering power of pardoning love set forth in another place, where the Lord by his prophet Hosea again declares of his people, "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely, for mine anger is turned away:" and what follows as the result of this? "Ephraim shall say, what have I to do any more with idols?"

See then, penitent offender, abundant reason why thou shouldst come to taste the goodness of thy God. It is by that goodness, his forgiving mercy, that He will subdue in thee the power of sin, and establish his "law of liberty" within thy soul.

Thou sayest, "wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" The Lord himself replies, "Sin shall not have dominion over you:" for why? "Ye are under grace." Grace, free pardoning grace in Christ Jesus, this shall break the chain of sin, animate the soul for holiness, and give a power to run the way of God's commandments.

Christians, you have found it so. How has sin been crucified in you? How has holy love

been awakened? What has been the healing medicine for your sinful and diseased souls? Saith every heart among you, 'O, the Lord hath shewn to me his wondrous redemption; *that* has healed my backslidings, set me free from guilt, and so delivered me from sin. I have health and cure; I walk in newness of life.' Then, mourning penitents, you who long for this healing, behold God saith, "return;" come to his feet, and the blessing shall be yours. What say you now? What say you to your God?

We will pass at once to the remainder of our text: for there,

II. We read in few words. THE REPLY OF THE REPENTING PEOPLE ISRAEL TO JEHOVAH'S CALL, "Behold! we come unto Thee, for Thou art the Lord our God."

"We come," trusting thy word, believing thy promise, relying on thy love. "We come," for healing grace. "We come" for restoration to thy ways. "We come" to be henceforward thine. "O Lord, other lords beside Thee have had dominion over us, but by Thee," even by thy grace, "will we make mention of thy name;" we confess Thee only as our God, and surrender ourselves to thy will.'

So speak, I trust, the heart of many here. We have described their past, their present state? They have been backsliding children. They are now repenting. They fain would come back to God. They have feared to do so. But they hear this day his voice; it saith, "return." And

while that good and gracious word is sounding on the ear, they feel the rising resolution ; their souls are moved ; it is the Holy Spirit operating in their hearts ; they think they *can* trust, yea they feel that they *do* trust, the word the Lord has spoken. “ We come,” they cry, “ behold we come,” we come unto Thee, Thou most merciful Father, we believe thy love, we resign ourselves to thy will ; from this time forth we would be only thine. “ Thou art the Lord our God.”

Beloved brethren, I pray that such may be the language of every individual among us. For it is the language of *faith*, it is the language of *obedience*, and it betokens the passing of a soul from death unto life.

We say it is the language of *faith*. The man who speaks thus, is one whom the Holy Spirit, having first convinced him of his sin, is leading unto Christ, and through Christ to God. He is one who believes the record of the love of God in the gospel of his Son. That gospel tells him that there is mercy for him, mercy for the sake of a dying Redeemer, mercy through the merit of an everliving Intercessor, and he credits the assurance given him. “ Behold,” he saith, “ I come, my God, in and through thy Son, my adorable Saviour, and I do believe, that for his sake, Thou hast pardoned me, and taken me for thine own, and that Thou wilt ever henceforward be the Lord my God.”

It is the language of *obedience* too. It is the renewal of the covenant. It is the confession, ‘ Lord, I have too long forgotten Thee, and all

the vows that should have bound me to thy service ; but, blessed be thy name, Thou hast not cut me off, Thou dost not cast me out, Thou dost vouchsafe to receive me again unto Thyself. Then, Lord, thine, thine by thy grace, would I entirely be. Here do I offer and present myself, my soul and body, to be a holy sacrifice unto Thee. Sanctify me entirely to thy service, write thy law upon my heart, mould my will to thine, and let my whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless unto Thee for ever. Thou art the Lord my God.'

Dear brethren, I do believe the blessed Spirit of the Lord is enabling many a one among you thus to feel, and thus to speak : and I rejoice in the persuasion, for, as I have said, it is the evidence of a soul being saved. None have this faith, none this desire after holiness, but those on whom the gospel of Jesus is taking its effect by the power of the Holy Ghost.

And let me say to those of you whose hearts do join in such language of humble reliance on God's word, and fervent longings for conformity to his will ; all of you who now respond to that voice of a heavenly Father which bids you return, and promises to heal your souls ; all who do so reply as in our text, " Behold we come unto Thee, Thou art the Lord our God ; " rejoice and be thankful ; the Lord has wrought his work of saving grace on you ; praise and adore his holy name ; his seal is on your souls ; the seal of his salvation ; and now recovered and restored, O may you never " turn again to folly."

SERMON III.

JOHN XIV. 6.

JESUS SAITH UNTO HIM, I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND
THE LIFE.

OUR blessed Lord had been telling his disciples how that shortly He should be departing out of this world unto the Father. And He had promised them to make it his care to prepare for them, as well as for all his people, mansions, places of abode, in his Father's house, that where He was they might be also. Out of this subject the conversation arose, of which the words in our text are a part. Jesus had said, addressing the disciples, "Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." The Saviour meant, 'you ought to know it, you have had it set before you.' But, said Thomas, "Lord, we know *not* whither thou goest, and how can we know the way?"

The Apostles were yet, comparatively speaking, very ignorant. Their minds were greatly blinded. Thomas was far from comprehending our Saviour's meaning. 'We neither know,' was his confession, 'whither it is that Thou art going, nor the path which we must take to follow Thee, and join Thee there.' And then it was that

Jesus replied as in our text : “ I am the way, the truth, and the life,” adding, “ No man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” As though He should say, ‘ to God it is that I am going, as I before have told you : believe in me, and you shall follow me to glory.’ Let us aim however to obtain a more exact understanding of our Saviour’s words ; and may the Holy Spirit unfold their import to every heart.

I. Saith Jesus, “ I AM THE WAY : ” the way for you to follow to that blessedness whither I myself shall soon be gone :—the way to heaven : the way to God.

The words at once remind us of a sad and awful truth. They remind us of what is our fallen state. Why do we need a way to God ? Is it not because we are far from Him ? Sin has placed us at a distance from Him. Yea it has made us flee from Him. We are afraid of Him. His wrath is due to our sin, and we dare not look up to Him, or draw nigh to his presence. What we want is some method of reconciliation. We want to be able to approach Him in confidence and love.

Now this is precisely what a sinner feels, so soon as his eyes are opened to a discovery of his own true condition. He is deeply sensible of a separation between his soul and God. He seems to himself indeed to be like the wayward prodigal son in a far country, famishing at a distance from his father and his father’s house. The words of the prophet, spoken to rebellious Israel, seem

to him just to describe his state ; “ Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you.” And so long as this is the case, what hope can a sinner have? God, he says, is angry at his sin. He sees nothing but a frown on his Maker’s countenance. The door of heaven is closed. He is ready to think himself for ever lost.

Beloved brethren, painful and distressing as is such a condition of mind, I could wish you all to know something of it. O, if as yet you have never felt any thing like this, then I do pray that you may be brought to it.

I tremble for men that have had no uneasiness about their state, no anxiety to learn the way of restoration to God. I fear lest they should go on in unconcern, and perish. I fear lest they should remain in that far land of worldliness and sin, where now they lie so thoughtlessly, till the thunders of judgment arouse them from their insensibility, then shall they begin to look around for the way of return, then shall they begin to inquire for the path of life, but, alas, that path will be for ever hidden from their eyes, the gate of mercy shut, the door of heaven barred, barred eternally against their souls.

O my brethren, how solemn is that warning, which Jesus gives us, when bidding us to strive to enter in at the strait gate, and tread the narrow way; for, said He, many, yes “ many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able.” Fain would they then commence the heavenward road, fain would they then return to

God ; but it will be too late ; *they shall not be able.*

I trust there are hearts among us that can say, ‘ Good Lord, we would, we fain would turn. But how shall we ? How shall sinners so fallen, so guilty, so far away, ever be restored ? Shew us, gracious Lord, shew us the good and the right way.’

Now to such, Jesus speaks : “ I am *the way.*” You feel your guiltiness. You feel your sin. It is sin that stands between you and your God. Had you no sin you could come to Him at once. But it is the sense of sin, that makes you full of doubt and fear. You can see the way sufficiently open for creatures such as angels are, holy, pure, and good ; but for yourselves, polluted and burdened with iniquity, you ask, what way remains ? Is there *any* by which such offenders may approach the throne of God, or hope for admission to his face ?

‘ Yes,’ saith Jesus, ‘ I will shew you *the way.* Come by me. Draw nigh in my name. Go not to God as you are in yourselves ; *that* would be to provoke his wrath : his hand of Justice then must fall upon you and you die. But remember who I am, and what I have done. I am the Son of God, and I was made man, I lived, I died for sinners, I died to take away their sin, I bare the anger sin deserved, and now I live again, I live to intercede for sinners, I plead for them, for all who come to ask the pardon of their sin, and peace with God, and eternal salvation, resting their hope of all these

mercies only on my merit. For all whose cry is simply this, 'O God, for thy dear Son's sake, forgive and save my soul!' for these I plead, and I obtain their pardon and acceptance, favour and life; their sins are all put away, for I bare those sins in my own body on the tree: their persons are justified, for all my righteousness is considered theirs, and they are accepted in me: their salvation is secured, for God, my Father, looks on them even as He looks on me; they shall never come into condemnation, they are passed from death unto life.'

See you not then, brethren, how it is that Jesus is the way unto God and to heaven? True, *if you had no sin* you could come to God, and feel sure of heaven, and have no fear. Well, Jesus puts you just in that condition. Jesus places every believer exactly in that situation. God looks on him, looks on the believer, and sees in him no sin. Why? Because it was all laid on Christ: Christ has taken it away. God looks on the believer, and He sees all righteousness. How? Because he looks on him in Christ his Intercessor, and beholds all Christ's righteousness as put on him. O, blessed truth! Thus is our salvation all in Christ. Our way to God, our way of pardon, acceptance, and eternal life, it is entirely in Christ. Truly then did that adorable and merciful Redeemer declare, as He pointed heavenward to glory and to God, "I am *the way*."

Awakened sinners, hear ye this. Jesus is the way for *you*. You say your sins are great and

grievous. So they are. But Jesus has atoned for all. You say you have no goodness of your own. True, you have none. But Jesus hath all righteousness, and He gives it all to you, if you are willing to have it, and stand in it before your God. O then, come to Jesus. In your hearts, by simple faith, come to Him as your Advocate and Intercessor. Draw near to God in Christ his Son, and all is well: heaven is yours: God is yours: and you are saved. So shall that be true of you which is said of all who are Christians indeed, "Ye who sometime were afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. *Through Him* we have access unto the Father."

II. Saith Jesus, "I AM THE TRUTH." There is a connection between this and what has gone before. It is, I think, as though Christ had said, 'other ways indeed there are, other ways which men love to take, and in which they hope to trace a path to heaven, but they are deceived; there is but *one true way*; I am *the way*, and I am *the truth*, that is, the only true, the only authorised, the only safe and saving way in which to seek your everlasting peace.'

There were many *false* ways among the Jews in our Lord's time. Men thought they were on the road to heaven, when in fact it was far otherwise.

Thus there were some who said, "We are Abraham's seed." This was *their* way to heaven. Because they were of the stock of Israel, there-

fore they thought themselves secure, they could not be lost.

The Baptist had to deal with such. "Think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our father." That was it which they really were doing: resting on their relationship to the patriarch Abraham, and flattering themselves that because they were of his family, they were sure of salvation.

Strange infatuation! And yet is it more strange than that of too many among ourselves? Men belong outwardly to the family of the faithful, the church of God. They were born in it. They remain in it still. They were in infancy baptized, and now in riper years they are constant among the worshippers in God's house, and, it may be, regular communicants at the table of the Lord. In these and other things they exhibit the outward and visible signs of union to Christ. But there they rest. This is *their* ground of hope, just like those Jews who made it their confidence that they were children of Abraham. The error is in principle the same. People put the externals of church communion in the place of vital godliness. And so, while confident of being right, they are altogether in the wrong way. The one way, the only way which is "*the truth*," this they know not.

Again, another false way we read of in the Saviour's time. There were those, we are told, who "trusted in themselves that they were righteous." Their way to heaven was that of their own deservings. They trusted to their good

deeds. These they thought would gain for them the favour of God, and make sure to them their salvation.

Our Lord specially addressed himself to such in the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican. And what was the object of that parable? It was to shew these, and all such self-righteous men, that so far from being in the right way to heaven, they were taking the very course to destruction. They were travelling altogether in a wrong direction. The only true way to God they were proudly neglecting.

And here again, how many of us are like-minded with them! Men dream that it is by their own goodness they are to get to heaven. Thousands do so: thousands of nominal Christians. But it is a fearful delusion. Their hope is false. It is exactly opposed to the whole Gospel of God. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy He saved us."

Then when Jesus spoke as in our text, and said of himself, "I am the way, and the truth," he would seem to have had his eye on many around him, whose way was not "*the truth*." It was not God's way to heaven.

Brethren, let us be on our guard. Jesus is the *way* for us, and if we take any other way, we refuse the *truth*: we reject God's word: we strike out our own path instead of following that which He has prescribed, and whatever we may hope, if we continue to do this, it must be to the loss of our souls. Then, I beseech you, be *sincere*: seek seriously to know the right path:

search the Scriptures to that end : pray earnestly to be kept from error : ask that the Holy Spirit may lead you into all truth. This is *His* work, and He will do it. Then will you come to Christ—Christ *the truth*—Christ the only way to peace and glory.

III. Jesus saith, “I AM THE LIFE.” He seems to mean, ‘ While I tell you that by me, and by me only, can you obtain salvation, I would have my people know that for them, and for all who do seek that salvation in my name, there is the fullest certainty and assurance of it. If, indeed, they believe my word, and receive me as their Redeemer, then already they *are saved*, their life is sure, their spiritual life is begun, yea, their eternal life ; for whoever, by faith, is joined to me, that man is already possessed of a principle within his breast, which is the germ and the earnest of everlasting life in glory. He has come to me, and I am even now his life.’

St. John in few words exhibits just what I conceive our Lord intended in this part of our text, when he writes in his first epistle, “ This is the record that God hath given to us eternal life, *and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son of God, hath life.*

Eternal life dwells in Christ. “ In Him was life.” Let a soul then be brought to Christ, be united to Christ, be possessed of Christ, and the eternal salvation of that soul is made sure ; for it hath its life in having Christ.

But, it may be, some will ask to have such terms as these explained to them: *united to Christ—possessed of Christ—having Christ—* what is it we mean?

Let me say first, we use such terms because they are such as God in his holy word teaches us to use. It is there we read of *having* Christ, of *winning* Christ, of being made *partakers* of Christ, of being *joined* to the Lord.

Plainly the expressions are scriptural. And to whom are they applied? To such as have real faith in Christ. And *that* is the very thing which the words imply; a true, spiritual belief in the Lord Jesus, such as is the work of God the Holy Ghost in the hearts of all his people, and by which they do lay hold upon the Saviour, receive him as *their* Saviour, take Him as their only hope, and, to use Christ's own gracious illustration of the matter, they do *feed* on him in their hearts. This it is to *have the Son of God*. A sinner feels that he is perishing. God, in the gospel of his grace, sets Jesus before him. He bids him trust in Jesus for salvation. The sinner, taught of the Spirit, obeys. He does cast himself on Christ. He does rely on Christ alone to save him. Now that is feeding upon Christ. It is taking the bread—the bread of life—which God presents. Christ is received into the soul, and then that soul *hath* Christ. It is by this simple faith we appropriate the Saviour, and He is ours.

And therefore we *have life*. “He that eateth me,” said Jesus, “even he shall *live* by me.”

Our souls are spiritually possessed of Jesus ; and having Him they live, they live for ever. “ He that believeth in me,” saith Jesus, “ shall never die.”

Happy assurance this, beloved brethren, for those of us, and I trust they are not a few, who have sought to Jesus as their way, their only way, their only true and saving way of coming unto God. Let such of you as know that, by the grace of God, this is what they have done, and still are doing, and yet would do more and more, let such, I say, thank God for this sure ground of confidence which the Lord by his own word now hath given them. Oh, how safe are they ! Their life, What is it ? It is Christ. Where is it ? It is “ hid with Christ in God.” And it is their’s to exult in the thought, “ When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory.”

SERMON IV.

HEBREWS XI. 6.

WITHOUT FAITH IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO PLEASE GOD.

To please God is, or ought to be, the first concern of man. If I know that there is a God, a God who made me, a God who has shewn to me his will, a God to whom I must soon give account, and upon whose favour or whose frown hangs my eternity of bliss or woe, surely I cannot but feel that of all things the question most essential to my welfare is this—‘How shall I please God?’ “Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the High God.”

The sacred Scriptures alone can give the answer, and they do so most distinctly. Our text is an instance. There we read a plain positive declaration to the point. The Apostle St. Paul, writing by the Holy Ghost, tells us that one thing there is without which we cannot please God: whatever else we have, if that one thing is wanting, all is vain, our souls are lost.

Brethren, let us give heed then to the statement before us. May the Spirit of God Him-

self enable us to do so. I trust we shall find the consideration of it most profitable to us.

What then is this one thing that is so indispensably necessary? It is *faith*. “Without *faith* it is impossible to please God.”

We often speak of faith ; and very commonly the term is used in a way that shews, I fear, much ignorance as to what faith really is. Men talk of it frequently as though it was no more than a set of sentiments, notions, opinions, a bare theory, as though there was nothing practical about it ; as though it had no influence in the direction of our lives and conduct.

Let it then be our first object to understand what the Holy Scriptures mean by *faith*. What did the Apostle mean by it in the passage before us?

The whole chapter to which the text belongs furnishes us with instruction on this point. It sets out with a definition, an explanation, of what faith is : and then almost all that follows is devoted to a striking illustration of the subject, by a variety of examples. Let us glance at the statements made.

The Apostle’s definition of faith is this, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” You observe here what things faith has to do with—“*Things hoped for, and things not seen ;*” that is to say, blessings promised, or truths revealed, for which we have no other warrant, no guarantee, save that of God’s word. We do not *see* them : but God declares them.

Now these things faith takes and gives a reality, a substance, to them, and teaches us to regard them with as much certainty, and as much to live under their influence, as though we had them before our eyes, or in our hands. Faith is that simple and firm belief of God's word which rests as sure that what He says is true, and is as confident that what He promises will be done, as though already every particular were verified by our own personal experience.

But this will appear more distinctly as we proceed to notice the examples of faith, or some at least of those examples, which the Apostle brings forward to illustrate his meaning.

There is the case of Noah. The Apostle mentions it in the verse next after our text. "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house." Almighty God told Noah that a flood was coming. That flood was a thing *unseen*. There was nothing to betoken it. All the ground that Noah had for apprehending its approach was God's word. But that was enough. He was as fully persuaded that a deluge was at hand, as though already the heavens were opening, the torrents falling, and the dry land disappearing from before his eyes. What therefore did Noah do? He prepared his ark. The Lord had commanded it; he obeyed the command; and for years he went on, notwithstanding all the scoffs and jeers of the men of that generation, making ready for the evil day. He *saw* the flood, not with the eye of sense, but with the

eye of faith, and accordingly he made his preparations and was safe.

Take the next example;—Abraham. “By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed, and he went out not knowing whither he went.”

God promised Abraham *a country*. He told him nothing as to where that country lay; “a land that I will shew thee,” that was all the description which the Almighty gave of it. Canaan was a thing *unseen*.

Yet Abraham at once obeyed the call which bade him leave his father’s house: forthwith he arose, and went out from his home and kindred, acting just as firmly, and with as much confidence and determination, as though he already saw the promised inheritance, and beheld his way all open to the possession of it.

There again was *faith*: the taking God’s word and acting unhesitatingly upon it. Abraham felt as sure of the promised inheritance as though he already had it in possession.

Another instance of faith, the Apostle brings from this Patriarch’s history. “By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac, and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said that in Isaac shall thy seed be called.”

God engaged to Abraham that he should be the father of many nations. Moreover He told him how this should be: that it should be through Isaac. Isaac’s descendants were the promised

seed. Yet, after a while, what does God require? He requires Abraham to put Isaac to death; the very child in whom the promises were to be accomplished. How does Abraham act? He at once complies. So far as *he* was concerned, Isaac was offered up.

And there again appeared his *faith*. God's word, he knew, could not fail. He had only to do as God commanded. To slay Isaac did indeed appear to be the very thing which would blight all his hopes, and prevent the fulfilment of the divine promises.

'Nevertheless,' said the patriarch, 'duty is mine, events are God's: I will obey: Jehovah will yet do all for which He has pledged himself.' And so, by this implicit submission to God's command, this ready surrender of his dearest treasure at the Lord's bidding, Abraham shewed how thoroughly he trusted God, and how firmly he was convinced that what Jehovah had said would be made good. He saw not *how*; but the thing which he could not *see* he yet *believed*, and therefore he acted as he did.

So we might go on to multiply our examples of faith from the chapter before us: and in all we should mark the same great point brought out: we should see that faith, the faith which the Apostle speaks of in our text, is no idle thing, no mere notion, no speculative opinion, no barren theory; it is a practical concern, a matter that has to do with the whole of a man's life and conduct; it at once leads to action; being such a persuasion of the truth of God's word,

as to things *not seen*, that we proceed to behave just *as though the things were seen*. Noah built his ark, just as though he saw the flood already rising. Abraham left his house, just as though he saw Canaan already open before him : and he offered up his son, just as though he saw that son's promised seed already born. This then is the main lesson of instruction which St. Paul was intending to teach. He meant to shew the peculiar character of real faith, that it is a principle of action. Precisely as St. James declares, " Faith, if it hath not works, is dead." All true faith *lives*, and because it *lives*, it *acts* in practical results.

Thus far we have spoken of what faith is. Let us pause to apply this part of the subject to our own case. What is *our* faith ? Christian faith ? wherein does it consist ? and how will it appear ?

You will note in those examples of Noah, and of Abraham, and indeed in all the rest throughout the chapter, that there was some one thing, a thing not seen as yet, which in every several case was placed before the mind of particular individuals, placed before them on the authority of God's word ; and whatever that unseen thing might be, their *faith* lay in the realising of it to themselves, so as to guide their conduct.

Now just so is it with us. The faith which we profess as Christians is exactly this. And I would say, we may take again the examples of Noah, and of Abraham, and may see much to explain, by way of analogy, what our faith is to be : *what it is we have to believe*.

Thus Noah was forewarned, that Almighty God, the Maker and Governor of the world, being infinitely just and holy, could no longer bear the sight of man's iniquity ; and that, in consequence, a terrible judgment would ere long burst upon a guilty race to their destruction. Moreover he was mercifully instructed how to escape that judgment. The ark was to be his refuge, his salvation. He built it, and was saved.

Brethren, what is the grand matter of divine revelation, as addressed to us ? Is it not this ? That we all have sinned against God our Maker, that his wrath is rising against sin, that soon a tremendous judgment must come down on every soul that doeth evil, that a deluge of eternal indignation is impending.

But, thanks be to His holy name, more than this is revealed. There is an ark. There is salvation. There is pardon for sin. There is escape from wrath. There is a way of reconciliation with God. Jesus the Son of God hath wrought the salvation for us. He came from heaven, He clothed himself in flesh, He took our place, He obeyed all that law which we had broken, He suffered all that curse our sin had merited, and now He stands before God, the Advocate for sinners, even for all who feel their guilt, and see their danger, and fain would have deliverance from sin, and would crave the mercy of their God :—for all such, the salvation of Christ is prepared, and they, fleeing to Jesus, are in the ark eternally secure.



[The text in this section is extremely blurry and illegible. It appears to be a list or table of contents with multiple columns of text.]

of this earth, and bids him look
his portion above. And so he
the world. Men smile at his
deem it. But what they call
faith.

In Abraham's conduct we saw
of faith. God called him to a
e. He laid on him a command
ey. He required of him a sa-
ly painful. To human *reason*
man *feeling*, the act prescribed
and unaccountable.

Each reflected, 'Jehovah cannot
to do as He directs. It is hard :
does seem strange and unac-
God will only order what is
sue well.'

do Christians find themselves
like faith. Their path of duty
difficult ! God's dispensations
trying ! His dealings are be-
of his people to understand,
ast, and not be afraid.

o : faith will be *satisfied* : sa-
nmands, to do them : satisfied
to make them : satisfied with
to meet them : prepared to say
is well."

at then is faith ? Even only
we have now done, what do we
? It involves repentance for
Christ as a Saviour, separation
obedience to God's commands,

Christian, this is *your* faith. Being warned of God of judgment not seen as yet, moved with fear, you get into your appointed place of refuge, and calmly and confidently you wait the coming storm, thankful to know that you are safe—safe in Christ.

Again, we read of Abraham, how, at the call of God, having the promise of another home, he left his native land, and followed where Jehovah led, in full assurance that, however he might be a stranger and a pilgrim for a time, he should have his hope fulfilled at last.

What a beautiful illustration is this too of *our* faith. Our native land is this poor world. God calls us thence. He tells us of a better country. He does not shew it us. He gives us his word that there is such a country. And his word is to be all our dependence. If we do indeed believe it, then shall we “set our affections on things above, not on things on the earth.” The truly Christian man does this. I say the *truly* Christian man. Alas, that there should be need to say it. But, dear brethren, I look around me, and I do see men, Christians in name, professing to believe in Christ, but their hearts, their affections, are in the world, set upon its gains, prospects, pleasures; I cannot but ask, ‘are these Christians indeed?’ No: Christian faith grasps heavenly things. Christian faith weans men from earth. Christian faith makes men live as pilgrims: their hearts are in their home. Christian faith makes a man check and restrain himself from pursuing so eagerly as his nature de-

sires, the things of this earth, and bids him look upwards, and see his portion above. And so he comes out from the world. Men smile at his folly;—so they deem it. But what they call folly, God calls faith.

Once more : in Abraham's conduct we saw another example of faith. God called him to a most trying course. He laid on him a command hard indeed to obey. He required of him a sacrifice inexpressibly painful. To human *reason* also, as well as human *feeling*, the act prescribed was most strange and unaccountable.

But the patriarch reflected, 'Jehovah cannot err. My part is to do as He directs. It is hard : it is painful : it does seem strange and unaccountable : but God will only order what is right. All will issue well.'

And how often do Christians find themselves called upon for like faith. Their path of duty is plain, but how difficult ! God's dispensations are right, but how trying ! His dealings are beyond the capacity of his people to understand, yet are they to trust, and not be afraid.

Faith *will* do so : faith will be *satisfied* : satisfied with all commands, to do them : satisfied with all sacrifices, to make them : satisfied with all dispensations, to meet them : prepared to say at all times, "it is well."

Brethren, what then is faith ? Even only glancing at it, as we have now done, what do we find it to involve ? It involves repentance for sin, reliance on Christ as a Saviour, separation from the world, obedience to God's commands,

submission to His dispensations, entire acquiescence in His will ; nay, in one word, faith, *true* faith, includes every thing that is essential to the christian character, and so far from being a mere inactive sentiment, a notional, uninfluential matter, it is the very life and soul, the principle and mainspring of all godliness.

Yes, my brethren, and hence the declaration of our text : “ Without faith, it is impossible to please God.”

Our object, therefore, now shall be, in the remainder of this discourse, to make an application of this matter to ourselves.

God, we are told, will be pleased with none who have not true faith. They may satisfy themselves : they may satisfy their fellow men : but with God they are weighed in the balances and found wanting.

Will any ask, why so much is made of faith ? I would not suppose such a question, were it not that really there are those, and not a few, who do seem to think it very unreasonable that faith should be represented as so indispensable a thing. ‘ If,’ say they, ‘ if a man *lives well*, why should the want of a particular belief be made so serious a matter ? ’

But do such persons consider what is meant by *living well* ? Do they at all understand what God considers *living well* ?

No : otherwise they would be aware that to *live well*, is to live according to right principles and right motives, and from a right state of mind ; that it is to live from the power and influence

of that very faith of which they think so lightly ; they would know that in God's sight there is no good life, save that which has its root and spring in faith : they would know, as our church teaches, that works, however good they may appear, are not, and cannot be acceptable to God, if they "spring not of faith in Jesus Christ," nay, rather, as the church then adds, "forasmuch as they be not done, as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but they have the nature of sin."

Besides, when men ask why make so much of faith, do they consider the insult which by that very question they put upon God ?

Insult, I say : for it is so even with a fellow creature. What greater offence can I give to a fellow man, than to say that I think the belief of his word a matter of little moment ? And shall I then dare to say this of God ?

Consider, brethren ; our Maker teaches us certain things in his revelation of truth : He sets forth his instruction ; He makes known to us a variety of matters, the knowledge of which He declares to be needful for our present and eternal happiness. Then to make the belief of all this a secondary concern, or a point of no concern at all ; to treat faith as a thing not essential ; to flatter men who have not that faith which God's word requires, that they shall yet do well ; what is this but, in the language of St. John, to "make God a liar ?" God declares one thing, we the contrary. God speaks in his word and says, "He that *believeth* shall be saved, he that believeth

not shall be damned ; ” and proud, blind, besotted men presume to decide that it is an unimportant question what a man’s faith may be, or whether he has any. Surely brethren, it is clear that if God tells me that certain statements of his word contain essential truths, and that I must believe them or perish, if I do *not* believe them, and yet promise myself that all is well, I do in the most daring manner set myself in opposition to God.

It is evident, then, that “ without faith it is impossible to please God,” inasmuch as where there is not a right faith, there is nothing right, nothing acceptable to God, so far from it, there is, in point of fact, a positive and direct contradiction given to his word, and of necessity a most grievous and criminal insult offered to his holy name.

Then, now do any ask what is the course for them to take ? They would wish to please God, and they hear that in order to this they must have *faith* : but, say they, how is this faith to be attained ? I would answer them briefly thus : two things are to be done, and done *together*. God’s word is to be read and heard with seriousness, devoutness, and constancy, in order that you may know the things to be believed ; and then, God’s Holy Spirit is to be sought in earnest, fervent, unceasing prayer, that so the things to be believed may be realized effectually within your hearts, and be made to operate practically on your lives.

Dear brethren, if you are sincere in religion,

if you do indeed desire to please God, this is what you are doing *now*. Yes, day by day you take your bibles, and read with attentiveness, deliberation, and care, some portion of them. You “*search* the Scriptures.” From time to time you also come to hear the word of God read and expounded in his house. Your hearts are set on learning his truth. But at the same time you feel that, however you might by reading and hearing gain much knowledge in your understandings, you want more than this. You see that *knowledge* is not *faith*. You wish to *feel* the truth. You would have it affect your hearts. You would have it guide your lives. You would have such faith as brings *experience* with it, produces *holiness*, and issues in *salvation*. And therefore, for this you lift up your souls in earnest supplication to the Holy Spirit : ‘ Lord, teach me : lead me into truth : bring it home to my heart : enlighten, purify, comfort, sanctify me by the power of that truth.’ So you pray.

Beloved brethren, are you thus seeking faith? If so, we thank God for you. The blessing is already in some measure vouchsafed. It shall be increased. Be encouraged. “ Follow on to know the Lord.” Still use the means for advancing in understanding and in grace. Keep to the word of God. Daily meditate therein, and ever as you do so, ask for more light, and more power, to see and to receive all that God reveals. The Lord will surely “ fulfil in you all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power.”

But there are among you those who can say, with gratitude and joy, that it is thus with them already. They *have* believed. They *know* it. They feel conscious of their faith. And they trace its power, and enjoy its comfort. It does *substantiate* to their souls the things unseen. An unseen God and Saviour : an unseen faithful friend their Comforter : an unseen hand directing all their ways : an unseen heaven, their eternal home : these things are their principles of life and action : they walk by faith : they “ look not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen.” They “ endure,” like Moses, “ seeing Him that is invisible.”

Believers, be your daily prayer still for increase in this faith : seek still the strengthening of this blessed principle within you. Remember, it is your life. It is that thing on which all else in your spiritual character, comfort, and godly walk depends, for it is that by which you appropriate for your peace, your consolation, and your holiness, all the truths, and all the promises, of the word of your God.

Increase of faith then,—for this should be your prayer. *Increase* of faith,—let this be the end of all your reading, and all your hearing of heavenly truth. And so, “ building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.”

SERMON V.

GALATIANS III. 21, 22.

IS THE LAW THEN AGAINST THE PROMISES OF GOD? GOD FORBID, FOR IF THERE HAD BEEN A LAW GIVEN, WHICH COULD HAVE GIVEN LIFE, VERILY RIGHTEOUSNESS SHOULD HAVE BEEN BY THE LAW. BUT THE SCRIPTURE HATH CONCLUDED ALL UNDER SIN, THAT THE PROMISE BY FAITH OF JESUS CHRIST MIGHT BE GIVEN TO THEM THAT BELIEVE.

THIS text is one that claims our most serious attention. It touches on that all important point, the way of man's salvation. It touches also on one of the most dangerous of mistakes into which men fall respecting their salvation. Let us then give it our most serious consideration: and may the Lord instruct us in his truth.

The text opens with a question, "Is the law against the promises of God?" To understand the meaning of that question we must bear in mind what St. Paul had been shewing. He had been shewing this fact, that the gospel, which he preached, was founded on the very principle which, so long ago as Abraham's days, Almighty God had laid down, as the rule for man's acceptance with Him, the way for man to find righteousness with God.

That way, the Apostle contends, was not by

the merit of any *works* to be done, but simply in the exercise of a certain *faith* prescribed.

How was it with Abraham? He was required to credit certain promises which God was pleased to give him. He did so, and was blest. “Abraham *believed* God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” It was by believing what God had said, not by the merit of any thing which he did, that Abraham found favour with God. And so, the Apostle argued, it was still; “know ye,” said he, “that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham:” and again,—“they which be of faith, are blessed with faithful Abraham.” In other words they, and they only, should be heirs of Abraham’s happiness, and be like him accepted with God, who believed, even as he did, the word of God. Now this was the gospel. “He that believeth shall be saved.” Therefore saith St. Paul, “the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, “in thee shall nations be blessed.” God would justify the heathen through faith; that is, in after ages God would have a people out of heathen nations, as well as from the Jews, brought to salvation: and this *through faith*, that is, by believing simply his promises in Jesus Christ. So should they be justified, accepted, saved. They should be blest as Abraham was.

Hence, in fact, it was none other than the dispensation of the gospel that was preached to Abraham, when it was said to him, “In thee

shall all nations be blessed." Men of all kindreds and climes, shall have but one way to blessedness ; and that shall be by faith ;—such faith is thine. It is upon their likeness to thee, in this matter of faith, that their salvation shall depend.

Thus then the Apostle shewed that, so far back as Abraham's day, Almighty God had established, and had promulged the gospel method of salvation. It was a settled principle. Man was to be saved, not by the merit of what he should do, but by believing the promises which God should give.

This being so, however, a question now arises ; it arises on account of a remarkable fact, namely, that after this setting up faith as the way of man's salvation, God Himself proclaimed *a law*, the end and purport of which was to enjoin on man what God would have him do. The Almighty had indeed never left his creatures without a law, but it had pleased Him, on one most solemn occasion, to give to Israel, the people whom He had chosen, a code of statutes, and especially the Ten Commandments, in which we read, in an explicit form, the Maker's will concerning the regulation of men's hearts and lives.

Now the question is, what was the meaning of this ? The Almighty publishes this law, calls for obedience to it, and threatens that whoever transgresses it shall die. Does He not seem to be putting forth a new way of salvation ? Does not this *law* appear to set aside the method of acceptance by *faith*, preached as we have seen to

Abraham ? Does it not look as though God had changed his plan, and that men, instead of trusting God's promises, and so being saved, were to obey this law, and by their own merit obtain favour with God ?

You now understand the question with which our text opens, " Is the law against the promises of God ? "

When God sets forth his commands, calls on us to keep them, and warns us that to break them is to die ; are we to understand that He has withdrawn His promises ; that we are no more to look for salvation by faith ; but are to set ourselves to the task of doing all He requires, and in that way to save ourselves ?

The question, brethren, is a very important one, and especially so, because it belongs to a subject on which men are constantly falling into grievous, yea, fatal error. It is marvellous to see how common,—I may say how universal, is the thought among the mass of mankind, that the way to be saved, is to do our best to keep the commandments of God, and then to hope that He will look with complacency upon us.

May I not put it to you, brethren, are there not many among you who to this hour have that idea upon your minds ? You imagine that God has given you his Law, in order that you, by keeping it as well as you can, may make yourselves deserving of his approval, and so secure your soul's salvation. Let me beg you now to attend to the text.

The question with which it opens is exactly

this, are you to be saved in the way you suppose? Is it the merit, of your obedience to the Law which is to obtain for you the favour of God? Was it for that end the Law was given,—to set aside faith in God's promises, and establish your good works as your title to heaven? What saith St Paul? "God forbid!" No: no such thing. God never gave his Law for that end. Never did He mean by that Law to set aside faith as the way of salvation. Never did He mean to teach men that by doing his commands they were to gain eternal life as the due reward of their deeds. He *could* not teach this.

And why could He not? We have the reason assigned: "for," saith the Apostle, "if there had been a law given, which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the Law."

In other words, had it been possible for man to keep any law which God could give, so as to deserve eternal life in merited recompense of his obedience,—had it been possible for the Maker to frame such commandments as his fallen creatures should be able perfectly and fully to perform, and so purchase his favour, "then, verily, righteousness should have been by the law;" God would have done this; He would have said that his creatures must save themselves by their own righteousness, the righteousness of their own obedience.

But has He said this? When He gave the law, did He declare any such thing? Did He say, 'by this law all who would be saved must

work out their own righteousness, and so gain heaven ?'

No : far otherwise ; so far otherwise that He for ever shut the door against any such notion. For mark what follows in the text, " But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin : " that is to say, God in his word hath so spoken of man and of all his race, as to make it clear that He never could have thought of any of them being saved by their own righteousness. His word has already "*concluded*" them all, shut them all up, " under sin." " There is none righteous, no not one. There is none that doeth good. All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

So the scripture speaks : and indeed, take the whole tenor of its statements, and you find their sum and substance to be the same. The word of God all through deals with man as a fallen, condemned, helpless, hopeless creature in himself : all its representations of his state, all its provision for his wants, all its rich and precious promises of grace, all contemplate him, all exhibit him, as a lost sinner, one already deserving condemnation, one whom no law can save, one so fallen that no code of statutes, such as a holy God must give, perfectly pure, and demanding a perfect obedience, no such commandments would even come within his reach ; for God can only give a perfect law, and man could never keep such a law, therefore the scripture at once concludes, and shuts up all under sin, and dis-

tinctly declares that "by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."

And what is the end and object of all this representation of our sinful state? Why is it that scripture hath concluded us thus under sin?

St. Paul tells us it was on purpose to drive us away from all notions of saving ourselves by obeying the law, and to keep us to that very thing which God had set forth, long before the law, as the only hope for sinners, *faith*, faith in his promises of mercy in Christ.

Mark the close of the text: "the scripture hath concluded all under sin, *that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe;*" not to them that trust to their own good doings, their own supposed obedience to the law; no, but to the humble *faithful* soul, that conscious of sin, oppressed with guilt, and seeking peace with God, simply rests on the gracious promise of pardon and life given to lost sinners in Christ Jesus.

I have thus far endeavour briefly to give the sense of the passage before us. Let me now point out the instruction which it yields. I shall offer only two remarks.

See, I would say, in the first place, *the use which we are not to make of the law of God.*

Our text shews us this. We are not to set the *law* against the *promises* of God. Yet this is what multitudes do. They do look to the law as that which they are to keep, and keeping it obtain salvation. And thus they set it up in preference to the faith of Christ. They do not

look to be saved by God's mercy in Jesus, but by the merit of their own doings.

I am sure too that many do this whose professions are very different. Talk with them, and they will say, 'certainly Jesus only is our Redeemer, we hope to be saved through him.' Converse with them a little more, and the truth comes out at length, that they cannot think Christ will save them, unless they deserve it; they must be as good as they can, and then, for Christ's sake, they hope they shall be accepted. So that really the ground and foundation of their hope is something in themselves, their own doings, their own works, their own obedience to the law.

In fact, all trusting to works, in any shape or to any extent, as the means of our justification and acceptance with God, is an appeal to the law. Whoever takes his own doings *at all* as the ground of his hope is going to the law to save him. 'God will be merciful to me,' says such a man, 'if I am good before God. My Maker will deal graciously with me, if I am obedient towards Him. Jesus will be my Saviour, if I do all I can not to want his help, but go as far to heaven as I may by my own good works.'

Is not such really the language of many hearts? I know it is. And what is this? It is *salvation by the law*. The first stone of the whole structure of the sinner's hopes he lays in his own doings. He uses the law as a means of obtaining life.

Now our text shews us how completely wrong is all this. God never meant his law to be used

in any such way. He never meant us to go to it, rather than to his promises in Jesus Christ. He never meant us to look on it as a law to give us life. He never meant us to have our righteousness by it.

Therefore if any of us have been setting about our salvation in this way, we have been going clean contrary to God's intentions: doing just what God says is not to be done. And can this be safe? Nay, we are perilling our souls: we are clinging to a hope which God does not warrant: more than this, a hope which God condemns. It is written, "As many as are of the works of the law are *under the curse*."

But some will say, are there not certain places of Scripture which seem to speak very differently to all this? How are they to be reconciled?

For example, we read in Ezekiel, "If a man be just, and do that which is lawful and right, if he hath walked in my statutes, and hath kept my judgments, he shall surely live, saith the Lord God." Now does not this seem to say that eternal life is to be obtained by our own obedience?

Not at all. The *life* there spoken of is not eternal life. Jehovah is dealing with the Jews. They had murmured against Him: they complained that He punished them for their father's sins: they were chastised and afflicted, and, as they said, were dying for sins their fathers had done. 'Now,' saith God, 'ye shall have no more any cause to murmur in this way: I will deal with

you, each by himself: the righteous shall live, the wicked shall die.'

By *living* is here meant life in this world: and so there are many passages of a like kind in the Old Testament. They do not belong to the subject we are treating of. They do not touch the question of eternal life, and the soul's salvation. They refer to those rewards and punishments in this world, wherewith God was wont to mark the obedience or disobedience of the Jews as a peculiar people.

But again, there are texts in the New Testament. I allude especially to two, both recorded by St. Luke. In the tenth Chapter of his Gospel you hear of a certain lawyer coming to Jesus. "Master," said he, "what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus sent him to the Law, "This do, said He, and thou shalt live."

Again, in the eighteenth Chapter, you read of a certain ruler who asked, "Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" He too was taken to the Law. "Thou knowest the commandments."

Now surely, it will be said, this was as much as to teach in both cases, that if they would enter into life eternal, they must keep the Law, and by so doing earn salvation as their reward. Our answer is, just the reverse. Read both narratives through, and see the issue. See for what it was that Jesus took the lawyer and the ruler both to the Commandments. It was to shew them that by the Law neither of them could be justi-

fied. They came to Him thinking that some "good thing" which they should do was to save them. They wanted to go to the Law for their salvation. Jesus proves to them both that in *that* way there was no salvation for them. To the lawyer he proves that he had not loved even his neighbour as he ought. The ruler he convicts of not loving God as he ought.

So that when Jesus pointed these men to the Law, and said, "do this and thou shalt live," he meant in real truth, 'prove that you *have* kept, or *can* keep the Law, then and not till then, speak of doing some good thing yourselves to gain eternal life. You will find that the hope is vain. Appeal to the Law, and it only condemns you.'

In all these instances then it will be found, as well as in every other, that the doctrine of God's word is consistent with itself. The Law was never given for man to save himself by keeping it. Not since Adam fell, has God ever called on man by his own doings to save himself. God is well aware that he cannot.

May you and I, dear brethren, see it too. May we deeply feel how impossible it is for us by works, or goodness, or merits of our own, ever to have righteousness, life and salvation. If we *will* seek our salvation in that way, then we contradict God. God says, 'believe my promises;' we say, 'no, our works shall be our confidence.' Fearful and daring folly! O, self-righteous sinner, be admonished. Trust to *thy* doings, trust at all to them, and thou art lost.

Our second instruction flows at once out of what has been already shown : and our text leads us on to it :—*How is it that we are to be saved ?* St. Paul replies, “ The promise is given to them that *believe*. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”

We are shut up to this. There is no other way. The Scripture leaves us no other door of hope. It gives the alternative, salvation alone by faith in Christ, or no salvation at all.

But what a mercy is this ! How good and gracious the hand which closes fast all other ways in order to shut us up to Christ ! Do we try any other way, any other path to heaven ? A flaming sword meets, and drives us back : but then it is a flaming sword, not, like that at Eden, to keep us *from*, but to guide us *to*, the tree of life.

Brethren, there are those of you who feel indeed that as to the Law there is no hope thence for you. The more you look at the Law, and compare yourselves with it, the worse your case appears. “ By the Law is the knowledge of sin.”

Then we call you to the *promises* : the promises of God in Christ : the free promises of pardon, peace, and acceptance now ; promises of grace, guidance, comfort, and help in this world ; and to crown the whole, of everlasting glory in the world to come :—all given you in Christ. Christ, the Son of God, has kept the Law which you could never have fulfilled, and has borne the curse which you could never have endured.

Come to Him: his blood is your atonement; his obedience is your righteousness. Look upon Him in all that He is as your Lord and Redeemer, and say, 'this is my rest, my hope, my confidence: Jesus is the Saviour for sinners, the Saviour for *me*.' The promise then is yours: it is "given to them that believe. He that believeth in the Son of God, hath everlasting life."

Brethren, ye who have taken this promise, I bid you rejoice in your Salvation. Remember how it is you stand before your God, even "in Christ, not having your own righteousness which is of the Law," poor, imperfect, and sinful, "but the righteousness which is by faith of Christ," the righteousness which in truth is *Christ's*, but now is also *yours*, for you are *in* Christ, and so are "accepted in the Beloved."

Keep this truth distinctly in view. In it lies the secret of your peace, and I will add the secret of your holiness too. For just as you know that you are saved by grace through faith, and not of your own works, so is it that all good works, well pleasing to God, will be in you and abound. Yes, let a man know that he is free from the Law as the ground of his hope, and that is the man who will come to the Law as the guide of his life; and gladly will he confess himself, as did St. Paul, to be "under the law to Christ."

SERMON VI.

EPHESIANS I. 6.

ACCEPTED IN THE BELOVED.

How much cause, my brethren, have we to thank and praise Almighty God, that in his holy word all which is needful to our peace, our sanctity, and our salvation, is made so plain.

The words of our text are few, but they contain a truth of unspeakable importance to the Church of God; and they express that truth so simply, so distinctly, that I know of no words in the whole volume of inspiration more precious to believing souls.

“Accepted in the Beloved.” Christian, it is the description of your *standing* before God. It is the ground of all your hope, the secret of all your confidence, the source of all your comfort, and the motive to all your obedience and submission.

I pray that our present meditations may be directed and blessed of God the Holy Ghost to the edification of all his people.

“The Beloved.” I need not say whom the Apostle intends under this designation. We recognize under it at once our adorable Redeemer,

the Lord Jesus Christ. What then is it that our text exhibits before us? It exhibits, I would answer,

I. WHAT JESUS IS: He is "the Beloved," the Beloved One of God: and then,

II. WHAT HIS PEOPLE ARE, they are "accepted," accepted of God, "in the Beloved."

I. We say the Apostle sets before us the Lord Jesus, and declares WHAT HE IS in the sight of God. He is "the Beloved."

Let us refer to one or two passages of holy writ which will guide us in forming a right conception on this sacred and interesting subject.

There we shall learn that Jesus was the object of his Father's love from everlasting. Before the worlds were made the Eternal Father looked upon his Son, and especially delighted in Him. Thus you remember the words of the blessed Redeemer Himself: "Father," said He, "Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." And wherefore did He so love Him?

We are taught elsewhere that whatever the Son of God was to do for his people's salvation, was all settled and ordained before the worlds were made, and that the Father regarded his Son *even then* as the representative of his Church, in whom he viewed his chosen, in whom He blessed them, and in whom He made his covenant engagements with them.

Thus you read, "He hath chosen us *in Christ before the foundation of the world*:" again, "He hath saved us, according to his own purpose and

grace, which was *given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.*" And if, as St. Paul declares, "eternal life was *promised* by God, who cannot lie, *before the world began,*" to whom was it *promised*? Who was there to receive the promise? O, my brethren, these are words in the contemplation of which we get some glimpses of the amazing mysteries of our redemption. Thus much we learn with certainty, that, even ere this universe was framed, the Father, God Almighty, looked upon his equal Son, regarding Him then as the Mediator of his Church, and covenanting with Him as their head and representative.

And so, in this, his Mediatorial character, it was, that Jesus stood, the Beloved of God from everlasting. The Father beholding Him thus, deliberated in Him, and gave Him glory, as preeminently his Beloved.

2. Further, as Jesus was the Beloved of God from eternity, so when at the time ordained He came into the world to accomplish his people's salvation, the Father looked on Him again, and again owned Him for his Beloved.

At his Baptism, and at his Transfiguration, what was it which was testified by the voice that came from the excellent glory? "This is my beloved Son."

The Father, from his heavenly throne, looked down upon his Son then clothed in human flesh, and occupied in the work by which the purposes planned in common between them should be fulfilled. The Father saw the Son carrying forward

the salvation of the Church. He rested on the sight in infinite complacency, and He loved his Son for the work He was accomplishing. Jesus was the Beloved *then* for what the Father *then* beheld. We say this with God's word to warrant it.

For consider what was the work which the Son of God was executing? What was it which the eye of his Father contemplated as He viewed Him in this earthly state?

In the first place, the Father beheld in his Son *all righteousness*. From the fall of Adam, down through ages and generations succeeding for four thousand years, the God of heaven had looked on earth, and what had He seen? Alas, what but sin? in every direction sin: in every individual sin: even in his own, his loved and loving children, whatever their holy affections, whatever their devotedness of conduct, still even in them, renewed as they were and sanctified by his own Spirit, the corruption of nature remained, the lust of the flesh that would not be subject to the Law of God: the rest of men meanwhile were but one mass of depravity, so that as his own word testified, "there was none righteous, no not one." But now the Son of God had come. Human nature till then had never worn in the sight of heaven any other aspect but that of a fallen race. That human nature the Son of God assumes. And for the first time human nature stands in Him complete in holiness.

The Father looked then on this. He saw in

Jesus what He never yet had seen, *a man all holy*. His Law was obeyed to its fullest extent, and all its purity reflected in the person of Christ. It is said, "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness:" that righteousness in all its perfection, Christ exhibited. Then with what delight and satisfaction must the mind of the everlasting Father have rested upon his incarnate Son. It did so. And herein the Son became an object of love. "This is my beloved Son, *in whom I am well pleased*." The perfection of his obedience is the holiness I love. His life is the copy of my Law. His character the transcript of my own. I see a man pure as my own Deity. I see human nature invested in divine insullied sanctity. "I am well pleased."

But again, there was another work with which the Son of God was charged. He engaged to make in his own person and sufferings a full atonement for sin. He came to bear the curse due to transgression. After a life of perfect obedience, He was pledged to endure, in his body and his soul all the tremendous punishment which the law of God had attached to the breach of its commands. Guiltless Himself of any transgression, He was to bear the weight of all that anger which eternal justice threatened against sin, just as though He had Himself been an offender.

This engagement was to cost Him his life. Atonement for sin could only be accomplished by the suffering of death. To this therefore He was devoted. "The Son of Man is come," said He, "to give his life a ransom for many."

Now in this suffering too the Father viewed Him. He looked on Jesus as the voluntary victim by whose vicarious sacrifice, the Church was to be saved. The Father looked, I say, and loved his Son for this his self-devotion. Mark those words, "Therefore doth my Father love me, *because I lay down my life.*" Yes, the suffering that his Son so willingly endure, made that Son an object of loving complacency to the Father's mind ; and again was He his Beloved, inasmuch as in Him He beheld the Redeemer of his Church, in the very act of ransoming his people.

So that in all the work of Jesus here on earth, the perfection of his life, and no less the sorrows of his death made Him ever "the Beloved" of the Father.

3. Once more, now that Jesus is gone up on high, and is at the right hand of God, what is it that He there delights to do, and how does the Father still regard Him? Still is He going on with his work, the work He undertook from all eternity, the work He came into the world to execute in time, the work of saving love, giving effect to all He did and suffered here by ever making intercession for us. It is as Mediator that He now stands before the throne : ready to act as Advocate for all who come to God by Him, and to communicate to his people all that grace of which they stand in need, 'Head over all things to the Church.'

The Father looks upon Him now, and delights in his intercession, honours Him before all the

hosts of heaven, as there He appears in human form, the man Christ Jesus, and distinguishes Him as above all others, "the Beloved." "He hath set Him," we are told, "at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come."

Thus then have we seen, what Jesus is in the eye of God, and why it is that He is so preeminently "the Beloved."

II. We have now to notice, as declared in our text, WHAT HIS PEOPLE ARE: "*Accepted* in the Beloved." And here we come to all the practical bearing of the wonderful truths to which we have been adverting, their bearing, Christian brethren, on ourselves.

"Accepted,"—let us reflect on what that word implies. It implies this, that the infinitely holy God, looking upon us, shall see in us no fault, nothing opposed to his own will, but, on the contrary, shall rejoice in us, delight in what He beholds, fixing his eye with satisfaction and love upon us, and acknowledging Himself well pleased.

Remember, brethren, God is holy, infinitely holy, and infinitely just; and therefore He can accept, approve, and delight in only that which comes before Him in a form congenial with his own perfections. In order to be accepted with God, we must so stand in his sight that He shall be able in all his justice, all his truth, all his holiness, to say, 'it is good, it is blameless, it is all that I desire.'

Now thus our text tells us it is with all true Christians: they are *accepted* with God. But now observe in what way they are so accepted: —“*in the Beloved.*”

We have seen how God regards his Son, how truly that Son is acceptable before him. Then here we are taught that so his people are. God views them *in* his Son. God *identifies* them with his Son. And just as that Son is *beloved*, so are they *accepted*.

When, in the beginning, the Father covenanted with the Son, He contemplated the church in her head; He recognised his people in their Mediator; and as He loved their representative, so He loved them.

When Jesus left the realms of glory, and came down to execute his work on earth, the Father still identified his people with him. Did Jesus fulfil all righteousness? The Father accounted that righteousness as wrought for those whom He views in Jesus; He imputes it all to them; He reckons it as their's. He regards them as having kept his law to the full, because Jesus hath done so, and they are in his sight one with Jesus. Hence in his word He sets Jesus forth to us as “the Lord our righteousness.” Yea, saith the Spirit, by the holy Apostle, “We are made *the righteousness of God in Him.*” The Beloved's righteousness is our's. Again, did Jesus by his own suffering and death make a full, perfect, and sufficient satisfaction, and atonement for sin? God the Father looks upon his Beloved on his cross, and in Him

sees the Church. Jesus was the Church's surety. God looks on his people in Him, and regards his atonement as their's, his satisfaction as their's, and accepting the penalty which his Son has paid, He puts it to their account, and declares his justice satisfied. And thus too the Beloved's atonement as well as righteousness is our's.

But follow Jesus whither He is gone. Let the eye of faith consider Him where He now is, at God's right hand, the Intercessor of the Church, her representative in heaven. Does the Father honour and exalt Him in that character? Does the Father still declare that it is his Beloved? Then remember, that Father still views his people in his Son: still does He identify them with Him: yea, they are "made to sit together with him in heavenly places."

Brethren, what matter have we then, in those few words of our text, for our wondering and adoring meditation! God of his mercy apply them to our hearts. Let me in conclusion endeavour to make some practical use of the truths which have been before us.

And first, I would say, what direction do we gather from our text, to guide every enquiring sinner, every awakened and anxious soul, who wants to know his way of peace with God.

I ask such an one, what *he thinks* to be the way of peace with God? Alas, how often he will answer, that if only he were better in himself, more free from sin, more holy in heart and life, then he could hope that God would accept him. Ah! poor sinner, *thus* seek thy peace,

thus seek thy acceptance with God, thou wilt never find it. Behold the way: "accepted in the Beloved." If God accept thee, it must be, it can be, only in Christ. It must be only for what Christ has done for thee, and suffered for thee; and this is what thou must humbly and firmly fix thy hope upon, if thou wouldest come to God, and be at peace. Go to thy God in prayer, and plead, 'Lord, I am guilty, but Jesus died for sin: Lord, I am unworthy, but Jesus has wrought all righteousness: set my sin to his account, and set his righteousness to my account: for Jesus' sake be merciful to me a sinner;' *thus* seek thine acceptance, and thou shalt have it. For this is God's own appointed way. Look not to what thou hast done, or mayest hope to do; look to what Christ has done, and be *that* all thy confidence. Think not of what God sees in thyself, but think of what He sees in Christ; and be that all thy hope. God grant to every awakened heart among us here grace to lay hold on the simple hope thus set before us. It is the only way of peace; and, never will an enlightened conscience find repose, never a man, who knows himself, find confidence with God, till he first receives this truth, and meekly claims acceptance, only "in the Beloved."

Again, let me urge the Christian man, who *has* learned to look for his acceptance with God only in Christ, to watch with jealous care over his own heart, lest by any means he should be drawn away from the simplicity of gospel hope.

O how ready are our hearts to forget what we

have learned : how prone to go back, from an unmixed entire reliance on Jesus, to something of dependence on ourselves : how often the believer is tempted, especially when he marks the faults and deficiencies in his own spiritual state, to think his standing in the sight of God, and his title to the divine favour, to be measured by his own character. No, my brethren ; our standing in God's sight, for acceptance, is alone *in Christ*. God accepts you, as to your justification, never for what He sees in *you*, but only for what He sees in *Christ*. It is not even what his own grace has wrought in you that is the ground of your acceptance for justification. You are "accepted *in the Beloved*."

It is a great mistake to confound your justification and sanctification together. They are two things quite distinct. You have your justification in Christ. God regards you as just and righteous, not because you are so in yourselves, but because Christ is so, and He looks on you in Christ.

Your sanctification is another matter. *That* is God's work *in you*. By his Holy Spirit He cleanses your thoughts, directs your wills, purifies your hearts, conforms you to Christ, and meetens you for heaven. But this is not that in which you are justified : this is not that which causes God to look on you, and acquit you of all sin, and accept you as righteous. It never could be so : otherwise you would not be "accepted in the Beloved ;" you would be accepted *in yourselves*.

It is from overlooking this that the Christian man too often loses his peace, and therefore his stability. He examines himself, and he finds sin wofully cleaving to him, even though he cannot but see that he has good proof of that work of the Holy Ghost, which marks him for a child of God, yet when he also sees how far he falls short of the holiness which he desires to maintain, then does he begin to say within himself, 'How can it be that God should look with favour upon *me*? How can *I* be acceptable to Him? While thus imperfect, thus prone to evil, and too often falling into sin, how can it be that God regards *me* with love and satisfaction?'

And so the mind is clouded: guilt increases on the conscience: the peace of the soul is broken: then follows weakness, and instability, and perhaps some sad fall: and all from losing sight of Jesus, and from looking at what we are in ourselves for justification, instead of looking only at Christ.

Then, Christian brethren, let this be your lesson of instruction. I beseech you keep the words of our text always in view, write them on the tables of your hearts; recollect, at all times, your position before God is that of oneness with Christ. Weak, and worthless, and sinful as you are, God sees not this; He looks on Christ; Christ is always, and perfectly acceptable to Him, and in Him *you* are accepted.

God grant you to retain fast hold upon this truth. Then will you have a principle to sustain you, animate you, and make you ready to

live obediently before Him. O yes, it is not only your peace, but your holiness too, that is bound up in a consciousness of this blessed fact, that you are "accepted in the Beloved."

SERMON VII.

EPHESIANS II. 4—6.

GOD, WHO IS RICH IN MERCY, FOR HIS GREAT LOVE WHEREWITH HE LOVED US, EVEN WHEN WE WERE DEAD IN SINS, HATH QUICKENED US TOGETHER WITH CHRIST; (BY GRACE YE ARE SAVED,) AND HATH RAISED US UP TOGETHER, AND MADE US SIT TOGETHER IN HEAVENLY PLACES IN CHRIST JESUS.

“HE ascended into heaven”—such is one of the main articles of our Christian faith. We solemnly avow our belief in it every time that we repeat our creed. And a blessed fact it is in the esteem of every true believer, the fact of Jesus our Lord’s ascension into glory, and his exaltation at the right hand of God. May the Redeemer Himself, from his throne above, pour out his Spirit upon us, even as He hath promised, and teach us to understand the things concerning Himself, and cause us to know our interest in them.

I have chosen a text for our present meditation in which we shall find much that bears, and that very strikingly, on the subject of our adorable Lord’s ascension.

What is the Apostle shewing? He is shewing the great things which God has wrought for his

people. And he mentions especially two, in the verses before us. God hath *quicken*ed his people: that is the first act of mercy specified. And then, He hath *raised them up, and made them to sit in heavenly places*: this is the second act.

Moreover, the Apostle declares at what time, and under what circumstances, these acts of grace were wrought: When was it? “Even *when we were dead in sins.*”

And still further, St. Paul explains how and in what way these things were done. They were done *in Christ*. He “hath quickened us *together with Christ*, and raised us up and made us sit together in heavenly places *in Christ Jesus.*” These are the matters then for our examination at this time. If God enlighten us we shall feel them to be peculiarly instructive, edifying, and comforting to our souls.

I. We say, the Apostle declares TWO ACTS OF MERCY WHICH GOD HATH WROUGHT FOR HIS PEOPLE. He hath *quicken*ed them, and hath *raised them up, and made them to sit in the heavenly places*: that is to say, he hath granted to them a glorious resurrection from the grave, and a triumphant exaltation to his own kingdom.

If you will carefully read over the whole passage to which the text belongs, you will see that this is the Apostle’s meaning. You must begin at the 15th verse of the previous Chapter. There you hear the Apostle telling his brethren, how that after he knew of their faith, and love, as Christians, he ceased not to pray for them, and

among other blessings which he implored for them was this, the knowledge of God's power toward them. Mark the 17th verse, "what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe," that is, what the power of God, in its exceeding greatness, can and will do for us: and then the Apostle adds, "according to the working of his mighty power which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at his own right hand in the heavenly places." In other words, what God's power did in Christ, that it will do in us; it shall work in us, as it wrought in Him. What has it wrought in Him? It has raised Him from the dead, quickened his dead body, restored it to life. And what more? It has exalted Him in that same body, once dead, now quickened, and seated Him at God's right hand in the heavenly places. This was the power that wrought in Christ, and these the acts which it performed. The same power, then, it is which shall work in his people, and the same are the acts which it shall execute in them.

Hence, in our text we find these two things specified. They are spoken of as indeed already done. The reason of this we shall presently see. But whoever follows the Apostle, from the verses to which I have referred in the first Chapter onward to our text, will trace his train of thought, and will observe at once how he has the same grand things in view throughout, the glories awaiting God's Church, the triumph of her resurrection, the height of her exaltation, in that day when the dead in Christ shall rise, shall be

caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thenceforward shall be happy and glorified for ever with the Lord.

This is the power of God toward them : this the purpose of his mercy : this the fruit of that great love wherewith He loved them : to quicken them from the grave in the great and blessed day of resurrection, and then to raise them to his throne, and to give them a seat in the heavenly places, an abode with Himself in glory.

See then, brethren, see and admire the wonders of God's love. O, what has that love in store for you ! To what bliss shall it bring you ! To what honour shall it raise you ! Vile as you are, guilty as you have been, worthless as you still feel yourselves to be, God designs to have you near Him, and with Him, and that for evermore. You shall see God. Your eyes shall behold " the King eternal, immortal, invisible, who dwelleth in the light that no man can approach unto, whom no man as yet hath seen, or can see ; " in his very presence, and in sight of his majesty, you shall eternally dwell, eternally delight.

True it is, death may come, death may be very near, yet a few days and we may have to lay you in the dust, but then *we* know, and *you* know, that a time there is, and it fast draws nigh, when your flesh shall be raised, you shall " hear the voice of the Son of God and live," you shall be made like to Christ, you shall be clad in light, your bodies shall join your souls in bliss, soul and body well fitted for each other, both perfect, both

pure, both glorified, shall be sharers together of the joy of your Lord. Christian, try to fix your thoughts on this: endeavour to realize it: say within yourself, 'Is it then so? Am I to be ere long in heaven? Am I to be like Christ? Am I to see the very face of God? Am I to abide with Him for ever?' Yes, it is this, no less than this, that God hath promised me. "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though, after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another." 'I shall rise from death, and meet my God, and never go out from his temple, but there be happy and holy to all eternity.'

O what amazing grace is this, my Christian brethren, which God has shewn toward you. What was there in you to invite such loving kindness? What desert had you, that God should bestow such blessedness upon you? For your answer to such questions let us pass on to the further matters to be noted in the text.

II. You will observe, THE TIME WHEN, AND THE CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH, THESE ACTS OF INFINITE POWER AND LOVE WERE ACCOMPLISHED. We then shall see what desert or merit there was in us: and whether it was our own goodness and worthiness that drew down such tokens of favour from Almighty God toward us. What saith the Apostle? "God, who is rich in mercy, *for his great love* where-

with He loved us, *even when we were dead in sins*, hath quickened us, and raised us up, and made us to sit in heavenly places." All was done, you observe, *even when we were dead in sins*; therefore it could not have been done for any merit or goodness which God could see in us. But then, why was it? St Paul tells us; "*for his great love* wherewith He loved us." Love, free love, sovereign love, unchanging and eternal love, looked upon us in our sins, pitied us, and resolved to redeem, and glorify us. What a marvellous truth! When there was nothing in us but sin; nothing to invite divine favour, but every thing to incur divine anger; nothing to attract almighty love, but every thing to call down almighty wrath; this was the time, and under these circumstances it was, that our salvation, in all its fulness, was secured; our deliverance from death, our resurrection to life, our exaltation to glory, all in effect was done, not literally and actually done, but so determined on, and such steps in order thereunto were taken, that the thing became sure, settled, and made certain, as certain as though already accomplished. Hence, as we have already said, St. Paul in the text speaks of these acts of God's grace towards his people, as even now already executed. "He *hath* quickened us: he *hath* raised us up, and made us to sit in heavenly places."

See then here the freeness, the sovereignty, and the certainty of God's purposes and dealings of love toward his children. He acts of his own will, rich in mercy; not for their desert, but for

“his great love.” They were in their sins. It was He who loved them, not they who loved Him. Yea, they were “dead in sins,” they could take no step toward Him; but He came down to them. The first movement was on his part. And hence the security of the believer. God loves him not for any goodness seen in him; this is not the ground of the divine procedure; were it so, who of us is there but would have constant cause to fear the loss of the love of God? for, O, what sin is there cleaving to us all; what coldness, forgetfulness, ingratitude, rebellion, does every Christian man detect within himself at times, and alas too often; and if the love of God for him, were to be governed by what the eye of God sees in him, how must he often tremble lest that love would leave him, dealing with him after his sins, and rewarding him according to his iniquities. And as to ever seeing God in glory, as to ever gaining heaven, as to ever sharing the blessedness and glory of that eternal kingdom, alas, how could any Christian man entertain the hope? No, ‘let God measure his love to me, by what He sees in me,’ says every saint, ‘and I am lost: I shall never see that good land: I shall never enter into his rest.’

But, Christian, it is not so that God proceeds. See in our text what his method is. See what it is that moves Him, and governs Him. “God, who is rich in mercy, for the *great love* wherewith He loved us.” There is the secret spring of all his acts in your salvation.

O let me call on all of you who know what it is to rejoice, as Christians ought to do, in hope of the glory of God, often to look back and think upon the state in which you were, when his mercy visited you. How does it set forth the riches of his grace! Yes, "ye that now follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord, look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye were digged." Consider what you were by nature before God: none of you righteous, no not one: all gone out of the way, all, in the sight of infinite holiness, become abominable; but then it was that God took mercy on you; and, by a scheme of wondrous grace, and power, and wisdom, secured to you life and glory everlasting. Surely you will thankfully subscribe to the Apostle's acknowledgment:—"He hath saved us, and called us, with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace." And again, and again, will you repeat the blessed truth, which the text so pointedly exhibits, "By grace, by grace, are we saved."

Self-righteous sinners, ye who yet will cling to the notion of goodness in yourselves as the ground of your hope, (there are thousands such,) see you not that *your* plan of salvation and God's, are just exactly opposed? *His* is all of grace: *Yours* of your own merit. Be warned: you are fundamentally, fatally wrong. Build your hope on such a foundation, and you perish. Eternal life and glory are *gifts* of God to men, purposed and secured to them, even when they were dead

in sins, granted to them, not for their merit, but for his mercy. May you so receive them, or they will never be yours.

III. We learn in our text, HOW, AND IN WHAT WAY, IT WAS, THAT THE MERCY OF GOD ACCOMPLISHED FOR HIS PEOPLE, THAT WORK OF WHICH WE HAVE SPOKEN. Obviously it has not as yet been literally accomplished. The actual resurrection and glorification of God's people is yet to come.

We ask then, how was it? And our text answers us: it was *in Christ*. "When we were dead in sins, He hath quickened us *together with Christ*, and hath raised us up together, and made us to sit together in heavenly places *in Christ Jesus*."

Here, my brethren, we have before us, one of the most important, most consoling, and most sanctifying truths of the Gospel. It is the very key to the whole doctrine of that Gospel, as regards the Church of God. The union of believers to Christ; their oneness with Him; their identity with Him in the sight of God: this is that grand fundamental truth, on the right understanding of which our apprehension and experience of the whole Gospel depends.

Let us state the matter in few words. God foresaw the fall of man. His mercy decreed salvation. His wisdom devised the plan of that salvation. Jesus the eternal and coequal Son of God undertook to be, and was constituted the Saviour of the Church. The Father looked

on Him, and dealt with Him, as the representative of the Church. Jesus pledged Himself to be so. The Church, in God's eye, stood identified with Christ, and the salvation of that Church was to be wrought *in Christ*. It has been so; and if any ask, how? Briefly we reply, it is thus:—The Church had sin upon her; that sin must be atoned for; it *is* atoned for; not by the Church, but by Christ her representative. Again, the Church must stand righteous before God: she *does* stand righteous before Him: not by her own obedience, but by the obedience of Christ which is accounted her's. Thus what Christ did is accounted the doing of the Church. But more than this. All that was then wrought in the person of Christ was but a foreshewing, a representation beforehand, of what is to be wrought in the Church. Christ was raised up from the dead by the power of God: so shall his people be. Christ is now glorified at God's right hand: his people shall be glorified too.

Thus you behold, in the first place, all the work that was needful for the salvation of the Church done *by* Christ; and then, all the blessings which that salvation shall bring to the Church already exhibited *in* Christ. Christ glorified in heaven is virtually the Church glorified. For they are inseparable. God has joined them together from all eternity in his own purposes; He joins them together in time by the work of his Spirit, uniting his people to their Saviour; and now we have only to look up by faith, and contemplate Jesus as He is in heaven, and we

see precisely what his Church shall be. Virtually, as we have said, the Church is already there, because Christ the representative is there. And here is the triumph of faith, to feel and to realize our oneness to a risen and glorified Redeemer; a Redeemer in whom God hath viewed his people from eternity; in whom He views them now; a Redeemer in whom they too are to view themselves, and to see in all his work of obedience, their righteousness, in all His sufferings, their atonement, in *his* death *their* death, in *his* resurrection *their* resurrection, in *his* ascension into heaven, and in all his glory there, that very exaltation to which they shall *themselves* ere long be brought.

Christian, you believe this; you believe that what Christ *is*, that you *are to be*: and *where* God is, *there* you are to dwell. What then should be the effect of this upon you?

Let me ask, ought it not to promote, does it not in every true Christian eminently promote, a heavenly frame of mind. "If," saith St. Paul to the Colossians, "If ye be risen with Christ," mark the words "*risen with Christ*," united to Him, one with Him, and therefore "risen with Him," if so, "seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." There, where Jesus is, your hearts should be; and there they *must* be, if indeed you do know Him, and love Him, and rejoice in Him, as your Redeemer. And to use the language of our Church, so simple and expressive, "like as you believe your Saviour to have risen, and ascended

into the heavens, you also will in heart and mind thither ascend, and with Him continually dwell.”

But is it so with *all* of us, brethren? Do you *all* know the power of this attraction? You affirm your belief that Jesus hath ascended into the heavens. Do your hearts and minds then follow Him, and dwell with Him? Is there this proof that you and Christ are one? Professors, mere professors of religion, your own hearts answer ‘No.’ You are earthly, you are sensual, you are sinful, you do not love to think of Christ, you are conscious of no drawings of the soul towards Him; the things of this world please you far more than the thought of Christ in heaven; you have a relish for the one, you have no relish for the other, and you know it. Then be not deceived. If an ascended Saviour leads not your hearts to heaven, it is because you have no part in Him.

Believers, you long for heavenly mindedness, you pray for it, you desire to overcome the world, you would have your hearts above it. Let me bid you often to call to mind how near you stand to Christ in glory, yea, how you and He are one, and pray that you may feel this more. So shall you indeed become more separate from earth, and have your hearts more closely attached to the unseen realities of heaven. O it is by conscious union to a glorified Redeemer that the Holy Spirit sanctifies the soul. Then seek more to know this union. Ask it of God. Meditate calmly on the fact that you are joined to Christ. Carry the thought with you into the

vortex of the world, with all its temptations and cares, 'I am one with Christ, Christ my glorified Saviour.' O it will check many an evil thought, and give you a settled and increasing spirituality, and joy, and stedfastness. Think of yourselves as sitting with Christ in the heavenly places. *Feel* the fact, and you cannot serve the world, nor walk in sin.

Let me suggest one thought more. How sweet to a child of God in distress and affliction is the comfort to be gathered from the consideration of union to Christ in glory. Is he poor, or sick, or under contempt? Is he persecuted by man, or tempted by Satan, or in any other sort of tribulation? Let him reflect that all such trial is but for a season: Christ is in heaven, and where Christ is there he is soon to be; yea, in one sense, there he already is: he is raised to sit with Christ.

Afflicted children of God, try to rise above the things which are temporal. Where is Jesus? Seek your refuge there; seek your repose and consolation there. Sufferings, sorrows, wants, temptations, persecutions, none of these things can separate you from Christ. Let them be sanctified, and they shall make you know yet more of the blessedness and security of union to him. "Your life is hid with Christ in God," and whatever your trials now, "when He shall appear, you shall be like Him, for you shall see Him as He is." Then, "comfort one another with these words."

SERMON VIII.

EPHESIANS v. 25, 26, 27.

CHRIST LOVED THE CHURCH, AND GAVE HIMSELF FOR IT, THAT HE MIGHT SANCTIFY AND CLEANSE IT WITH THE WASHING OF WATER BY THE WORD, THAT HE MIGHT PRESENT IT UNTO HIMSELF A GLORIOUS CHURCH, NOT HAVING SPOT OR WRINKLE, OR ANY SUCH THING, BUT THAT IT SHOULD BE HOLY AND WITHOUT BLEMISH.

WHAT a golden chain of gracious truths, my Christian brethren, do these few words of the inspired Apostle exhibit before us. You have, as it were, the history of Christ's acts and purposes toward his people all drawn out. May the Holy Ghost be with us, and bless us, in our examination of it.

The Apostle makes four distinct statements in the text. He declares, in the first place, the fact that Christ hath loved the Church: next, that He hath redeemed it: then, that He doth also sanctify it: and finally, that He will ere long glorify it. These shall be, by the help of God, the several points of our present discourse.

I. "CHRIST LOVED THE CHURCH." Now here is a wonder at the outset. For who was Christ? and what was the Church?

Who was Christ? The only begotten, eternal, and equal Son of God: as great, and glorious, and holy, as the everlasting Father.

And what was the Church? A company of fallen, corrupted, earthly, sinful men.

Mark the contrast. Hear the voice of the Father respecting each. "Unto the Son," He saith, "Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity." But of men it is written, "there is none righteous, no not one; they are all gone out of the way; there is none that doeth good." Mark, I say, the contrast. On the one hand, a Being all infinitely pure: on the other hand, a wretch all wofully depraved. And yet the one loves the other. Christ, that hated iniquity, sets his heart on objects themselves desperately wicked. Christ, that ever loved righteousness, chooses those of whom not one is righteous, no not one.

Now, is not this a wonder? A mystery? That Christ should love *angels*, angels that never sinned, we can understand. But that He should love men, sinful men, how could it ever be?

We answer, there are two sorts of love: the love of *complacency*, and the love of *compassion*.

The love of *complacency* is that of one who sees in another all that delights himself, all that is pleasing to his mind, and congenial to his nature. Thus God loves Christ, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; mine elect in whom my soul delighteth." This is the love of *complacency*.

But then, there is the love of *compassion*: that is, when one has his heart drawn out towards

another, not because he beholds what is pleasing, but because he beholds what is pitiable. He sees misery, and ignorance, and error, and ruin, and helplessness, and this awakens interest, calls forth tender solicitude, and glowing benevolence.

So God loves the world. The world lieth in wickedness. It is all unholy: just what God abhors. But the world is lost: it is ruined: it is hopeless in its woe. Therefore God pities it. "God so *loved* the world, that He sent his only begotten Son to save the world. "Such is the love of *compassion*.

Now this helps us to understand the truth we are speaking of: Christ's love to the Church. There was nothing in the Church, in other words, Christians, there was nothing in *you* to make you worthy of his love. You were all unclean. You were perishing in sin. Therefore it was Christ loved you: not because you were lovely in yourselves, but because you were most wretched: not for your goodness, but for your helplessness. This touched his heart. Your sin would have repelled Him: but your misery attracted Him: and so from mere compassion, and free grace, He looked upon you, and resolved to bless you.

"None eye pitied thee,"—it is the Lord that speaks, and addresses his Israel of old, fit emblem of his Church at large, "None eye pitied thee, and when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thy blood, I said unto thee, live. Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold

thy time *was the time of love* : yea, I swear unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine."

O what say you, Christian brethren, to this? Is it not most true? Christ, the Lord of glory, set his love upon you, even when you were perishing in sin; *why* you know not, save for this, and in truth it was the cause, that had He not done so, you must have been for ever lost. "He remembered us in our low estate, for his *mercy* endureth for ever." His mercy, not our merit, moved Him then. Truly "the love of Christ passeth knowledge."

Here then, is the first thing in our text: the free and spontaneous act of the Lord Jesus Christ in taking compassion on sinners, and for their very misery setting his heart upon them.

II. We learn in our text, what the love of Christ led him to do for the Church: "HE GAVE HIMSELF FOR IT:" that is, He *redeemed* it.

The Church by reason of sin was amenable to the judgment of God. God had already declared that judgment. "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." That wrath was due to the Church. Had God dealt with his people as they of themselves deserved, then must he have poured upon them the fierceness of his anger to their eternal perdition.

Why has He not done it? The answer is before us. Christ gave himself for the Church. He voluntarily offered himself to stand in his

people's place, and to endure the vengeance which their sin had merited.

This offering was accepted. Eternal justice approved the proposal. It was settled, yea before the worlds were made, that Jesus the Son of God should become the surety for the Church, and taking on himself her sin, should suffer in her stead.

Accordingly, "when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son." He came from heaven. He clothed himself in flesh. He was made man. 'Lo,' said He, 'I come to redeem thy children, O my Father; I come to pay their debt, the debt contracted by their sin, the debt they owe to thy broken Law, thy outraged holiness: on me let all thy anger fall: only let them go free. I am prepared,—first to keep thy Law myself, so that I shall owe nothing on my own account, and then, whatever the weight of punishment which they deserve, whatever the terror of that curse which lies against their sin, on me let it all be poured. I give my life to ransom them.'

Such was the undertaking of the blessed Jesus. And He fulfilled it. He *did* obey his heavenly Father's law. He magnified it by his obedience so perfect and complete. The strictest scrutiny could find no flaw. Justice acknowledged that she had no claim against Him. He was without blemish and without spot. Sin was not in Him. Therefore for Himself He had nothing to suffer.

And for that very reason He was able to do what otherwise He could not have done. He could give himself to bear our suffering. He

received his people's guilt. The whole burden of that guilt was laid upon his head. And so He stood in the day of wrath. He presented Himself before the justice of God. Justice laid her hand on Him. "Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts." The stroke of vengeance fell. "My soul," said the gracious sufferer, "is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." The terrors of his Father's anger are upon him. His body languishes. His human spirit fails. "My God," he cries, "My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" He bows his head, and gives up the ghost.

There, Christian brethren, see the mystery of your redemption. Christ hath given himself for you. "He bare our sins in his own body on the tree. The good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." To ransom the Church, the Lord of glory is accursed, and dies!

O the depth of the riches of redeeming love! Believer, think on this. Christ loved you, and this was the proof of his love, that he gave Himself for you. His blood was shed, and his spirit was broken, and at length he died, and all to set you free from guilt and punishment, and bring you to eternal life.

O, my brethren, how lightly we speak of these things, how little we feel of them, compared with what we ought to do! And how little do we live under the practical influence of them! Alas, who would think we owed such mercies to our Lord? Why do we not love Him more?

think of Him more? speak of Him more? and live more to his glory? May God the Holy Spirit come and soften every heart, and teach us to feel deeply and increasingly our adorable Redeemer's love.

III. Our text carries us still further: it tells us what was the object which the Saviour had in view, when thus he gave Himself for the redemption of his Church from sin and death. It was this, "THAT HE MIGHT SANCTIFY AND CLEANSE IT WITH THE WASHING OF WATER BY THE WORD,"

"That he might sanctify and cleanse it." The Church was not only *guilty*, but *defiled*. The Lord's people are by nature not only sinners in need of a *redemption*, but sinners in need of a *purification*. Now their redemption, as we have seen, is obtained by the suffering of their blessed Surety in their stead. This frees them from *guilt*. But they want more than this. Their natures are evil. Their hearts are vile. They want *new* hearts. They want to be freed not only from the *guilt*, but also from the *power* of sin. Now how is this effected?

Jesus provides for it. It is the object He has in view: "that He might sanctify and cleanse" his Church: might give to his people a new heart, and a right spirit, might deliver them from the dominion of the devil in their souls, might subdue their iniquities, might implant in their breasts true holiness, might produce, in their dispositions and their lives, all goodness and right-

eousness and truth, yea, might renew them after his own most blessed image.

But what is the *power* by which this change is to be brought about? How is the Church, redeemed as she has been by the suffering of Christ, thus to be sanctified and cleansed, as He designs that she should be?

The Apostle answers in our text ;—“ with the washing of water ” it is the Church is sanctified.

“ The washing of water, ”—what is this? Is it baptism? Yes, we answer, baptism rightly understood, the Baptism of the Holy Ghost, such baptism as Jesus spoke of in his conversation with the Jewish ruler Nicodemus, the baptism not of water only, but of the Spirit ; or as St. Paul expresses it, “ the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost. ”

Readers of the Bible need not be told how often water is the symbol there made use of to designate the grace of the Holy Spirit. And the washing of water, with which the Church is cleansed and sanctified, can be nothing else : it is the grace of the Holy Spirit. It is that for which we every Sunday pray, in that ancient and scriptural collect of the Communion service, “ Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love Thee, and worthily magnify thy holy name. ”

Here then is the *power* by which Christ sanctifies the Church. He pours out of the grace of the Holy Spirit, that Spirit which He promised that he would send down upon his people, and

entering their hearts thereby, He cleanses them from the pollution of iniquity, and “purifies them a peculiar people zealous of good works.”

But we have yet another thing to note as to the way in which Jesus sanctifies his own. While by his Spirit it is that he accomplishes the work, what are the *means* which He makes use of for that end?

St. Paul explains this also: “the word,” the word of God, this it is that Jesus employs, and by that word his Spirit works in those whom He has redeemed. The great truths of divine revelation, these are brought to bear upon the heart and will of a redeemed sinner, and, the power of the Holy Spirit causing him to feel those truths, his affections are drawn heavenward, and he walks in newness of life.

Hence when Jesus, on earth, prayed for his Church, we read this striking petition, “sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth.” You note the *means* of their sanctification, “through thy *truth*, thy *word* is truth.”

Yes, let but a sinner’s heart be made to feel those great and gracious things with which the word of truth is filled; let him know that God has loved him, and that from everlasting; let him know what this heavenly love has done for him, how it has wrought a wonderful redemption for him, that Christ hath died to save him, and that God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven him, that he is reconciled unto God by the death of his Son, pardoned and saved eternally through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: O, the

heart that really knows, believes, and feels such things as these, how will it be henceforth affected toward sin and the world on the one hand, toward God and holiness on the other?

Christian, you can tell. "The word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation,"— you know what a change it has been the means of accomplishing in you. You hate sin, you forsake the world, you love God, you delight in holiness, and why? Because the word has taught you, and the Holy Spirit given you by Christ, has made you feel this precious truth, that by grace, free grace, the grace of God in Jesus Christ, you, a guilty sinner, have been ransomed, forgiven, everlastingly saved.

Here then we behold the sanctification of the Church. "Christ hath sanctified and cleansed it, with the washing of water, by the word."

IV. What is it that Christ hath yet in view as it regards his Church? What is to be the issue of that eternal love which He hath borne toward her, and of that marvellous redemption which He hath effected for her, and of that work of sanctification which by his Spirit and his word He hath wrought in her? It is declared to be this, "THAT HE MAY PRESENT IT UNTO HIMSELF A GLORIOUS CHURCH, NOT HAVING SPOT OR WRINKLE, OR ANY SUCH THING, BUT THAT IT MAY BE HOLY, AND WITHOUT BLEMISH."

A state of glory then, a state of glorious perfection, this is that which Christ designs as the end and consummation of all his plans and acts

of love toward his people. Glorious perfection, I repeat, for this you observe is the state described. The Apostle declares that the Church is to be "a *glorious* Church:" but wherein shall her glory consist? It shall consist in this, her freedom from spot or blemish, yea, her holiness, complete unsullied holiness, in one word, her likeness to her Lord.

On earth, indeed, the Church, in a certain comparative and limited sense, is holy. "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people." True Christians are changed in heart. They are separated from the world. They love God. They choose his ways. They follow after holiness. But *perfectly* holy they are not.

Blessed be God, however, they shall be so. In that day when Christ shall come to gather together his elect, and take them to the mansions in their Father's house, then each one of them shall be found blameless, yea, "without fault before the throne of God," clothed in that "fine linen, clean and white, which is the righteousness of saints," not that righteousness for justification, which they have from Christ imputed to them, but that which constitutes their sanctification, wrought in them by his Holy Spirit, and in which they shall stand "perfect and complete in all the will of God." Then it is that the Church will appear "a glorious Church," sinless, pure, and holy, like to Christ. Most blessed thought! "When He shall appear, we shall be like Him."

Now this then is the issue of the Saviour's

plan of love. All the counsels of eternal mercy had this for their end, the glorious perfection of the Church. All that Jesus did and suffered for his people, and all that by his Spirit He now works in them, is to terminate in this one result, their spotless holiness. And when that result is gained, Jesus will be satisfied. This will be his joy, to "present to Himself," to have before Him, in the day of his appearing, as his own possession, this sanctified Church, holy, and without blemish.

Let me close with one or two reflections. And first, let us mark the instruction which our subject yields : instruction as to what is the real character of Christ's salvation. Take the mass of men in this Christian land, ask them what it is that Christ, as a Saviour, hath done for his people? He has died for them, you will be told : and why has He died for them? you ask : To deliver them from hell, will be the reply : and there, with the vast majority of people, lies the whole of Christ's salvation. Deliverance from hell, this is the grand blessing which men, for the most part, think of Christ, as procuring for his people. They go no further. But let me ask, Is this the whole of Christ's salvation? Is it merely our rescue from eternal woe? Far otherwise. There is much more than this. This is but a part. Yes, and in fact it is but a step to something else. Christ delivers his Church from God's wrath and damnation, in order that He may do something more.

Observe the text : He "loved the Church, and gave Himself for it, *that He might sanctify and*

cleanse it :" here was the end and purpose of his redemption : for this it was He saved his people from eternal death, that He might have them a possession for Himself to sanctify, and make them pure, spotless, holy, and perfect for ever.

The instruction then is this. See the object of the Gospel. See what has been the Redeemer's aim all through. It is his people's *sanctification*. He could not make them holy while the wrath of God was yet abiding upon them. Therefore this is the first act of his love. He gives Himself for the Church, to ransom her from wrath and ruin, in order that then He might sanctify and cleanse her, and present her atlength unto Himself glorious in her perfection.

Then secondly, I would say, out of this truth there arises a very important admonition.

It is this. Have any of us been wont hitherto to think of the salvation of Christ only as a deliverance from condemnation? Has this been all that we were anxious for? Did we know that we were safe from hell, should we be satisfied, and say that it is all we want? Then plainly we know nothing aright of Jesus and his Gospel. We do not understand what salvation is.

Sinner, it is so with you. Men of the world, it is so with you. All that you look to Christ to do for you, all you ask, all you hope, it is simply this, that when you die you may not go to hell. Now, let me warn you, *that* is not the salvation of Christ. The salvation of Christ is a deliverance from *sin*, the love of sin, the power of

sin, the practice of sin : it is the being brought to holiness, and to God. This you have never sought. Therefore I said you know not what salvation is. May the thought awaken you.

But lastly, there is consolation to be gathered from our subject ; consolation for all true children of God. Wherein does it lie ?

Christian, let me ask you, why do you prize the Gospel ? Is it not for this, that it brings you sanctification ? Had the salvation of the Gospel been no more than freedom from guilt, damnation, and death ; had it left you in sin to serve Satan, and to be a worker of iniquity ; what would you esteem it ? No salvation at all !

You long for *holiness*. You pant after it. O, to be perfect ! Well, you shall be so. This is Christ's design. His salvation has for its end just the thing which you desire. It is holiness. For this He loved you ; for this He redeemed you ; for this He now cleanses and sanctifies you ; to make you glorious in holiness for ever.

Rejoice then, believer. Jesus will "perfect that which concerneth you." In his faith and love fight on against the devil, the world, and the flesh ; yet a little season, and you shall be satisfied, for you shall "awake up after his likeness."

SERMON IX.

HEBREWS VIII. 10.

THIS IS THE COVENANT THAT I WILL MAKE WITH THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAITH THE LORD ; I WILL PUT MY LAWS INTO THEIR MIND, AND WRITE THEM IN THEIR HEARTS.

A precious promise this, my brethren, to all the people of God !

True, the house of Israel it was, to whom the promise first was made. But it does not belong to them alone. St. Paul is speaking here of a new covenant which the Lord will make with them. But then, *what* covenant is it ? It is the covenant of the Gospel : the very same into which we are called, and of the blessings of which all the true Israel of God, all the faithful in Christ Jesus, do partake.

Therefore, while our text makes mention of Israel, and sets forth mercies yet in store for them, when they shall remember themselves, and be turned unto the Lord, it also serves to gladden the hearts of all believers, all of every kindred of the earth whom the Lord our God shall call.

I place the words of our text, then, now before your minds, beloved Christian brethren,

in order that you may fix your thoughts in meditation on them, and see what grace is given to you of God in the covenant of his love in Jesus Christ. And although we have in the text but a part of the blessing of that covenant, yet I prefer to dwell on that alone, for, sure I am, there is full enough in it for our present discourse, and if only the mercy there specified be ours, all others shall come with it, even all "the things that are freely given to us of God."

This then is the promise of his new covenant, the promise He makes respecting all his chosen people; "I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts."

I. Let me say, how do these words teach us what is THE NATURAL CONDITION OF THE HEART, even the heart of the Lord's own people.

The law of God, alas! is *not* there: and because it is wanting, therefore does the Lord declare that He will introduce it. Our natural state is one of lawlessness and disobedience.

Yes, brethren, it is too true. In one sense indeed the law of God may be said to be in our hearts, and in our minds; that is, we may have a knowledge of it, a sense of right and wrong, a perception of goodness and of sin, at least to some extent.

So St. Paul speaks of the very heathen, though living in ignorance of God's word, yet as having "the work of the law written in their hearts," inasmuch as there is a sort of witness left in their own consciences, by which

they may know, in no small measure, what they ought, and what they ought not to do.

In like manner, and to a much greater extent, we, who have the light of God's word shining all around us, and whose consciences cannot but be aware of what God has commanded, and what He has forbidden, *must* have thus far God's law impressed upon our minds, and written in our hearts.

And, indeed, there, sinner, lies thy criminality. Thou canst not plead ignorance. Thou canst not say, 'I knew no better.' God hath shewed thee what is good, and yet thou hast done what is evil.

But it is something beyond this which is meant in our text: something which by nature we have not: and the very terms of the text, conveying, as they do, a promise from God, that He will imprint his law upon his people's hearts, proves at once that it is a thing which without his grace they would not have had.

No, brethren, left to ourselves we shall never set up God's law within our souls. We have another law exalted there. It is the law of sin; the law of our own wills, our corrupt and evil wills; this is the rule which we follow.

We *may* know, we *do* know, what God hath commanded: we know how He has required of us to love Him, "the Lord our God, with all our heart, and mind, and soul, and strength, and to have none other God."

Yet what have we done? We have *not* loved Him with all our hearts; we have set up idols in

his place ; we have followed the devices and desires of our own depraved nature ; yea, as the Prophet speaks, “ All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his *own* way.”

Beloved brethren, have you ever been led deeply to feel this ? Have you made confession of it sincerely and seriously before your God ? Have you looked into your hearts, and mourned to find the law of God *not* written there, as it ought to be ? Has it grieved you to think how you have dishonoured God, by taking idols, and putting them into his place, and obeying laws exactly opposed to his law ?

It is one of the first signs and proofs of a saving change in any sinner’s soul, when a sense of his wicked waywardness in this preference, not of his Maker’s authority, but of his own inclination, not of God’s commands, but of his own conceits, awakens him to shame, and sorrow, and unfeigned repentance, and he learns to abhor himself, and is heard to sigh and cry for his own vileness, and his language is, ‘ O for a new heart, O for a will subdued to God’s will, O that my own proud, foolish, selfish spirit were brought down, and the law of my God set up, as it should be, in my soul ! ’

Brethren, it is well when a man begins so to feel, and so to speak. Perhaps some of you are actually at this moment in this state of mind. Then let me take them again to our text.

II. You will observe, that if the text shews us our natural state of lawless disobedience, it

also tells us HOW, AND IN WHAT WAY, THE CHANGE WE WANT IS TO BE WROUGHT: how the law of God is to be established in our souls. Almighty God Himself undertakes to do it. “*I will put my Laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts.*”

When Israel is converted unto God, it will be God’s own work. So He speaks by his prophet Ezekiel, “*Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh, and I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.*”

Thus the Lord declares that Israel’s conversion unto Him shall be the work of his own hand. When their idols are cast down, and the Lord alone exalted; when their stony disobedient heart is changed into a meek submissive heart, a heart of flesh; when God’s statutes and judgments shall be loved, and revered, and obeyed,—it shall be through the power and grace of his Almighty Spirit working the wondrous change upon them.

Now, brethren, so it is with us. Our change of heart and will is the work of God. The writing of his law within us must be done by the operation of his Holy Spirit.

Hence, when our Lord was speaking of this great change, He described it as a being “born

of the Spirit:" a new creation of the soul, to be wrought by the power of the Holy Ghost. And so St. Paul, speaking of all who are living in holy obedience to God, saith to them, "We are His workmanship," the workmanship of God, "created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

Awakened sinner, what dost thou desire? Is it not this, to be changed in heart, to have thy soul renewed, to be freed from the law and dominion of thy sins, to have thyself subjected and conformed to the law of thy God?

Then learn this day whither thou must go to have all this accomplished in thee. God alone can do it. And God himself undertakes the work. The Holy Spirit it is who makes it his own special office to cleanse the hearts of sinners from their sin, to put the law of God into their minds, and write it in their hearts: He *has done* it already for thousands: He *will do* it for thee. Go then, and ask Him: "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."

But, perhaps, some of you will inquire what right you have to expect so great a blessing? What claim have you on the Divine regard? It is true, God makes a promise, but then, you say, are not you to do something on your part to make yourselves *deserving* that the promise shall be fulfilled to you? In answer to this, I would have you notice a still further and very important matter in our text.

III. We remark THE PECULIAR WAY IN WHICH THE LORD DECLARES HIS PLAN OF GRACE. It is by *a new* covenant. The promise of our text is a new covenant engagement. "This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, saith the Lord ; I will put my laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts."

You remember the Lord is speaking of Israel ; the Jewish people. Now there was a covenant which He had once made with them, even at the time when He led them forth out of Egypt, and was about to fix them in the land of Canaan. Then it was that He entered into his first covenant with them. He gave them a law : and He told them that as long as the nation kept that law, as long as they obeyed and served their God, so long He would favour them, protect them, and bless them : but if they broke his law, and departed from his service, and obeyed not his voice, then would He "turn to be their enemy," and they should feel all the weight of his wrathful indignation.

Now you notice the nature of this covenant : it was *conditional* : that is to say, God's favour, or wrath, depended on their own conduct : if they obeyed his will, He would bless them : if they disobeyed, He would cast them off.

So you read in the book of Deuteronomy how Moses sums up this covenant : "See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil, in that I command thee to love the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments, that thou mayest live, and

the Lord thy God shall bless thee : but if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not fear, ye shall surely perish. I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing."

These were then the terms of the covenant. If, as a nation, Israel served God, then, as a nation, they should prosper. If they sinned against Him, then, as a nation, they should suffer.

Now what did Israel do ? Did they serve God ? No. They wofully departed from Him, and rebelled against Him. What was the consequence ? God kept to his word. He poured his wrath most terribly upon them. He has cast them out of their land. They are under his curse.

So then, by the first covenant, Israel is a lost and ruined race.

Now, therefore, what hath God done ? In wondrous mercy He proclaims a new covenant : a very different covenant from the first : it is the covenant of the Gospel. That Gospel, Israel, as a nation, shall ere long receive : and then shall we see our text fulfilled in them.

Meanwhile, let us mark wherein this new covenant differs from the old : the second from the first.

Surely it differs in many points. But the particular I want to have noted now is this, *the kind of engagement* which this new covenant makes. The old covenant, as we have seen, made every thing depend on Israel's own conduct. The new covenant is altogether of another kind. It leaves nothing to depend on Israel.

all depends on the good and gracious
God, and this is its glory, its beauty, its excellency

Mark how you have this particular brought
out in the verses going before the text. St. Paul
takes up the words of the prophet Jeremiah, when I
"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, will make a new covenant with the house of
Israel, and with the house of Judah, not according to
ing to the covenant that I made with their fathers,
in the day when I took them by the hand and led
them out of the land of Egypt." No, it was to
be of another description altogether. And why
so? For this plain reason, that by that covenant
Israel had become a ruined people. The Prophet
gives that reason,—“because they continued not
in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith
the Lord.” Then follow the terms of the new
covenant. “This is the covenant that I will
make with the house of Israel after those days,
saith the Lord: I will put my laws into their
minds, and write them in their hearts.”

You see no conditions here. Nothing is left
suspended on Israel's behaviour. Jehovah makes
an absolute, a free, an unconditional promise.
The covenant is a simple declaration, on his
part, of grace, and goodwill toward the people.
And hence when St. Paul speaks of this new
covenant, and calls it a *better* covenant, why
than the first, he explains the reason why it is
so much better, because, “it is established on
better promises.” Truly they are better, inasmuch
as the promises of the old covenant were con-
ditional, but those of the new are unconditional:

they are simple ~~declarations of the~~
signs of God ~~in our hearts~~

And now, my brethren, ~~let us~~
on ourselves. ~~The~~
nant. It is the same ~~with~~
Observe them ~~with~~

I was saying ~~that~~
sinner was ~~here~~
the mercy of God ~~is~~
in Jesus Christ. ~~Whether~~
whether such ~~are~~
and hope for ~~it~~
having any thing ~~to~~
thy of God's ~~grace~~
look at the text. ~~It~~

sets forth his grace. ~~It~~
on merit which ~~is~~
you, you must bring ~~it~~
your own, and ~~it~~
you, then will ~~it~~
taste his grace.

O no, far ~~from~~
who feel the ~~need~~
grace He ~~has~~
and it shall be ~~given~~
"A new heart ~~will~~
to have my ~~law~~
your whole ~~heart~~
put my laws ~~in~~
in your hearts.

See then, ~~how~~
that suits your ~~condition~~
thing, so as to ~~bring~~



It all depends on the good and gracious will of God, and this is its glory, its beauty, its excellency.

Mark how you have this particular brought out in the verses going before the text. St. Paul takes up the words of the prophet Jeremiah, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah, *not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers*, in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt." No, it was to be of another description altogether. And why so? For this plain reason, that by that covenant Israel had become a ruined people. The Prophet gives that reason,—“because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.” Then follow the terms of the new covenant. “This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts.”

You see no conditions here. Nothing is left suspended on Israel's behaviour. Jehovah makes an absolute, a free, an unconditional promise. The covenant is a simple declaration, on his own part, of grace, and goodwill toward the people. And hence when St. Paul speaks of this new covenant, and calls it a *better* covenant, better than the first, he explains the reason why it is so much better, because, “it is established on *better promises*.” Truly they *are* better, inasmuch as the promises of the old covenant were conditional, but those of the new are unconditional:

they are simple declarations of the gracious designs of God toward his Israel.

And now, my brethren, note how all this bears on ourselves. The Gospel covenant is *our* covenant. It is the same as Israel's new covenant. Observe then what is its character.

I was saying that it might be some awakened sinner was here who fain would seek to share the mercy of God in the covenant of his love in Jesus Christ, but who would be ready to ask, whether such an one as he is may look to God, and hope for mercy from Him, and this without having any thing of his own to make him worthy of God's regard? We say to such a man, look at the text. See in what way it is that God sets forth his grace. Does He make it to depend on merit which He sees in you? Does He tell you, you must bring to Him some good thing of your own, and that when He shall find this in you, then will He look down on you, and let you taste his grace?

O no, far from it. All he says to *you*, to *all* who feel the need in which they stand of the grace He has to impart, is simply this, "Ask, and it shall be given." Do you need new hearts? "A new heart will I give you." Do you need to have my law set up within your breasts, and your whole souls brought to love it? "I will put my laws into your minds, and write them in your hearts."

See then, how this promise is just the thing that suits your state. You can do no good thing, so as to gain the grace of God as due to

you. Therefore God grants it to you at once. He grants it to you as his free gift. Let this then make you bold to seek it. You do not come to make a claim, on the ground that you have so much of good disposition in you already, that He must be favourable to you. No, you come as those who have nought to plead but your own wants, nought to look to but God's free grace.

Then, I say, how welcome to you is this new covenant promise. The Lord just suits that promise to your case. It is unclogged, unfettered, by any requirements of merit on your part. Jehovah speaks as a God of sovereign love, "I will do it." And, in truth, it is a token of that love already vouchsafed you, that you are seeking the mercy He engages to bestow. Why, why do you long for renewing grace? Why crave a new heart? Why desire to have your own will humbled, and God's will exalted?

It is because God has thoughts of good toward you, and has already commenced his work of mercy. It is because the Lord himself, not waiting for any goodness on your part, to give you a claim on his regard, has chosen you, and touched your hearts within you, by his Spirit, therefore you have these warm desires to walk in his ways, and He who hath called out those desires within you, will, in due time, let you feel and know that He is working in your souls, "to will, and to do, of his good pleasure."

IV. There is one other remark which I have purposed to make on our text. Hitherto you

have seen what it is that God declares that He will do within his people,—that he will conform their will to his own laws. Observe then NOW, IN WHAT LIGHT THIS CHANGE WITHIN THE HEART IS HERE PRESENTED TO US. It is spoken of as one of the grand and chief *blessings* which the Lord bestows upon his people. It is made a matter of *promise*, of *gracious promise*, and therefore is contemplated as among the *special favours* of a God of love.

And so it is indeed. This gift of the Holy Spirit to free our souls from the power of sin, and set the law of God within our hearts, and cause us to yield a ready obedience thereunto, it is a blessing indeed. So the sinner feels it to be, when first he is seeking the way of life. O the miserable slavery of sin! It is horrible, and hateful to his mind. And deliverance from it, and heavenly grace to sanctify his soul, these he does esteem true blessings, and right gladly therefore does he hail the promises of them which the new covenant brings. What joy for him to think that holiness, the thing he longs for, is what God hath undertaken to impart.

So the advanced Christian: he too regards it among his most precious mercies, that God hath said, “I will put my laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts.” And why? Because he is one who feels, more and more continually, the constraining power of the love of God toward him, and hence it is the thing which he unceasingly desires, to be made holy in body, soul and spirit. Yes, the Christian man is one who

thinks how the Lord has looked on him, and loved him with an everlasting and unchanging love: he thinks upon the cross, and wonders at the redemption there accomplished for his soul, the Son of God in human flesh dying to save a wretched sinner such as he has been: he thinks of heaven, and adores the mercy which has opened to him that glorious kingdom, and given him a place at God's right hand: and then his soul's emotion,—what is it? 'Lord, let me, more than ever, give myself to Thee: let all within me praise thy holy name: sanctify me wholly to Thyself: make and keep me only thine.' Then, for such an one what a comfort it is to reflect, that this is that very thing whereof God hath made him a free promise, even *grace to be holy*.

So that holiness, that is, conformity to God's law, submission to God's will, obedience to God's commandments, while it is with you, my Christian brethren, the very thing you most desire, it is also the very thing which God hath given you his word that He will work within you. Therefore wait on Him for it. Ye Christians indeed, ye who choose the law of God, ye who feel the love of God to you, and therefore do bind his law to your hearts, and aim to walk in all his holy ways, bless Him for his promise; put Him in remembrance of it; plead it in your prayers; use the means which He has given, his word and his ordinances, and seek in them, by the power of the Holy Ghost, advance in holiness. And "the very God of peace shall sanctify you wholly. Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it."

SERMON X.

ROMANS VII. 22.

I DELIGHT IN THE LAW OF GOD, AFTER THE INWARD
MAN.

THERE is something, at first sight, almost contradictory in the way in which the Apostle St. Paul speaks, at different times, respecting the law of God. But a little before, in this same epistle, he had said that Christian men were not “under the law:” that they were “delivered from the law:” yea, that they had become “dead to the law.” Yet what have we now in our text? A declaration most distinct, and decided, of his own attachment to the law. “I delight,” saith he, “in the law of God.”

I trust we shall see what his meaning is, and understand how entirely his several statements agree together. And may God grant us in our own hearts to feel how true it is that a Christian man, though not under the law, but delivered from it, and in a sense dead to it, yet does, from his heart, love it, and delight in it.

There are three matters which I would wish you to observe in order to understand the subject before us.

I. WHAT IS THAT LAW OF WHICH THE APOSTLE SPEAKS.

II. WHAT IS THE POSITION OF THE CHRISTIAN MAN IN RESPECT OF THAT LAW. And

III. WHAT ARE HIS FEELINGS TOWARDS IT.

I. WHAT IS THAT LAW OF WHICH THE APOSTLE SPEAKS? It is the law of God: in other words, the will of God.

The first law given to man was that to Adam in Paradise, "Of the tree of knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat." A very simple law, but quite sufficient to serve the purpose for which it was given. All that was wanted then was some rule laid down to be a test of Adam's love to God. And for *this* that one command was quite enough. So long as he loved his Maker, so long would he refuse to touch the tree. Alas, too soon he took thereof, and did eat: plain proof that his love was gone.

From that day other laws, more in number, more particular, and more defined, became requisite. Man was fallen. He needed to be told of duty: he needed to be warned of sin: he needed specific injunctions, and specific prohibitions, such as before were uncalled for.

Hence the multiplied rules which, from time to time, we find his Maker giving him. All these were parts of his law. The whole together constituted the statute book of the Creator's moral government.

The substance of this law is in various places collected together, and exhibited before us: some-

times more fully than at other times : but the law is the same.

Thus in the ten commandments we have a short, but a most comprehensive setting forth of the will of God. All duties toward Him, all duties toward our fellow-men, are there enjoined : all sins against Him, all sins against our fellow-men, are there forbidden. Under a few heads every thing that God would have us do, or not do, is expressed. Hence the way in which those ten commandments are often alluded to in holy scripture : and hence too the manner in which our Church in her Communion service recites them continually as the law of God.

But the ten commandments are not the only form in which the law of God is set before us. Again and again we meet with separate passages of holy writ in which the same representations are repeated, only in other words. Take an example : the prophet Micah speaks : “ He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.” Examine those words : you will find the ten commandments all condensed there : justice and mercy to man : faith and obedience toward God.

To mention one other instance : Jesus Himself gives us, if I may so say, his version of the law : “ Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and mind, and soul, and strength : and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” Here again, though in few words, is the whole

will of God concerning his creature's duty to Him, and to each other. Let a man love God indeed with all his heart, supremely and unceasingly; let a man love his fellow-creature even as himself;—he is a perfect man: “On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” Such then is *the law*.

II. We inquire, WHAT IS THE POSITION OF A CHRISTIAN MAN IN RESPECT OF THIS LAW?

I answer that of course he is bound, as every man is bound who knows his Maker's will, to submit himself to it. It were folly to suppose that God should give a law, and any of his creatures be at liberty to disobey. As a creature of God every Christian is subject to the will and commandment of his Creator. He cannot be otherwise.

But has he obeyed the law? No. He and all his race alike have broken it. “The Scripture hath concluded all under sin.” His own heart confesses this: “All we like sheep have gone astray. If Thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?”

Then what is his desert? Having failed to keep the law, having broken it times without number, what is it that he justly merits? The sentence is written, “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the law to do them.”

But if so, we then ask, how is any man to be saved? Can he make amends for his offence? Can he atone for his sin? No. The only atonement which the law knows of is death.

If he atones for himself he dies. But some will ask, will not obedience to the law for the time to come suffice to satisfy for past transgression? Most certainly not. The word of God gives no such hope. Besides, man could not now obey the law, as the Justice of God demands. Even if allowed to make the attempt, for the purpose of removing his guilt, and escaping punishment, he could never accomplish the task. The law commands *strict unfailing holiness*. Man is too weak, too corrupt, to come up to the standard of its requirements. Yet God cannot alter those requirements.

Then what is to be done? The Gospel replies:—let the sinner, who feels that this is his condition, look to Jesus. What will he see in Jesus? One who has done for him what he could never do for himself. Jesus hath kept the law completely. Jesus too hath borne the curse of the law, the wrath which it threatens against sin. He hath done this for all who believe in Him, all who feel themselves guilty and helpless, and who do simply come to Him as their Redeemer, believing that He did all which the law required, and endured all which the law had threatened, and this for *them*. “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.”

But you will say at once, ‘then the Christian man is free. If Christ *for me* hath kept the commandments of the law, and *for me* hath endured the curse of the law, the law hath nothing

more, as it were, to say to me : all its demands are satisfied.'

Exactly so. And this is just what St. Paul meant when he said, as we noticed at first, that Christian men were "not under the law." They are not under it, as a law which they are called upon to keep in order that by the merit of their obedience to it they may save themselves. Christ has done this for them. He has performed all things on their behalf. By his obedience they are made righteous. In this light therefore they are now "delivered from the law:" they are, in a certain sense, "dead to the law:" they and the law have no connection any more. Their salvation depends not on any merit of their obedience. It is not required of them by deservings of their own to save themselves. All that was to be done, all that was to be suffered, in order to their salvation, Jesus hath done, Jesus hath suffered.

Behold then their *position* in respect of the Law, and as regards their salvation. The holy will of God they have not kept: they deserve the curse: they cannot save themselves: can make no atonement: can render no due and perfect obedience: left to themselves they are lost. But Christ comes forward: takes their place: will answer for them. What does the law require? Obedience? He renders it. Atonement? He makes it. Has the law any further demand? No: none! All is done! Christian men stand before God represented in Christ. God's Law is satisfied in Christ; and so the law is satisfied with them.

Here then is their freedom from the law. It lies in this, that as to their justification before God, as to their acceptance with Him, as to their soul's salvation, *they* have nothing to do with the law. Their Surety, Christ, hath transacted all on their behalf; the law hath dealt with Him, and therefore it has no demands on them.

III. WHAT THEN NOW ARE THEIR FEELINGS TOWARDS THE LAW ?

Do they cry 'Liberty,' and cast the law away, and scorn its authority, and defy its obligations, and run riot in sin? Ah, no! "I *delight*," saith St. Paul, a man peculiarly given to rejoice in his freedom from the Law as to the matter of his justification, yet, saith he, "I *delight* in the law of God, after the inward man."

In examining these words we shall find two things to be noted. There is the *delight* expressed: and then, there is the *peculiarity* of that delight,—it is "after the inward man."

There is the delight expressed: "delight in the law of God." And why did St. Paul delight in the law? I reply, for many reasons.

He would do so *for it's own sake*. "The law," said he, "is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." Therefore the Christian loves it. There is that in all holy things which is well-pleasing to his soul. Sin is his abhorrence. He loaths it. He shrinks from it. He will not "touch the unclean thing." But purity and virtue, Christian virtue, godly living, holiness, *this*

he has pleasure in. It is congenial to him. For it's own sake then he chooses the Law, and loves it.

And then, *for God's sake*, he delights in it : for he regards it as coming from God, and God is his Father, his Benefactor, his Friend, the God that has given him all his salvation in Jesus Christ. Because of this the Christian man loves God, and therefore he listens with a childlike readiness, cheerfulness, and love, to the voice of God : and all which God commands is welcome to his affections : all the will of God is pleasant to him, for the sake of Him whose will it is : he receives it, not as a slave the order of his taskmaster, but as a happy loving child his parent's desire.

Again, *the very position* in which a Christian stands towards the law of God, makes that law a delight to him to keep, and for this reason, that being free from the law in the matter of his justification, not having to obey the law in order to establish his claim to heaven, but knowing that heaven is already his by God's free gift in Jesus, and feeling therefore that he has not to toil and labour after righteousness by the merit of his own obedience,—how does he look at the law ? how does he go to the law ? He looks at it as that which he has no cause to fear, no reason to tremble at its strictness, no ground of alarm at its curse : from all this he is free : the law is stript of all that would have made it an object of dread : and hence it is to him an object of delight : and he goes to the law in a

spirit of liberty: he says, 'I thank my blessed God and Saviour this law has no demands on me; Jesus hath answered all; therefore I can listen to it without fear; and I do love to listen to it, and my delight is in it, because I am free from all guilty apprehension respecting it.' O may such be the language, dear brethren, of all our hearts.

But further, note the *peculiarity* of the Christian's delight; it is "*after the inward man*:" that is to say, the happiness he has in the law of his God, is the happiness of his soul within him, as that soul is renewed and sanctified by the Holy Ghost, and governed and influenced by the love of his God.

The "inward man" is the "new man:" the soul "created in Christ Jesus unto good works:" the soul that by faith is united to Jesus, and filled with holy affections toward God, and strengthened and sustained by the power of the eternal Spirit of all grace.

This *inward man* cannot but delight in the law. It is the Spirit of God who creates that inward man. It is the love of God which actuates that inward man. It is the joy of salvation, a salvation all full and free, pardon, justification, acceptance, everlasting life, all given, given now in Christ, this joy it is that fills the heart. And where this is the case God must be loved: all that belongs to God must be loved: his holy law, his will, it cannot but be loved.

So that,—and a beautiful and blessed truth it

is, although the Gospel sets the Christian altogether free from the law in the matter of his justification, the Holy Ghost by means of that very same Gospel, brings the Christian inwardly to such a state of the affections toward God, that he can look at the law and say, 'that law is my delight.'

Let us bring our subject to a close by making a few practical remarks. I would wish to shew how it bears on some different classes of character.

Let the *man of the world* see how great is his error. He is wont to deem the service of God, as irksome, and painful, and oppressive. Is it so indeed? No: just the contrary. God's children *delight* in Him, and they *delight* in his law. His service to them is perfect freedom. They choose it. They are prepared, and willing to obey it.

Then can godliness be irksome? Can obedience be painful? No, brethren, to none who are Christians indeed. It is their happiness: it is their joy. O that you would seek to share their feelings. O that you would "taste and see how good the Lord is." O that you would pray, 'Lord, make me to love Thee, and to love Thy law, and to know thy people's blessedness in keeping thy commandments.'

Let the *servile professor of religion* see how wrong he is. Whom do I mean? I mean the man whose religion is all a matter of constraint and fear. He performs certain outward acts of seeming piety: why? because he feels forced and

compelled to do them. He abstains from certain outward acts of sin : why ? because he is afraid to commit them. His wishes and inclinations go one way, his fears force him another way. Is that religion ? No, far from it ! And why is it not religion ? Because here is no *delight*, no freedom, no liberty, no cheerfulness. It is all a system of dry, dull, heavy, compulsory formalities. The very life of all true piety is wanting, that *love* which makes obedience a happiness.

Brethren, is your religion such as this ? Then your hearts are not right. You want *love*. Without *love*, do what you will, it is nothing worth. So long as your religion lacks *delight*, so long it lacks reality. God accepts no forced services.

Then next, let me say a word to *the licentious hypocrite*. There are such men : men that would turn God's grace, in the Gospel of Jesus, into an occasion for iniquity.

'The law !' they cry, 'the law ! No believer has any thing to do with the law. He is not under the law : it is all low legal bondage to talk of it. The Christian is free. Let him live as he will.'

And so they *do* live, in all manner of dishonesty, falsehood, pride, impurity, and worldliness of mind, and if you call them to account, and place before them God's command, 'O,' say they, 'we have nothing to do with that : believers are free from the law.'

What do such wicked men mean ? The Apostle Paul *delighted* in the Law. He reckoned it

no pleasure, no privilege, to be in such a sense free from the law as that he might live in sin. No : he knew well that if Christ had redeemed him from the *curse* of the law, it was in order that he might learn how to enjoy the *holiness* of the law. "He gave Himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works." Therefore he that thinks the Gospel is to give him leave to slight the law, and walk in sin, knows nothing of that Gospel. He may speak of it, and that with great fluency : he may speak of the love of God, and that with much fervency : he may speak of the Lord Jesus, and that with rapturous profession of attachment to Him : but if he loves not the law, nor delights in the law, let him know that he is a fearfully criminal and wicked hypocrite. His end is destruction.

Lastly, *Christian brethren*, ye do love the law. Ye would love it more. Ye would have a more fixed, constant, and increasing conformity to it, wrought within you. Remember the secret, the secret of all true, spiritual, acceptable obedience : it is such a sense of your salvation in Christ, as makes you delight in doing all that pleases God : it is so to feel your freedom from the law in the matter of your justification, so to realise your acceptance *in Christ*, so to see that the law has now no claims on you, so to understand your release from all those claims by what your Lord and Saviour has done for you, as that you now may look upon the law and see

in it only the gracious will of your heavenly Father, that will which, *for love's sake*, you delight to keep.

Then would you grow in holiness, in devotion, in obedience? Think often, and with seriousness, on the wondrous salvation which God in his mercy has wrought for you: think how He has made you righteous in Christ: think how marvellously He has redeemed and saved you in his Son: then will your hearts be more and more touched with love, softened, and sanctified. O indeed it is the living "by faith in the Son of God who loved you, and gave himself for you," it is *this* which makes you to look with more and more delight to the pure and holy commandments of your God, and count it your happiness to walk in his ways. May the Holy Spirit, working within you, sanctify you by the love of God, and make you, as children, in the spirit of adoption to say, with the Psalmist, "O, how I love thy law!"

So then, brethren, it is true, the Christian man is one who stands before God accepted and justified, not in his own obedience to the law, and in that sense he is not under the law: yet in another sense he *is* under the law, inasmuch as it is his authority, standard and guide, for it is the will of God, the God he loves in Jesus Christ, and therefore he delights therein. "This," saith he, "is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous." The Lord so write his law in all our hearts!

SERMON XI.

ROMANS XV. 3.

EVEN CHRIST PLEASSED NOT HIMSELF.

AND yet saith St. Paul, “by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers, all things were created by Him, and for Him; and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist.” Such was the power, such the glory, such the supremacy of Jesus our Redeemer. Nevertheless, although possessing this eternal and divine preeminence, Lord over all, what saith our text concerning Him? “Christ *pleased not Himself.*”

The Apostle is exhorting Christians to study not their own indulgence, but each other's good: and especially he calls on the more advanced and established brethren, to bear with the younger and weaker, and to be ready to give up many of their own wishes and feelings, in order that they may not hinder the peace and progress of those who are more feeble in the faith. “We,” saith he, “that are strong, ought to bear the

infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification." That is to say, 'be prepared to sacrifice your own inclination, when by so doing you see that you may benefit another's soul.' And then comes his argument for this: "for even Christ pleased not Himself:" Christ your Lord and Master sets you the example: Christ who had the right unquestionably, if any being had, to make his own feelings the sole guide of his conduct, supreme as He was in equality with God, the Maker, Sustainer and Governor of all God's universe, yet what did He? Even He pleased not Himself. Then what should his followers do? Shall the Lord of glory, whose they are, and whom they serve, surrender his own gratification for them, and they not surrender theirs for Him and his?

This is the argument, and to Christian hearts the strongest and the most affecting which the Apostle could employ. May the blessed Spirit of all grace enable us to feel and to manifest its power.

Let us consider,

I. WHEREIN IT APPEARS THAT CHRIST PLEASSED NOT HIMSELF. And,

II. IN WHAT WAY HIS EXAMPLE MAY INFLUENCE US.

I. We inquire, WHEREIN DOES IT APPEAR THAT CHRIST PLEASSED NOT HIMSELF.

The Apostle directs us how to understand his meaning by what immediately follows. "Christ,"

saith he, "pleased not Himself, but, as it is written, the reproaches of them that reproached Thee, fell on me." These words are taken from the Sixty-ninth Psalm, a Psalm that particularly dwells, in the Spirit of prophecy, on the sufferings which the Messiah should in after times endure. They are the words of Christ. He speaks as the Son of God made man, and addresses his eternal Father. Here on this earth He stood the Father's servant, prepared to do that Father's will, having as it were no will of his own, giving Himself up to do and to bear all that the Father might require. Now in this his subjection and service to the Father, He had to meet all the contempt and hatred of ungodly men against his Father's name. Hence saith He, "the reproaches of them that reproached Thee fell on me:" but I am well content: I come, my Father, not to please myself, not to consult my own feelings, not to choose for my own comfort what is agreeable to me, I have surrendered myself to Thee, and therefore willingly do I bear all shame and suffering for thy sake. I am here in this world, which Thou hast sent me to redeem, to be simply and entirely devoted to one object, the performance and endurance of all thy heavenly will.'

We see then at once the sense in which the Apostle spoke these words concerning Christ. He spoke of Him in his Mediatorial character, and work. He spoke of Him as He appeared on earth. Still one with his Father in eternal Godhead, but now made man, "He took on

Him the form of a *servant*," ready to execute his Father's commands, ready to obey that Father's will, and without one consideration of Himself, his own ease, his own enjoyment, prepared to go through all reproach, all pain, all trial and woe, "enduring the cross, and despising the shame."

And now to take one or two particulars,

1. I will say, look at *the outward condition* of the Lord Jesus Christ, all through his life and history on earth. Is it not truly, in this respect, the life and the history of one who pleased not Himself?

Jesus was truly *a man*: as truly as any one of us: bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh. He had man's feelings: I mean He was as sensible of physical suffering, and understood the discomforts of poverty and want, and the pain of hunger, of thirst, of toil, and of fatigue as well as we. Now, if He had pleased Himself, if He had wished to make Himself, in his human nature, easy, happy, comfortable, would he not have chosen a very different lot in life to what He did? But in truth He exercised, as it were, no choice. The Father's will ordained all. The Saviour, it had been foretold, was to be a *poor* man, "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, his countenance more marred than that of any man, and his form more than the sons of men." And it was so. What the Father ordained, to that the incarnate Son submitted: willingly, cheerfully submitted. There were good and gracious ends to be accomplished, as regarded the Church, by this his humiliation,

his poverty, his outward want and woe. And therefore, from his cradle to his cross, you see the blessed Jesus, as to his state and condition in the world, you see Him as to his human nature's circumstances and feelings, not thinking of his own comfort, but readily taking that lot of lowliness and suffering to which the Father called Him. In this respect truly He "pleased not Himself."

But, my brethren, how amazing a fact is this! The Lord of glory becomes a man, a poor and woe-worn man, to do the work of our salvation! Marvellous and condescending love!

2. Look at the Lord Jesus *as to the condition of his holy soul while in this world*. Remember that though He took our nature, He took it without sin, and therefore his human soul, although like ours in every other respect, yet was perfectly untainted, perfectly pure. With that soul so undefiled He lived amongst corrupt and fallen men. With that soul so spotless and so pure He walked this earth, all fouled and polluted as it is with evil. That soul of the blessed Jesus, as holy as God is holy, was thus brought into contact continually with the evil of this world, with the wickedness of man, yea, with the very worst temptations of the devil.

Christian, think of this, and say whether indeed it is not true that Christ, your immaculate Saviour, pleased not Himself, when thus He came and dwelt in this miserable abode of human depravity, and allowed Himself to be assailed by the horrible suggestions of Satanic malice

and wickedness. *You* know a little of the pain which holiness experiences from the sight and approach of sin. Poor as your own attainments in holiness are, and far, immeasurably far as *you* are from the perfectness of Christ your Lord, yet, as it is said of Lot, you know what it is to have your soul vexed within you from seeing and hearing the unrighteousness of the wicked: you know the grief of having sin forced upon your contemplation: you know the misery of having wicked imaginations and unholy thoughts suggested by the devil to your minds. What then must it have been for Christ to endure all this, and that in its worst forms? For He saw much more of sin in the world than you can do. And He saw much more of heinousness and offensiveness in sin than ever can appear to you. And, moreover, He had all this power of evil, evil in men, evil in devils, arrayed specially against Himself: all were leagued against Him: all who reproached God reproached Him: all who hated God hated Him: so that whatever was evil, whatever was opposed to his holiness, was brought in it's utmost force, and with the most active hostility, to distress his spirit, and to wound his heart.

Consider this, I say, my Christian brethren, and will you not own that Jesus indeed pleased not Himself. How far from grateful to his mind was all this contact with iniquity! Would He have chosen this, had He studied only his own delight! O no: but, as we said before, it was the Father's will. The Father appointed to his

Son, in working out the redemption of his people, thus to take up his abode in a world of sin, and there to maintain his own spotlessness, notwithstanding all the abounding of iniquity around Him, and all the machinations of evil spirits against Him. He therefore consented to all, and endured all, not considering what was pleasing to Himself, but only what his Father's will appointed.

But what a wondrous fact again is this ! The Son of God not only takes a human body, and subjects Himself to all bodily privation and pain ; He also takes a human soul, perfectly spotless and holy, and in that human soul He undergoes all the peculiar suffering and distress arising from constant collision with evil, such as to Himself was exquisitely painful. Surely, surely, we feel, the holy Jesus, had He pleased Himself, had never known this perpetual distress in his sinless but sin-encompassed soul.

3. Once more, look at Jesus *in his agony and death*. Follow Him to that most awful scene of woe through which he passed, when at last He surrendered Himself to experience in body and soul the curse of his Father's Law. Truly *then* " He pleased not Himself."

Behold Him as the time of suffering drew nigh. " Now," said he, " is my soul troubled, and what shall I say ? Father, save me from this hour ! But for this cause came I unto this hour." Mark the words. The hour of the curse, the hour of the cross, was at hand. He shuddered at the prospect. Had He pleased

Himself, his human nature, body and soul, never had borne that weight of woe. But no: for this very cause had He come to that hour, that He might undergo the punishment due to sin, and, therefore, complying with his Father's requirement, He resigned Himself to the sentence of eternal Justice, and awaited patiently its execution.

Yet again, as it approached, how do we see fresh proof that indeed He pleased not Himself. "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." Jesus, in his human nature, did really shrink from that tremendous suffering. Still forthwith He rises as before above his fear, and resolves that the shudderings of humanity shall all be disregarded, and his Father's will be wrought. "He went away again the second time, and prayed saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done."

O Christian, mark your Saviour's self-devotion. He felt, He felt intensely, the bitterness of the trial before Him. His soul was "exceeding sorrowful even unto death." "Nevertheless," said He, "not my will, but thine be done." 'Father, I am ready to endure the worst. My human nature trembles: but I would not have my feelings spared; be thy justice satisfied; be thy Church redeemed.' Yes, brethren, go to the dark shades of Gethsemane; go to the crimsoned summit of Mount Calvary; there in the agony and bloody sweat, there in the cross and

passion of your great Redeemer, see how it was that "Christ pleased not Himself."

In one sense, indeed, notwithstanding all that we have said, Christ *did* please Himself. Notwithstanding the trials of his earthly lot, notwithstanding the sorrows of his holy soul, notwithstanding the horrors of his agony and death, Jesus was pleased, well pleased, in the midst of all his woe, for such was his love to his people, that He willingly, yea, cheerfully consented to the enduring of all, that they might be saved. He was not *compelled* to what he did. He did it voluntarily. He did it of his own free love. And therefore in such a sense, He pleased Himself. Yet, as we have shewn, the work He had undertaken, *freely* undertaken, was one which called for the greatest sacrifices, and involved the severest sufferings. It brought the incarnate Son of God to want and woe, to pain of body, and anguish of soul, and at length to the curse, the cross, the grave. O glance at his painful life again, and call once more to remembrance his accursed death, and then say, did He not truly sacrifice Himself, his own feelings, and enjoyments, surrendering all that He might execute his Father's will, and save our souls? Yes, brethren, yes, we owe our salvation to this, that "Christ pleased not Himself." All glory to his grace and love!

II. We have now to notice the INFLUENCE WHICH THIS TRUTH CONCERNING OUR ADORED AND LOVED REDEEMER SHOULD HAVE UPON OUR

MINDS: Are we his? Do we owe our all to this, his sacrifice of self for our sakes? Then the reflection that even He, all glorious and divine as He was in Himself, yet in accomplishing our redemption pleased not Himself,—ought it not to have some practical effect upon us?

St. Paul, as we have seen, would shew us, at least in one particular, what that effect should be. As to our conduct toward our fellow christians, especially those who are weak in the faith, the Apostle tells the more advanced believer, he must not always follow his own feelings only, but he must regard theirs also, and seek to meet them, and give up sometimes his own wishes in order that he may please them, please them for their good to their edification. So would he be like Christ: not pleasing Himself that he might do good to others. But this is only one particular application of a great and important principle. The principle is this, that a Christian man is to be like Christ. He is to remember that, like Christ, he belongs to God: that God's will, and not his own wishes, should be his guide: duty, not inclination, is to prescribe his course: not what *he* would choose, but what God appoints, this is to be his lot.

Now, Christian brethren, you know full well, how often God's appointments are far from what you of your own natural inclination would desire. They are often very painful to you.

Thus you have *duties* laid upon you, from which you are ready to shrink. Nature pleads to be excused. The task is too great. It is too

hard. It cuts off so many indulgences. It demands such sacrifices. The requirement is too severe. 'No,' says the follower of Christ, 'true, the requirement is difficult to comply with, flesh and blood do complain, but my Saviour! what did He do? Did He shrink from duty, because it was hard and painful? O no! Neither then will I. I will no longer hesitate. 'Begone my selfishness. My Saviour's walk of woe, my Saviour's toil and pain, my Saviour's cross! these forbid me any more to think of self. My God, thy will be done.'

Again, Christian, your heavenly Father calls you sometimes to bitter *trials*, trials in your outward circumstances, trials in your spiritual state: and perhaps with some of you, at this time, those trials may be peculiarly severe. Your spirits are depressed. It is hard to bear it. Afflictions are so many, and so sore. Temptations are so strong. Satan is so malignant. "O," saith the fainting soul, "O that I had wings like a dove, then would I flee away, and be at rest." Yet would this be right? Flee away? A follower of Jesus flee away? Did He do this? Nay, rather "the cup," said He, "which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" Flee away? That would be indeed to please ourselves. That would be to follow our own feelings in preference to God's will. Then, afflicted, tempted, troubled child of God, art thou Christ's? Think again of Him. Think of his self-surrender, his self-sacrifice, his patient suffering. Behold Him in the garden. Behold

him on the cross. See all his own feelings submitted to his Father's will. Then say, what thy temper ought to be. Should it not be meek subjection, resignation, acquiescence? Should it not be holy resolution not to think of self any more, but by thy Saviour's grace to copy his example, and say, "My Father, not as I will, but as Thou wilt."

And let me add another thought. Do you not see, beloved brethren, in this call to follow Christ your Lord, a blessed privilege? Shall it not sweeten your toils and your trials to reflect, that thus you are only brought the nearer into conformity to Him?

Is it a difficult thing to bring yourselves to say, 'well, I am *not* to please myself; my own wishes, my own feelings, let them go, I resign them all,'—is it difficult to come to this? Indeed it is. But then I ask, will not this reflection ease the yoke, and make the burden light, that you are but called to do as Jesus did. O will not this remembrance serve to make the bitter sweet,—'my Saviour, my Lord, who so loved me, and whom I love, He was called to this before me, He pleased not Himself, and shall I not count it a joy to tread in his steps? Shall I not reckon it a high favor vouchsafed to me to drink of the cup that He drank of? Especially too when I know how it is written, "if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him." Blessed Jesus! mould my character to thine; let thy mind be in me: be it my happiness in this, as in all things, to be like Thee. Never, never more may I please myself, but give my all to God.'

SERMON XII.

1 SAMUEL XVII. 50.

SO DAVID PREVAILED OVER THE PHILISTINE WITH A SLING,
AND WITH A STONE.

MEN of war love to hear of martial deeds. Such things are to their taste. Not only so, they learn much from the recital of them. They learn from the tale of conquests gained by other and earlier combatants, how to gird themselves for the fight, and how to meet and overcome a foe.

The Christian is a warrior. He is "a soldier of Jesus Christ." And the word of command is given to him, as it is to all who follow Christ, "Fight, fight the good fight of faith," and he must obey.

The warfare, however, is one for which He who hath called him to be a soldier has graciously made ample preparation. And among other helps He has given *this*, authenticated accounts of many who have already fought and conquered. These accounts the Christian combatant may read, and from them he shall gain much instruction and encouragement. Such is the narrative to which our text belongs: the

history of David's conflict with the giant Philistine. If ever there was a fight of faith, this was one.

Let me call to your remembrance some of the chief particulars in the transaction. Our aim shall be, by God's help, to gather thence some profitable hints for our own spiritual warfare. May the Captain of our salvation go with us over the field, and shew us the lessons of instruction it affords.

The first thing that arrests our attention is the appearing and bearing of the Philistines' champion, the giant Goliath.

Multitudes there were of enemies to Israel in the Philistine's camp : but this man far exceeded all, in the fearfulness of his character, and the vehemence of his hostility. He went forth, and stood out in front of his companions in arms, the foremost of the enemies of God. He was a man of enormous stature : more than nine feet in height. His armour corresponded to his size. The coat of mail he wore weighed five thousand shekels of brass. The staff of his spear was like a weaver's beam. The man's strength must have been immense. A foe more formidable, from his personal power and prowess, one could not conceive. His hand might crush any ordinary man. The giant was also fully aware of his own strength, and consequently he was very daring. "I defy," said he, "the armies of Israel : give me a man that we may fight together : " the ablest warrior of all your host, let him come to me, I am ready to meet

him. And so for forty days did he draw nigh, morning and evening, to renew the challenge.

What a picture have we here, brethren, of our grand enemy, the enemy of God, and of all God's Israel, that wicked one the Devil.

Multitudes indeed there are, foes to the people of the Lord : but Satan stands forth the champion of the host. Like Goliath, the foremost of the Philistines to harm Jehovah's servants, Satan presents himself, the Prince of the power of darkness, the God of this world, the first to act the part of an enemy against God's Church.

And he is indeed a powerful foe. Mighty men have been cast down by his hand. Adam our first father, strong as he was in the perfection of primeval innocence, fell by his assaults. And, alas, how many a servant of God has had reason to know his power to wound, and that most grievously, although, the love and faithfulness of the Lord forbidding it, he has not been able to destroy.

Nor is he powerful only. Like Goliath, he is daring too. He defies the armies of Israel. There is not one of all God's host whom he fears to combat. The wilderness of Judea bears witness to this. For forty days did he there present himself : and to challenge whom ? The incarnate Son of God ! He knew it was the Son of God. He addressed Him as such. He ventured even to defy omnipotence : as bold as he is bad, as daring as he is strong.

Christian brethren, this is the foe whom you have to fear. He is set on seeking your harm,

if possible, your soul's eternal ruin. Apollyon is his name, i. e. the destroyer. "As a roaring lion," saith St. Peter, "he walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." It is well for us to fear him. Think what he has done. How many children of God has he maimed and injured. They thought not of their danger. They strayed carelessly within his reach. Or they went out to meet him unduly provided for the contest. And O how many have had therefore to walk softly all their days in the bitterness of their soul. "Simon, Simon," said Jesus to Peter, "behold Satan hath desired to have you." We know what this meant. How sorely did he thrust at Peter, and how severe was Peter's fall! Brethren, let us take warning.

We next observe a movement in the camp of Israel, and there comes forth one from among their ranks to take up the giant's challenge. It is David, the Son of Jesse, the Bethlehemite.

'But who is he? and what has he to give him hope of success in such an encounter? He is but a youth: his father's youngest son: a very child in comparison of the champion of the Philistines. Besides, he is quite unused to war; he has never known what it is to be in battle yet; he is utterly inexperienced. How unequal a contest! He must surely be vanquished! The giant will easily take his life!' So doubtless spake many an Israelite, as David went out to the combat.

Not more unequal, brethren, is that contest, on which every Christian enters, so soon as he

does in earnest begin to follow Christ. Satan at once presents himself. Look then at the two combatants. "Thou art but a youth," said Saul to David, "and he," the giant Goliath, "a man of war from his youth." Even so, young Christian, it is with thee and thy great enemy. Thou art but entering, as it were, on life. Whereas thy adversary, the devil, has, ever since the world began, been practised in all the arts of warfare, warfare against the souls of men. It has been his occupation, his employment. And the warnings of God's word, as well as the history of God's Church, unite to shew how formidable and terrible is the foe that is sworn to seek the hurt of thy soul.

This is nothing imaginary. It is a *fact*, that there is such a being as the devil. It is a *fact*, that for thousands of years he has been engaged in destroying, or in seeking to destroy, the souls of men. It is a *fact*, that he has slain multitudes. By his own assaults and devices, or by the agency of other evil spirits, who act with him and under him, he has been carrying on a constant and destructive war, for near six thousand years, against our race.

Is it not then a fearful thing, youthful Christians, aye, and I may say, advanced and established Christians too, is it not a consideration fitted well to fill your breasts with apprehension, that this mighty, and malicious, and watchful spirit is resolved to force you to a contest with him. He has access to your souls. His aim is at your hearts. Meet him you must. And you

must overcome him, or he will overcome you. You or he must fall. And certainly, at first sight, it must be owned, every thing is against you. You are weak, and he is strong. You are unprepared, and he well provided. You inexperienced, and he long practised. Thousands, and tens of thousands, are the victims he has numbered. And how shall you escape? Of yourselves, and in yourselves, you have no security. Left to yourselves, you must be vanquished; and if vanquished, lost eternally. 'Tis a worse encounter, than that of David and Goliath. The stripling son of Jesse had a far better prospect of overcoming the gigantic Philistine, than you have of defeating the wicked one. The question then is, how shall you prepare against him? How shall you go forth to the conflict?

In answering this question we proceed to another particular to be noted in the history before us. I mean, the *spirit* with which the youthful David went to meet the Philistine. Glance over the several incidents of the Chapter, and you will mark not a few points, well worthy of notice, as exhibiting David's feelings.

For example, observe how, from the first mention which was made of Goliath, *David viewed him as the enemy of Jehovah*, and hence took courage in the thought of himself entering the lists with him. "Who," said he, "who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" David looked on Goliath as one who dared to set himself against not Israel only, but Israel's God. In his defi-

ance of *them*, he challenged the Lord of hosts. And well did it serve to embolden the youthful warrior to look on his antagonist as on one who had put himself in opposition to Jehovah. In doing so Goliath had almighty power arrayed against him, and David would therefore reflect, that in going out to fight with this enemy of God, he had God Himself on his own side. The Lord of hosts would be with *him*.

Here then, believer, is a lesson for you. Look you on Satan, as David did upon Goliath. Remember he is God's enemy. In opposing God's people, he opposes God Himself. And if you go to fight against God's enemy, may you not well reckon that God will be with you?

It may be that some soul, in this house of God now, stands in the midst of a hard and sore fight with the foe of his peace. He is at times cast down. "The enemy crieth so, and the ungodly cometh on so fast." Nay, but let us say to such, 'Faint not, for who is this foul fiend that he should defy the armies of the living God? Shall he stand against God? Will not God deal with him as his own enemy? Then, weak believer, pluck up thy courage. If Satan is against thee, be assured God is for thee.'

In the next place, mark *the fixed resolution* with which David pledged himself to the conflict. No sooner had he understood what it was that Goliath was doing, than his own mind was made up. "David said to Saul, thy servant will go, and fight with this Philistine." Here was no wavering, no hesitation. It was enough that

Goliath defied God, and his people. At once the resolution was formed, "thy servant will go, and fight."

Neither, Christian, may *you* hesitate. A spirit of fixed determination is what you must have. There must be a settled resolve. Satan stands forth against thee, and against thy God. Then thou canst give no other answer to his challenge than David did: thou wilt at once reply, 'I will go and fight.' Beware of half-heartedness, of hesitation, of indecision. Satan is determined, we must be so too. The enemy declares his purpose: we must avow what is ours.

Are any of us yet lingering? Is there one among you, brethren, that is not up, and in arms, against the wicked one? O, coward spirit, what is thy part in Christ? Where is thy love to God, if Satan finds no foe in thee? No, dear brethren, no, it cannot be. If you are truly on the Lord's side, the devil must know it. He must have your resistance. Let him have it then at once. Shew *whose* you are.

Servant of God, think of all thy obligations! What has thy Prince and Saviour done for thee! How much thou owest Him! Now then let thy love appear. Here is *his* enemy. He hates, and insults thy Lord, as well as seeks to ruin thee. O, remember all thy Saviour's love for thee. How did He fight for thy soul's salvation against all the powers of darkness. Then be resolute. Let love make thee bold. Say to thy Lord and God, 'thy servant will go and fight.'

Again, mark *the use which David made of*

past experience for his own encouragement. Saul said, "thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him." And Saul said truly so far as regarded David himself. But David had better grounds of confidence than any thing in himself. Hear his reply. "Thy servant kept his father's sheep : and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock : and I went after him, and smote him, and slew him : thy servant slew both the lion and the bear : and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them. The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine." Thus David had been in perils before, and the Lord had strengthened and defended him. He called, then, these events to mind, and this gave him confidence.

Believers, take this too, as a lesson for *you*. Treasure in remembrance what God hath done for you in days gone by. You have been in temptation : who preserved you ? You have passed through conflicts with the enemies of your salvation : who succoured you ? O, there is much comfort in the thought of these past deliverances. And it is our *duty* to keep them in mind. We owe it to our God, as well as to ourselves, to record his gracious interpositions on our behalf. It is for his glory, as well as our own consolation, to say with the Apostle "He hath delivered, and doth deliver, in whom we trust that He will yet deliver us." Blessed indeed is the man who, as he goes to his conflict with evil, is able

from happy experience past to say, "the Lord is on my side, I will not fear." And this confidence, Christian brethren, shall be yours, as you cherish the recollection of past mercies, and accustom yourselves to reflect on all the way the Lord has led you hitherto.

Another particular let me bid you notice. See David's *fear of using unfit armour*. Saul wanted David to put on his coat of mail and helmet. David tried them : he examined them : but, said he, "I have not proved them : " I do not know how they will serve me. So he put them off.

Christian, take care what armour you wear. There will not be wanting advisers, some around you, and it may be your own heart within you, to recommend to your use armour that will never stand you in any stead : armour that, like Saul's, looks well, but it will not suit your conflict.

He that would overcome sin, and vanquish the devil, must take the armour with which God, not man, provides him. "Stand," saith St. Paul to the Ephesians, "having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace ; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." This armour is tried, and it will stand. May we trust none other.

Thus much then as to the spirit in which David entered on his combat.

And now let us hasten to follow him, and witness the combat itself, and its issue. David declined Saul's armour: but he chose him five smooth stones, placed them in his shepherd's scribe, and took his sling in his hand. 'Strange provision this,' said many a stander by. And so says human reason now of the Christian's preparations for *his* conflict. Nevertheless let us see the *end*. The giant drew near. He was clothed from head to foot. His shield was borne before him. He looked about for his antagonist. Behold the stripling David! The Philistine despised him, for he was but a youth, and ruddy, and he cursed him by his gods, and to daunt his spirit, "Come to me," saith he, "and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field." David unalarmed advances, strong in faith, and giving glory to God. "Thou comest to me," said he, "with a sword, and spear, and shield, but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel; and all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear, for the battle is the Lord's, and He will give you into our hands."

With that he quickened his step, took a stone, and slang it: it crushed the giant's forehead to the brain, and he fell senseless to the earth. But a few moments more, and the giant was dead.

Behold the triumph of faith! Christian com-

batants, be it yours to stand and see this great sight. Learn from it how you must overcome the wicked one. He may be, he is, very strong, and daring. He may, he will, attempt to daunt your spirit, even as Goliath sought to intimidate David. Youthful Christian, he will especially say to thee, 'it is vain to resist: I am stronger than thou art; thou must yield.'

But, if your faith is like David's, you will say, 'No: the battle is not to the strong: the battle is the Lord's: I will go forth in the strength of the Lord God. Almighty Saviour, be with me, succour me, defend me, and I fear nothing.' And so you will meet the foe, not with spear and shield, but, as did David, in the name of the Lord, and in reliance on his aid.

You will bear with you your *sling*, in other words your *faith*. You will carry in your *scrip*, I mean a *sanctified memory*, some few *choice stones* fit to be hurled against the Philistine, *passages of God's holy word*, suitable for resistance to the tempter.

Then when he draws nigh, lofty though his bearing, horrible his aspect, terrible his words, malicious his design, fear him not. Take some text, some precept, promise, or other precious portion of holy writ, such as grace has stored thy mind with, and cast it fearlessly against the foe; all the while committing thyself to the love and care of thy faithful God: and, as with David, so with thee, the sling and stone shall prevail against the Philistine.

Brethren, if you are truly Christians, you un-

derstand something of this. You know what a spiritual conflict is. You feel it more or less every day. And times there are when the wicked one seems to make special assaults upon you. Then learn of David. Remember the way in which he went forth. Regard the devil as he did Goliath; look on him as God's enemy, your Father's enemy, and so be emboldened to meet him; your God and Father will surely go with you. Be resolute, as was David: he was determined to fight: O have no parleying with such a foe: make up your mind to conflict, yea, to victory. Be mindful too, as was David, of what your God hath done for you already; recollect past deliverances: think too not of your own deliverances only, but of those which other saints have had, and so strengthen yourselves in God. And then, as David, take no strange armour. Away with all human contrivances for safety. "Put thou thy trust in the Lord." Rely on his Almighty succour. Be well furnished with his word. Yea, like David's son, and David's Lord, say ever to the tempter, "it is written:"—"it is written:"—he cannot bear that stroke. One word of God, slung in faith, is enough to bring him to the dust.

Dear Christian brethren, ye who are sore troubled by the enemy, remember David's fight of faith: and ask of David's God to give you David's grace: so shall you prevail, as David did, "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might;" yea, "God shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly."

SERMON XIII.

PSALM LXXIII. 1.

TRULY GOD IS GOOD TO ISRAEL.

Who ever doubted this? The very man that speaks these words, the writer of this Psalm, the pious Asaph himself had been tempted to question it. "My feet," said he, "were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped."

The Lord mercifully kept him from falling. And now he writes this Psalm, moved thereto by God the Holy Ghost, and he puts on record all the temptation through which he had passed, and thankfully tells how his God had delivered him.

But the circumstances of that temptation, brethren, are such as we often see as we pass through life, and the trouble into which Asaph had been drawn, is what many a Christian now is liable to feel.

I trust therefore, that we shall find it profitable to listen to the record he has left of his experience. It contains much admonition, and much consolation. Let us pray the Lord, the Holy Spirit, to bless it to our souls.

I purpose to carry you through the Psalm,

and in so doing, I shall have to bid you observe four matters there presented to us.

I. CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH ASAPH HAD WITNESSED.

II. A TEMPTATION THENCE ARISING.

III. HIS DELIVERANCE OUT OF THAT TEMPTATION, and

IV. THE HAPPY FRAME OF MIND INTO WHICH, IN THE ISSUE, HE WAS BROUGHT.

I. THERE ARE CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH ASAPH HAD WITNESSED. What were they? He tells us in few words: "I saw *the prosperity of the wicked.*"

He beheld around him those, of whom it was too plain that they had no fear of God before their eyes, proud men, violent men, sensual men, men who by their bad lives corrupted others, and by their atrocious words and deeds insulted and blasphemed Almighty God.

Yet what was their condition as to this life? They seemed to have no trouble; they prospered in the world; they had more than heart could wish; they increased in riches. And when they came to die, "there were no bands in their death, their strength was firm," they had no fears, their minds were peaceful and undaunted.

But what made the sight of such things so painful to this good man Asaph was the great difference between his own lot, and that of these wicked men. While they were prospering, he was suffering. "All the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning." His

whole life seemed to himself to be one of affliction and distress.

Here, then, were the circumstances before his mind. Men who hated God appeared to be always happy : and he, a servant of God, was exposed to constant trouble.

My brethren, it cannot be denied, that we very often see like things to these. Alas, we do behold men, every where around us, who live without God in the world. Yet, how many of them seem to thrive, and prosper ; they rise in the world, and become rich, and great ; and even to their dying day, they appear to be always cheerful, and in death itself they still have no alarm. At the same time, we see humble followers of Christ, his chosen ones, true, and meek, and holy Christians, who seem to have nothing but sorrow. Troubles, like wave after wave, come upon them, and they are always in suffering.

II. Out of such circumstances we find a **TEMP-
TATION PRESENTED TO ASAPH'S MIND.**

He was "*envious at the foolish.*" Such men, he thought, did not deserve to be so happy. How strange in God to allow that they should prosper in this way ! Why, said his foolish heart, if wickedness was to be thus favoured, it were better to be no servant of God : especially seeing, that notwithstanding all his piety, he was always in affliction. "Verily," he exclaimed, in the impatience of the moment, "I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my

hands in innocency." 'What profit is it to me to be religious? It is a vain thing to serve God.'

And have none of you, brethren, ever found thoughts like these rising within you? While *you* weep and lament, the world rejoices: and then saith the wicked one, 'see how unfairly you are dealt with; you ought to be better off in life; you ought to have less trial; you love God, and serve God; He should take more care of you, and not give all his favours to the wicked, all his chastisements to you.'

I know, indeed, that you cannot dare quite so broadly to call God's ways into question; you *would* not do it; still there does sometimes hang about your minds a sort of surprise, and almost, it may be, a disposition to complain; you think it hard; you are ready to ask, 'how is it that God can order matters thus?' Here are yourselves poor, in trouble, in sorrow, and so you have been perhaps for years and years: and there you see wicked men, close beside you, living in comfort, wealth, honour, happiness. You do feel prone to say, 'how can these things be?' So it was with Asaph. But

III. Mark now his DELIVERANCE FROM ALL THESE PERPLEXITIES, and see how he was brought out of the snare, and saved from the temptation, into which he had well nigh fallen.

The temptation was to doubt of God's goodness to his own people, to complain against

God's dispensations, and to throw up God's service.

The first thing that seems to have served as a check upon the murmuring thoughts which had begun to rise in Asaph's mind was this, the reflection that, in giving utterance to them, he should grieve the people of God.

He was on the eve of saying what he felt. But then he considered, "if I speak thus, behold I should offend against the generation of thy children."

A godly man is very jealous of the peace of God's Church. He would not offend the veriest little ones in God's family. He would tremble to do hurt to any soul that God has loved. And therefore he takes heed as to what he shall say.

So Asaph held his peace. He was silent, lest he should do harm. Still his mind was at work. He was not satisfied. He could not yet see how to explain the dealings of God with his people, assigning to *them* so much of pain, and allowing to the wicked, so much of rejoicing. "When I thought to know this," said he, "it was too painful for me."

But in the midst of this perplexity, he resorted—whither? He went "into the sanctuary of God." There the Lord met with him, and shewed to him such things as at once scattered all his doubts, and made him ashamed of all his repinings.

"I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I *their end*:" the end of these wicked worldlings. 'I saw that their prosperity was no

sign of God's favour. Nay, I perceived in it a terrible judgment: and that in this way: they had set God at nought, and chose to love the world more than God; then said the Almighty, be it so; take your own way; make yourselves great; heap up your riches; I will not hinder you; in the sight of the world you shall be what you wish, and rise as high as you can desire in earthly wealth and station; by and bye, shall come a tremendous change; death shall seize, and hurl you down from all this height of worldly greatness, and wrench from your grasp all your treasure of earthly gain, and put an end to all your joys of sensual indulgence, and what shall be left to you then? Nothing! absolutely nothing! no joy, no peace, no hope, no heaven, no God! the things you now despise, my truth and grace, shall be hidden for ever from your sight: no, nothing shall remain to you, but lamentation and mourning and woe.'

"Surely," saith Asaph, "thou didst set them in slippery places; thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when one awaketh, so, O Lord, when Thou awakest, Thou shalt despise their image." Thou sufferest their vain imagination for awhile, soon shalt thou scatter it, and all their pride shall prove empty as a dream. But, alas for their souls! their immortal souls! *They* perish for ever!

Thus then was Asaph taught no longer to be envious at the foolish, when he saw the prospe-

riety of the wicked. God shewed him the end of these men. He trembled, and was thankful that he was not one with them. So was he delivered from the snare. He went away from the sanctuary another man ; no longer restless and repining, but calm and satisfied ; satisfied that however ungodly men might seem to prosper, this was no mark of God's favour ; and that the children of God need have no wish to share their joys, nay, that it was *their* mercy to be kept far away from such a lot, seeing that the end thereof would be desolation and destruction for ever.

A blessed visit then was that of Asaph to the sanctuary of God. Brethren, let us be encouraged, in like manner, to look for God to meet us here ; here to send a message of instruction or admonition, or consolation to our souls, as we each may need ; here to pour his grace upon our hearts, and to enlighten our minds, guide us into truth, save us from temptation, and send us on our way rejoicing in his love.

Yes, let tempted believers especially learn to regard the house of God as the place in which they are to look for their *deliverances*. Let them pray that God will grant them such deliverances there. Let them come up to the sanctuary expecting a message from the Lord. Let them give ear to his word, as it is read and preached, listening for that which will suit their case, and bring peace to their minds.

And they may be sure that sooner or later they shall find, as Asaph found, the things which

are "too painful for them," all made clear ; and their minds shall be set at rest in the renewed assurance of the faithfulness and love of their God.

IV. We have now to notice, THE HAPPY FRAME OF MIND INTO WHICH ASAPH AT LENGTH WAS BROUGHT, when the temptation which had troubled him was removed.

The words of our text strongly indicate this. They shew the conviction which was now more deeply than ever impressed upon his heart. "Truly God is good to Israel." 'Let appearances be at first however much to the contrary ; notwithstanding that it does sometimes seem as though the wicked were blest, and the godly forgotten ; and however the tempter would suggest that *it is so*, and that God does not care for them that love Him, as they might expect that He should do, yea, that He gives to evil men a happiness which He withholds from his own children ; notwithstanding all appearances ; notwithstanding all insinuations of the tempter ; and notwithstanding too the folly and unbelief of my own heart, in allowing such thoughts ever to enter my mind and harass me ; I now can see through all ; I see that God is to his people, and cannot but be to them, pure, unfailing love ; in all He does, and in all He abstains from doing toward them, He is love ; in all He gives, and in all that He withholds, He still is love ; "God is *good* to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart," his saints, his renewed and sanctified

children, those who are not only of Israel, but are Israelites indeed, chosen and holy unto God.'

The text may be viewed, for such it is, as the confession of a man, whose mind having been shaken for a season, and troubled with doubts respecting God's dealings with his people, doubts of his love and wisdom in the orderings of his Providence concerning them, now has come out of the temptation, has seen through the mists which beclouded his view, has looked beyond present appearances, has pierced the veil, and there, beyond all the low and darkening vapours of this earthly region, has discerned the God of love seated on his heavenly throne, unchangeably the same, the same in all his grace toward his people, a God of truth and faithfulness, without variableness or shadow of turning, *good* in all his purposes and dispensations, *always* good, *only* good to his true 'Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart.'

But the frame of mind in which Asaph wrote these few words in the opening of the Psalm, will be better seen by examining the language which he uses again toward the close. For there you will observe he comes back to the point at which he had set out, shewing in a manner most beautiful and affecting, how, for his own part, the goodness of God was all his hope, and trust, and portion; declaring too the shame he now felt at the thought of those doubts which had for a time been possessing his mind, and recording the resolution to which he had come for the future, to stay his heart simply and confidently

on his God, as all his salvation and all his desire. Let us note one or two particulars in the close of the Psalm, exhibiting this most blessed state of feeling into which Asaph had now been brought.

As I have just remarked, you will see the *shame* he felt in the thought of those doubts which he had for a time allowed to agitate his mind. "Thus," saith he, referring to the trouble these doubts had occasioned, "my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins : so foolish was I and ignorant, I was as a beast before Thee." He had been like a brute ! Why ? Because of the stupidity and irrationality of his unbelieving suspicions : as though he knew no better than to judge of God only as the world judges : doubting of God's love, because he was himself outwardly afflicted, while wicked men were outwardly prosperous. Why, what ignorance was this ! A child of God should not allow that such a thought should even cross his mind. Surely *he* ought to know that God has a very different way of proving his love to his children than by making them rich or great.

Dear brethren, may not *we* have to blush as Asaph did, and own that we have been but as *beasts* before God ? When we have been ready to say, ' Can God love me, and let me suffer as I do ? Can God love his saints, and let them be poor, and afflicted, as many of them are, while many around them, wicked men, are prospering, and getting more than heart could wish ?'

Alas, my brethren, where is our faith? When ever such thoughts only give us a moment's trouble, why is it? It is because we have lost sight of God, as He truly is, and are thinking of Him no better than the poor ignorant world is wont to do. Like brutes we have our eyes all downward on the earth, instead of upwards toward God.

Then, should ever such suspicions of God's goodness enter our minds again, let us away with them at once. Let us bear in remembrance what Asaph saw in the sanctuary. He saw that the men whom God shall soon cast down to hell, are the very men whom He often suffers to have all they wish. It is his judgment on them. "The prosperity of fools," it is said, "shall destroy them."

We do not say that prosperity in the world is always a mark of God's anger. No: but that it *often* is so: and that, at all events, it is no proof, no *such* proof, of love, as He gives to his own people.

No: they have better tokens of his favour. The mercies granted them in his everlasting covenant, *these* are their treasures. Herein He has declared his loving-kindness toward them. He has chosen them and redeemed them, and called them, and sanctified them, and He has promised to be their God for ever. O to have *these* evidences of his love! Brethren, seek these mercies for yourselves. Then you will want no other pledges of the Lord's good will toward you.

But, you observe, how that with *shame* for his past doubting, Asaph unites humble and blessed *assurance* for the future.

He thankfully confesses how mercifully his God had dealt with him. Notwithstanding his sinful doubts, God had not taken away his gracious presence. "Nevertheless," saith he, "I am continually with Thee; Thou hast holden me by my right hand." *That* in truth was the cause why he did not altogether fall. God had not let him go. God had not taken his Holy Spirit from him.

Ah, christian, what but this has kept *you*? How often had you fallen, fallen away from God, and that for ever, had not the Lord, in his unchanging faithfulness, holden you by your hand, refused to part with you, and drawn you back again to Him.

How precious is the thought of this, the faithfulness of God. Believer, it is your soul's security. Jehovah Himself has brought you to know Him, in and through Jesus, as your Father, and your God, and therefore, yea, because from eternity He loved you, and marked you for his own, therefore has He kept you to this day, and, blessed be his name, He will yet keep you by his power, through faith, unto salvation.

So did Asaph strengthen himself in God for the time to come. "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. My

flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.”

Here you behold the work of God the Holy Ghost in the heart of this tempted saint. You see it in the humble faith, the simple devotion, and the firm assurance to which he was now brought, and that, in no small measure, by means of the very temptation through which he had passed.

The temptation itself was evil. His own yielding to it was sinful. But out of evil God brings good. He overrules the tempter's snares, and Asaph's own weakness, for the eventual increase of heavenly graces in his servant's soul. And so it is that all things are made to work together for good, in the end, to the children of God. Now, more than ever, did Asaph say, ‘My God, Thou art my guide, Thou my strength, Thou my portion ; thy word shall teach me ; thy Spirit shall lead me ; thy love shall satisfy me ; thy presence be my comfort now ; thy glory my heritage for ever. I now seek none but Thee. I crave nothing more, if but I have thy love. Let others make this world their all, Thou, O God, art the portion of mine inheritance, and of my cup.’

Dear brethren, would that all of us may enjoy this portion. If there are those among us who know not God, O that they may be led to seek Him, to seek Him by prayer, begging of Him to grant them his Spirit, to bring them to Himself, to let them know Christ as their Saviour, and the great Jehovah Himself, as their Father

in Him ; thus may they seek Him, and He will be found of them ; and then they are blest indeed ; blest for time, and blest for eternity.

Christians, ye who know God, study to know Him more and more ; keep closer to Him ; live more upon his love ; follow the counsels of his word ; seek and find your comfort, your repose, your satisfaction, peace and joy, in his presence with you.

O, I say, draw nearer and still nearer to your God. Remember He is all your's. Meditate upon Him ; what He is in Himself ; what he promises to be to you ; what you need to find in Him ; and go, day by day, and ask, ask largely of Him ; God loves that you should do so ; even that you should set your hearts upon Himself, and say with Asaph, ' None beside Thee, O my God, none in heaven, none in earth, can give me what I crave : Thou art my all. '

Blessed are they who thus are *athirst* for God. Their joy shall in due time be full. Brethren, be it yours to aspire after God yet more than you ever have done. Be urgent for more of his Spirit, more holiness, more peace, more heavenly mindedness, more conscious enjoyment of his nearness to your hearts.

Then indeed you shall feel, and own, that " God is good to Israel. " The treasures of the world, you will feel, are not his children's portion. They are not *your* portion : you have a better. If wicked men possess them, you will not complain ; only let God be your's, and then all is well. Want, sickness, trouble, sorrows of a

thousand kinds may come, still all is well ;
yea, a time there is, and it fast draws nigh,
when heart and flesh themselves shall fail, still
all is well ; for “ God is the strength of your heart,
and your portion for ever.”

SERMON XIV.

MATTHEW XV. 23.

BUT HE ANSWERED HER NOT A WORD.

CHRISTIAN brethren, are there none among us this day who are ready to say, 'And so it is with me! I pray: I pray daily: I pray fervently: I have prayed again and again for a particular mercy, and this for a long time past, but Jesus answers me not.' It is a frequent case. It is a trying case. Let me deal with it for a little while in this present discourse. And may the Eternal Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus, guide our thoughts, and send his word to the hearts that need it.

I do not intend to go through the whole of the narrative to which our text belongs. It is a narrative full of interest, and full of instruction. But at present I propose only to fix upon one point in it. That point is brought before you in the text. Here is a humble, believing, importunate supplicant at Jesus' feet; she is imploring mercy; but Jesus answers not; no, "not a word."

I have said that a like case is often found among Christians now. And when a praying soul has

had, or seems to have, no answer from the Lord, then come strong temptations, and fears, and doubts, and soon dejection, and despondency.

Now it is against these that I wish to guard. I wish to shew you that your receiving no answer *as yet* to the supplications you have offered, is of itself no ground for fear, no warrant for despair. Let me notice a few of the thoughts which are apt to arise in anxious minds on this account. The case of the individual referred to in the text will greatly help to illustrate the subject.

In the first place, it may be suggested by the enemy of our peace, that we have no reply to our petitions, because *the petitions themselves are wrong*, and not according to the divine will.

But this does not follow. Our petitions may be perfectly right, perfectly in accordance with the divine will, and yet, for a time, we may not see them granted. Look at the facts of the history from which our text is taken. An afflicted mother comes to Christ, intreating his pity for her daughter. Was she wrong in this? Or was the mercy she sought such as Christ considered it not proper to bestow? Just the reverse. Her request was to Him most acceptable. He altogether approved it. And He gave her the best evidence of this in the end, for He granted her all she asked. Yet, however approved her prayer, however acceptable her request, for a time you observe Jesus answered not a word. We say then, it is no sign that you are wrong in your petitions, if for a season the Lord ap-

pears to you to refuse a reply. Do not say, you must be asking for what He does not approve. This is no just conclusion from his silence toward you. And if only you can take your Bibles with you to the mercy seat, and shew that you have the warrant of God's written word for your requests, then, rest assured, your prayer, let it be ever so long unanswered, is and cannot but be acceptable. For there is nothing more well-pleasing to the Lord than this, that his children should put Him in remembrance of his own word, and plead his own promises. Do this, and you may be sure your petitions shall always be approved. "If," saith St. John, "if we ask any thing according to his will, He heareth us;" He listens, that is, with favor and acceptance to our supplications. Those supplications may not be immediately granted. But delay is no token of God's disapproval.

Again, it may be, and it often is, the fear of a praying man, when he sees no answer given to his cry, that *he has erred in the manner and spirit of his prayer*, that he has been too anxious, too urgent, and that on this account the Lord does not answer him. But we reply, and we turn to the case before us in our text for the proof, that the Lord's silence for a season, is no evidence of any sinfulness in the manner or spirit of our prayer. Here was one whose manner of intreating Christ, and the spirit of whose supplication was most agreeable to the divine mind. Jesus loved her urgency, her perseverance, her unwearied renewal and repetition of

her desires. In the end He commended her expressly for this. And yet, for a long time, "He answered her not a word." Say not then brethren, ye who pray, and it may be long have prayed, and as yet have seemed to pray unheard, say not, 'the Lord is offended; I have trespassed on his mercy; I have presumed on his compassion: I have been too eager, too urgent, too pertinacious in my prayer; my importunity has seemed in his sight impatience, and therefore He will not answer me!'

Brethren, it is true, we must not be *impatient*. "Tarry thou the Lord's leisure." But *importunity* can never offend. Alas! would that we had more of it. Most of us are far more in danger of erring on the other side. We are too cold, too formal, too indifferent in prayer.

No: urgency, perseverance, constancy, is just what the Lord commands. "Men ought always to pray," He teaches us, "and not faint." It is Christ's own direction, "Ask," and not only so, "*knock*:" "Ask, and it shall be given you: *knock*, and it shall be opened unto you."

It is altogether an error then to fear, if we have, or seem to have, no answer from the Lord, that He is offended at our fervency of supplication, or troubled by the frequency with which we renew our petitions. It was far otherwise with her, of whom our text makes mention: far otherwise is it, Christian brethren, with yourselves. By no means, therefore, cease your prayers, or relax in ardor of desire, or diminish the importunity with which you pray, because you have

no reply. If you have the Lord's own word to warrant you in what you ask, then, rely upon it, He cannot be offended because you *knock*, and that repeatedly, at mercy's door. If the door appear yet unopened, this is no reason for ceasing to knock. *Still knock again.*

Yet further, it will be often whispered, foully and maliciously whispered, by the enemy to our hearts, that *Jesus heeds us not*, neglects us, does not attend to us, and that this is the cause why He answers not.

Vile blasphemy! Reject the thought, my brethren, the moment it arises. And look again at the instance before us. Here was one, whom, as we see in the issue, Jesus regarded with peculiar interest. He had heard all she said; He had listened attentively to her cry; secretly, in his soul, He had deeply and tenderly compassionated her distress. And, from the first, He had been resolved to relieve, and bless her. In his own purpose He had said to her, as soon as she made her request, "Be it unto thee, even as thou wilt."

Yet how did He act? When she cried unto Him, saying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David," He answered her not. When his disciples came, and interceded for her, He spoke indeed, but only, as it were, to crush her hopes; "I am not sent, but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel;" and she was *not* of Israel. When again she came, and worshipped Him, crying, "Lord, help me!" "It is not meet," He said, "to take the children's

bread, and cast it to dogs." What could be more discouraging? What conduct, what language more disheartening? What treatment more calculated, by its appearances, to drive a poor suppliant away, and make her feel herself neglected, unheeded, uncared for? Yet, was it so indeed? Far, far, otherwise! Even so, then, Christian, may it be with you. The Lord has been silent. He has answered not a word. Nay, it may be, that there are things in providence befalling you, which have seemed to wear an appearance of direct discouragement; the Lord, you say, seems to rebuke you, and to tell you that He has nothing for such a one as you are. O, begone these sinful thoughts, thoughts which only Satan seeks to cherish, and which, unbelief alone, criminal unbelief, could entertain. Silence, on God's part, is no token of neglect toward your prayer. Providential dispensations, contrary to your feelings and expectations, these too, are no proofs of disregard. The Lord hath still his eye upon you. Praying souls He cannot overlook. His ear is still open to their cry. His purposes of grace toward them, are already formed, and, however delayed, shall surely come to pass. "I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an *expected* end."

Once more, let me notice another very peculiar, and very trying form of the enemy's temptation, whensoever prayer has appeared to be, for a long time, unanswered. It is this, the thought that there must be *some particular de-*

termination of the divine will against our hopes ; some secret decree of Almighty God, which has sealed our doom ; and this is the reason why our cries are unnoticed in heaven.

I know that this is a constant device of the devil, in order to draw a weak believer into a despairing state. Many a one have I seen, for a season at least, wofully oppressed by the tempter in this way, and ready to take to himself the language of the wretched Saul, " God is departed from me, and answereth me no more : " ' He has blotted out my name from the book of life : I am not one of his elect : the privileges of his children are not for me : it is vain for me to pray. The Lord doth not, will not, listen to my prayer. '

Now, surely, if any one had reason to fear that God's decree was against her, and that her petition to Jesus would be vain, it was that very individual whose case is now under our examination. The word of God had been sent to the Jews : and she was of another nation. The Messiah had been promised to Abraham's race : and she was not one of that chosen seed. Nay, more : that Messiah was now come : she was kneeling at his feet : and what does she hear Him declare ? " I am not sent, but unto Israel : " and how does He speak of *her* ? not as one of the children, for whom the bread was provided, but even as a " dog, " altogether forbidden to share the children's food. Assuredly, I repeat, if any one had cause to say, ' the decree of the Lord is against me ; I am excluded from

mercy ; the fixed determination of Jehovah's will is a bar for ever to my hope ; ' it was this poor afflicted Canaanitish woman. Yet, what was the fact ? Was there no blessing for her ? Most assuredly there was, and one pre-eminently large and gracious.

My beloved brethren, not one of you can have one tenth of the reason to suspect that God's decrees are against you,—I say, not one tenth of the reason, which this woman had. For, certainly, the Lord did *seem* to put her distinctly beyond the pale of his covenanted mercies. It is not so with you. You read nothing in his word to bid you fear that He has determined against you. And his present, and perhaps continued silence, when you pray, can be no indication of any pre-determined purpose of his against your souls ; not more so in your case, than in that of the Canaanite before you. The Lord answered her not a word ; yet this was from no decree prohibiting mercy to her ; it was no token of any secret determination against her ; so the sequel abundantly proved. And, in like manner, there is no ground whatever, for any one of you to say, ' I am not heard ; the Lord has already doomed me to destruction, and therefore I have no answer from Him.'

Nay, rather, the very fact that you *do pray* is proof of God's good will toward you. The very fact that He has caused you to seek his face, having cast your lot in a land where his name was known, having given you in baptism a pledge of your admission to the privileges of

his children, having provided for you, in the ordinances of his Church, so many means of approaching to Him, having set before you in his word so many promises encouraging you to come to Him, and then by his blessed Spirit having awakened in your souls desires after Him, desires for his pardoning mercy and renewing grace, for his presence and guidance here, and the enjoyment of Himself in glory, having created in you thus those very longings after Himself, which have brought you to his feet in prayer and supplication, what right, I say, what right have you to yield to the suspicion that the Lord has yet some secret decree against you, and that therefore He answers you not? Could you deal so with your own child? hold out before him every possible encouragement to expect something from you, resolving all the while in your own minds that it should never be his? Impossible! And will you think your God capable of dealing with you, as you would abhor the idea of dealing with your own child? It cannot be. God has taught you to pray, and He has promised to hear prayer; that is sufficient proof that there can be no decree against you. If He answers you not, it is for some other cause, and not because He has any determination to leave you unblest. The Canaanitish woman, with every appearance against her, every appearance to lead her to fear that she was shut out from hope, yet found in the end that there was a blessing, and a full one, in answer to her supplication. And so let all, whom God has taught

to pray, be sure, however the Lord may keep silence for a time, it is because of no predetermined sentence, excluding them from grace ; it is from other and far different causes, and this the end shall fully shew.

And here I will pause. I have used our text, and the history of which it is a part, for the purpose of meeting a few of the many cases of spiritual perplexity and temptation, which are always to be found amongst the children of God. The want of an answer to prayer is a constant source of trial. I do not mean that prayer is seldom answered : but that constantly it is the experience of one and another among the members of Christ's Church, that, for a season, their petitions at the throne of grace, petitions founded on God's word, and offered in faith, and fervency, and humble and godly importunity, are yet, to their apprehension at least, unacknowledged, unanswered of the Lord. And then it is the tempter seeks to harass them. He will suggest that our prayers are wrong ; or that we ask amiss ; or that the Lord is not pleased ; or that He neglects us, and does not heed us ; or that He does not mean to hear us, we are out of his covenant purpose, He has no design to bless us. And my wish has been to illustrate, from the case before us, how utterly unfounded are all such apprehensions. We see in that case how prayer may be most right in its object, most acceptable in its spirit, and such as the Lord is attentively listening to, and, so far from there being a decree against the suppliant, the prayer is

one for which a rich answer of blessing is in store ; and yet, for a time, to that very prayer the Lord answers not a word.

I would conclude by adding a few words of address to two classes of persons.

And first, to those who are most concerned in our present subject,—Christians, who live in the habit of fervent prayer, and yet complain that they seem to receive no blessing.

I must say to them at once, that I am inclined to believe many of them mistake the matter of fact. They are *not* without a blessing. They imagine that their prayers are profitless : but let them try to do without those prayers, and they will soon discover how much of grace and mercy they were receiving, which, without prayer they would cease to have communicated to them. They are, I say, not without a blessing ; and a time shall come when, their present morbid state of mind being rectified, and their present temptations dispersed, they shall see, and shall gratefully own, that it has been good for them to draw nigh unto God.

But let me suppose that they are correct in their view of their own case. God does not answer them : not yet : the promise tarrys. Then, what is the exhortation I have to address to them ? What is the lesson which the history of this Canaanitish woman reads to them ? Is it not this, “if the promise tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry.” In the Lord’s own time, the *best* time : in the Lord’s own way, the *best* way, the supplications of his people shall

be granted. “*In due season* they shall reap, if they faint not.”

Meanwhile, Christian brethren, do you not see an end, an object, which the Lord may have in view, in delaying his answer to your prayer? We have been mentioning this morning certain fears, as to the reasons of the Lord’s silence, which you may be tempted to entertain, but for which there is no ground. It is Satan’s way, to put such constructions on the Lord’s delay, in giving his answer to prayer. But now let us ask, can we not gather for ourselves some explanation of his dealings with us in this matter from his own word.

What, think you, was the Saviour’s object in treating the Canaanitish woman as He did? “O woman, great is thy faith!” Does not that explain all? She had faith, great faith, great faith in the power and mercy of the Son of David; and the Lord would call that faith out; He would increase it; He would exercise it; and then He would crown it with a blessing.

Believer, so it is with you. *You* have faith; faith in Jesus your Lord, your strength, and your Redeemer; you trust his love, and power, and faithfulness: you come to Him for comfort, peace, and joy; you come to Him for grace and strength; you come to Him for deliverance from temptations, and victory over the world, and power against corruptions; and often you come to Him for the interposition of his providence, as well as of his grace; but frequently you have to own that your peace is not perfect, your joy

not full, your temptations not removed, your corruptions not extinct, your path in Providence not cleared, your measure of grace not equal to your desires. And why does the Lord delay to do all you ask? It is to call out faith: to quicken its exercise: to make you more urgent, more persevering, more importunate in prayer, and then to do for you at last exceeding abundantly above all that you ask or think. Then, "wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart; wait, I say, on the Lord."

One word to a very different class: those I mean, who are strangers to any anxiety about answers to prayer. They pray in *their* way. They *say* their prayers. At home, at Church, they utter words of prayer. But as to an answer, an answer of peace and grace, they look not for it, they wait not for it: they *receive* no answer, but this gives them no concern.

Brethren, are such here? Men who pray, but so pray as not to care for a reply? Is this prayer? To ask with the lip, what the heart heeds not to have? What mockery! The Lord awaken such! How plain that they are dead in sin. The Spirit of supplication teach them to pray!

SERMON XV.

PSALM XXXI. 14, 15.

I SAID, THOU ART MY GOD : MY TIMES ARE IN THY
HAND.

HAPPY, thrice happy, the man, who may thus speak. Beloved brethren, I invite you this morning to the contemplation of his blessedness : and I pray God to grant you all to be partakers of it.

The words of our text, were David's words : and we have in them

I. A CONFESSIO MADE ; HE ADDRESSES THE LORD JEHOVAH, AND DECLARES "THOU ART MY GOD."

II. WE HAVE A REFLECTION ENJOYED ; "MY TIMES ARE IN THY HAND."

I. Let us observe THE CONFESSIO MADE ; "THOU ART MY GOD." It contains two distinct acknowledgments. The Psalmist affirms in reference to Jehovah, "Thou art God ;" and then, beyond this, "Thou art *my* God."

1. David confesses the Lord Jehovah to be God : as elsewhere, "from everlasting to everlasting Thou art God."

St. Paul said, "there be gods many, and lords many:" that is, in the world at large, "but," he added, "to *us* there is but one God." So David lived in a day when idol gods abounded on every side, in the nations of the earth around him. He often speaks of it. "Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands:" and he adds, "they that make them, are like unto them: so is every one that trusteth in them. But, thou, house of Israel, trust thou in the Lord." He, and He only, is the true and living God.

In like manner, our text is a declaration of this great first truth of religion. There is but one God, and Jehovah is He. "I am the Lord, and there is none else." "Thou art God alone."

But now it is needful, in order that we may understand the Psalmist's confession, to consider well what is meant under that great and terrible name. "Thou art God." What does this imply? What did David himself understand thereby?

We shall best answer the question by just recalling to our minds a few of those places, in the book of Psalms, in which we hear the pious writer setting forth the nature and attributes of the God he adored; places wherein, in truth, God Himself, by his Spirit in the Psalmist, tells who, and what, He is. Our only difficulty is how to select these places of holy writ, for the book of Psalms is full of attestations to the character and perfections of the Almighty God.

Let us glance at but a few, in which we shall

hear how the Psalmist sets forth that majesty and supremacy, that universal dominion, that goodness, holiness, righteousness, and truth, and that special favor and constant faithfulness toward his own people, which David identified with the name of the Lord Jehovah.

Thus, eternal majesty and might, he testifies, belong to God. "The Lord *reigneth*. He is clothed with *majesty*: the Lord is clothed with *strength*, wherewith He hath girded Himself. Thy *throne* is established of old; Thou art from everlasting." Again, we read: "All thy works shall praise thee, O Lord; and thy saints shall bless thee: They shall speak of the glory of thy *kingdom*, and talk of thy *power*; to make known to the sons of men his *mighty acts*, and the *glorious majesty* of his kingdom: thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations." David's God was "King of all the earth," One who in his providence exercised a rule of unlimited dominion.

Eternal majesty however, and boundless control, were not the only subjects to be celebrated. Alas! these *alone* would leave us far from happy in the contemplation of the Almighty. The Psalmist, therefore, loves to dwell on other points, and especially those attributes of goodness, holiness and righteousness, wherewith the majesty of God is adorned, and the rule of his omnipotence endeared.

Mark how these are introduced, in connection with the supremacy and sovereignty of Jeho-

vah. “ *Great* is the Lord : his *greatness is unsearchable* : men shall speak of the *might* of thine acts : I will declare thy *greatness* : ” and then it follows, “ they shall abundantly utter the memory of thy *great goodness*, and shall sing of thy *righteousness*. The Lord is *gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger and of great mercy* ; the Lord is *good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works* ; the eyes of all wait upon Thee, and Thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thine hand, and satisfieth the desire of every living thing. The Lord is *righteous* in all his ways, and *holy* in all his works.” What an assemblage of attributes ! Goodness, and righteousness, and grace, and compassion, and forbearance, and holiness, and tender watchful care ; all combined with greatness, majesty, and might ; greatness with goodness ; majesty with mercy ; might with love !

In like manner, in another Psalm, we read : “ All nations, whom Thou hast made, shall come and worship before Thee, O Lord, and shall glorify thy name : for Thou art *great*, and doest *wondrous* things, Thou art God alone : ” and then immediately, “ Thou, O Lord God, art a God *full of compassion, and gracious, long-suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth*.” How beautiful the transition, from the vastness of Almighty power, to the plenteousness of infinite mercy and of eternal truth ; and how precious the union !

Similar passages soon crowd upon us. We

add but one or two. "Thy *mercy*, O Lord, is in the heavens, and thy *faithfulness* reacheth unto the clouds: thy *righteousness* is like the great mountains: thy judgments are a great deep: how excellent is thy *loving kindness*, O God; therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings." Mark, as before, the union of divine infinity, with mercy, truth, and loving kindness, as vast as deity itself. So again, "Great is our Lord, and of great power, his understanding is infinite: He telleth the number of the stars, He calleth them all by their names:" and what else? "*The Lord lifteth up the meek; He healeth the broken in heart; He bindeth up their wounds.*" Blessed association, boundless might, and tenderest compassion.

But there is another point. While David saw in his God, this mightiness, majesty, and supremacy, united with mercy, truth, and righteousness, and all the glorious and gracious attributes which constitute one infinite perfection, he also marked, and loved to mark, the manifestation of the divine character, specially in regard of the people of God, his humble saints, his chosen sheep. Thus he testifies, "The Lord is nigh unto all that call upon Him: to all that call upon him in truth: He will fulfil the desire of them that fear Him: He also will hear their cry, and will save them: The Lord preserveth all them that love Him." His special regard is for them. A general care, a providential charge, an universal goodness there

is, even over all his works. But there is yet “a people nigh unto Him,” of whom it is declared, “the Lord *hath pleasure* in them that fear Him, in those that hope in his mercy; the Lord *taketh pleasure* in his people; He will beautify the meek with *salvation*.”

And this formed an important, a prominent, an essential feature of the character of God, in David’s estimation. Jehovah was supremely great, and good, and just, and true to all. But his eye was *specially* upon his own. “The Lord *careth* for the righteous.”

Then, when David made the confession, “Thou art God,” we have learned thus far what he meant. He meant to acknowledge, in the Lord Jehovah, that one only Being, who is Maker and Governor of all, having supremacy, and unbounded sovereignty, full of mercy, goodness, righteousness, and truth, and specially loving and faithful towards his people. Such was God.

2. There is a further part of David’s confession to be noted. David not only says, “Thou art God,” but, “Thou art *my* God.” Now there is a peculiar force and significance in that one word, *my*,—“my God.” Let us consider what it implies.

In the seventeenth chapter of the book of Genesis you read of the covenant which Jehovah made with Abraham. And this was the promise, “to be *a God* to thee and to thy seed.” Now we know that, in one sense, Jehovah is God to all mankind. Whether they seek Him, serve Him, love Him, or not, still He is God their

Maker, God their Preserver, God their Governor, God their Judge. When therefore He speaks in so pointed a manner to Abraham, and promises, "I will be *a God to thee*," there seems to be something intended, far beyond what He was to others. And we know this *was* intended. Abraham's own history, the history of his children, the history of the Jewish people, their history in ages past, their history to this hour, undeniably shews it. God has been to Abraham, and to his seed, *nationally*, what He has not been to any other race of men. His hand has been, in a peculiar manner, over them. His power has been specially exercised toward them. His government of the world has been carried on with an express reference to them. All his attributes have been manifested, in a particular manner, in his dealings and dispensations with them. And, outcasts as they now may seem, God hath not cast them away. Still has He mercies in store for them, and the very way in which He yet preserves them a separate nation proves that He hath not forsaken them. He has thus indeed been a God to them. All He is, as a God, He has shewed Himself to be to them. The emphasis of the expression is strikingly marked elsewhere: "The Lord of hosts is the God of Israel,—*even a God to Israel*."

Now when David said, "Thou art *my* God," he meant something analogous to this. He meant to say, 'Adorable Jehovah, thou hast graciously called me to the knowledge of thy name; Thou hast condescended to enter into a covenant

with me ; most precious are the promises Thou hast made to me ; yea, Thou hast bidden me know that all which Thou art, and all which Thou hast, as God, Thou wilt call into exercise for my good. Art Thou infinitely great and glorious ? Art Thou supreme in majesty and might ? Art Thou sovereign ruler over all ? Then do I know that this thy greatness shall be shewn, and this thy sovereignty employed, in ordering all things for my welfare. Art Thou infinite in all thy attributes, goodness, grace, wisdom, righteousness, and truth ? Then do I know how these shall all combine to arrange and execute most infallibly, most tenderly, and most unceasingly, whatever shall conduce to my real benefit. Art Thou to thine own specially a God of faithful love ? Then do I know that so Thou wilt be to me. I will say of the Lord He is my refuge, and my fortress, my God ; in Him will I confide ; He shall cover me with his feathers, under his wings will I trust, his truth shall be my shield, and buckler.'

Such was the peculiar force of David's confession, "Thou art *my* God." What Thou art, as God, that Thou wilt be to me. And it is very interesting, and very edifying, to observe, how David was wont to plead with his God the warrant, the ground, the reason, yea, the right he had, thus to claim a special interest in his Maker's regard. Jehovah had pledged Himself to him. "The Lord had made a faithful oath unto David," and hence David could urge the petition "Remember the word unto thy ser-

vant, on which Thou hast caused me to rest my hope." And hence too, when he came to die, he could take his stand on the firm foundation of a covenant promise : "The Lord hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure."

David therefore had full liberty to claim Jehovah as his own. "Thou art *my* God."

But it is time, my brethren, that we turn from David to ourselves. Are there none of you, that can take up his words, and say, and that with as full right as he, "Thou art *my* God."

Yes indeed there are. All true Christians may speak thus. Are they not warranted so to do? Has God made no covenant with them? When he viewed them in his Son, before the worlds were made, did He not give to them, as we are taught, in Jesus, as their Head and Surety, the grace of their salvation? And has He given them no visible token of this covenant and promise, ordering their lot to be cast within the boundary of his Church, and causing that they should be set apart in baptism for Him, and have his promises of forgiveness of sins, and adoption to be the sons of God, visibly signed and sealed to them? Moreover, does He grant them no perpetual witness of this covenant, so often as they see the holy table spread, that sacrament wherein our God doth so affectingly assure us of his favour and goodness towards us? And then, have you not, Christian brethren, in the blessed word of God, the exhibition of this covenant, the record of its promises; and as you

read those promises, and meditate upon them, and mix faith with them, are you not continually receiving to your hearts fresh and fresh assurances of the fact that God is yours? Is it not written of such as you, "I will dwell in them, and walk in them, I will be their God, and they shall be my people?" And once again, have you not found, in answer to your prayers, no tokens and pledges of what Jehovah is to you? no burdens of guilt removed? no sense of pardon vouchsafed? no inward peace bestowed? no spiritual strength imparted? no ability for duty granted? no power against temptation supplied? no comfort in affliction ministered? Whence, and what, are all these answers to your prayers?

Beloved brethren, ye who have these tokens of the good will of God toward you, it is for you, like David, to say, in meek but unwavering confidence, "Thou art *my* God."

And, in so saying, consider your confession, and what it imports. Why did we dwell, in the opening of our discourse, on the testimony which David so fully bears as to what God was? Why, but that we might see how much was meant, when he declared, 'this God is mine.' We shewed how he saw in God, the high and lofty One inhabiting eternity, the Maker and ruler of all, the holy, just, and true, the good and gracious, the faithful and unchangeable; so that under those words, 'my God,' we perceived how glorious a claim he made.

Then, Christian brethren, if Jehovah is yours,

yours by his own gift, his gift in Christ, consider *what* you have, in having God? Yes, often meditate on the discoveries which He makes to you of Himself. Think what He is in Himself, and then reflect that He is all this to you; so shall you say, "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance, and of my cup." And the more you do this, with the more reason shall you add, "I have a goodly heritage."

II. Let us go on to the remainder of our text. We have in it A REFLECTION ENJOYED, "My times are in thy hand." The period at which David thus spoke was one of great anxiety and peril to him. His foes surrounded him. They sought his life. But he recollected his God, how great, glorious and powerful, how gracious, wise and faithful, how able, and how sure, to help and keep him: 'then,' said he, 'here is my stay, my comfort, my refuge, "My times are in thy hand," and under the care and governance of the Lord God Almighty I will repose.'

In like manner, you Christian, are to take this thought and rest upon it. 'My times are in Jehovah's hand, and all is well.'

The times of a child of God are various. We may look at his history, either as to temporal things, or as to spiritual things, and what countless changes we shall see. As to temporal things, he has his times of ease, comfort, and prosperity, and he also has his times of anxiety, alarm, and sorrow, of sickness, and suffering, and death. As to spiritual things, he has his

times of peace, comparative peace, happiness, and holy rejoicing; and he has also times of conflict, of trial, of darkness, and difficulty. All the variety of Christian experience, taking the whole Church together, it were impossible to delineate. Indeed, take only one individual, one Christian man, what multiplied changes his single history would present.

But, notwithstanding all vicissitudes, to the believer in Jesus this privilege continues, under all circumstances secure, to look upward to his God, and say, "My times are in thy hand." One thing, one thing only, has a right to disturb him in the enjoyment of this privilege: that one thing, *wilful sin*.

Let a Christian man wilfully depart from his path of duty, then he has no more the comfort, not till he has come back to his proper path, and his proper place, not till then has he the warrant to say, that his times are in the hand of God: no, he has taken them, if I may say so, out of God's hands, and by his own folly and wilfulness, has lost his right to trace his circumstances to the ordaining love and wisdom of his God.

But now I speak to believers in Jesus, living by the faith of the Son of God; to those whose faith, working by love, attaches them to Jesus, to follow Him, to do his will, and tread in his steps, and walk humbly with their God. You, my brethren, find your times are various indeed.

It may be, they are now happy times. As to temporal things, some of you are rejoicing.

Many of you, I trust, are so as to spiritual things. Remember, then, from whom this mercy comes. Bless the hand that bestows your comforts. Say, 'these, my times of joy, are ordered by my Father's love, and secured by his almighty power. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits."

But, it may be that to many of you, the present are times of grief, sorrow, and suffering. If so, to you the text has special application. David, as you see, was passing through such times when he uttered the text. May you, like him, find your comfort then in this recollection, that your trials, be they temporal, or be they spiritual, are under the cognizance, yea, the direction of God, *your* God; a God too great, too wise, too good, too faithful, to err in any of his dispensations, or to forsake you under them.

Then learn two things: learn to *submit*, and learn to *hope*.

Learn to *submit*. The cup that your Father hath given you, shall you not drink it? Can you doubt his wisdom to judge, his love to purpose, his power to execute, his faithfulness to carry to their end, just those plans concerning you which He sees to be best? Do you think your trials are attributable to any forgetfulness on his part, any mistake, any weakness, any want of love, any failure of promise? O no: you reject the thought. 'My God,' you say, 'the Lord Jehovah, the Creator, the ruler of heaven and earth, so great, so gracious, so wise, so true,—He be in error? He want for power?

He fail in love? or He forget? It cannot be! Return unto thy rest, O my soul. Jehovah is thy God. Thy times are his. Be still. Be patient. "Let Him do what seemeth Him good."

But then I said also, Learn to *hope*. Are you in trouble? Yet, say not you despair of better times: better, I should not call them; God's times are the *best*: times of trouble, if ordained by Him, are best for *you*: but I mean times more welcome to you, more cheerful, and more happy. Do not despair of such.

Remember, however pressed with trouble now, thy times, sorrowing, suffering Christian, thy times are in the hand of God, and He can and He will, in due season, turn thy darkness into light. Then try to look up. Resist despondency. Chide thy fears away. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance and my God."

And, certain it is, one time is near at hand, a time sure to be ordered well, a time that shall change, once and for ever, all our sorrows for eternal joy. Believer, thy time of *death* is in the hand of thy God. He has fixed it, and He will attend it. "Right dear in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints."

Then, beloved brethren, all of you, I bid you come, and seek your share in the portion of God's children. "Happy are the people that are in such a case, yea, blessed are that people who have the Lord for *their* God."

SERMON XVI.

PSALM XLVI. 1.

A VERY PRESENT HELP IN TROUBLE.

IT is said of Moses, that he “endured as seeing Him who is invisible.” The same may be said of every man who lives the life of faith in this troublesome world. He looks beyond the things that are seen. He fixes his soul on God. That God whom no man hath seen or can see with the eye of sense, the believer contemplates with the vision of faith, and so he walks in communion with the Lord Almighty, realises his presence, and rejoices in his love. And what is the effect of this in his habit of mind? A most blessed peace, a calm and heavenly quiet, a holy stedfastness of spirit, all arising from the consciousness of a near and all-sufficient resource, in the God of his salvation. So he endures, bears up under trial, resists temptation, rises above fear, takes his path of labour or suffering, in patience possessing his soul, because he knows his God, although invisible, is always nigh, and will never fail him in his time of need.

Christian brethren, great indeed are the privileges attached to faith. “Let not your heart

be troubled," said Jesus, for why? "Ye believe in God." Faith in God is the remedy for fear. I pray that you may prove this more and more. And the text I have chosen to-day is one from which I would aim to gather a few reflections which I trust that God will bless to the strengthening of your faith, and so to the increase of your holy peace. What have you in that text? You have a description of what the Lord is to his own. We shall notice,

I. THE INTIMATION GIVEN RESPECTING THE PEOPLE OF GOD, THAT THEY ARE LIABLE TO TROUBLE.

II. THE FACT AFFIRMED, THAT WHENSOEVER TROUBLE COMES THEY HAVE A HELP, AND THAT THAT HELP IS GOD.

III. We shall observe, THE PECULIAR CHARACTER OF THE HELP THEY HAVE IN HIM: it is a *present* help: yea, a *very present* help in time of trouble.

O, that not one of us, beloved brethren, may want the experience of this most blessed truth. May God, for his dear Son's sake, and in his Son, reveal Himself to us, as He doth not unto the world, and cause us to partake of the felicity of his chosen.

I. We remark in our text, AN INTIMATION AS RESPECTS GOD'S PEOPLE, THAT THEY ARE LIABLE TO TROUBLE.

Favored indeed they are above all men. The Lord hath set his love upon them. He hath chosen them in Christ before the foundation of

the world, a people peculiar to Himself, that they may be holy and without blame before Him in love. Yea, such hath been his grace toward them, that in order to make them his own, He hath sacrificed his Son. He spared not his well beloved, but gave Him to bear the curse of sin, that so He might redeem from death the people of his choice. And then beyond this, He hath in store for them a glorious inheritance with Himself in heaven : they are the very heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. Happy then indeed, inexpressibly happy they are. None have such favor, none have such honor, none are so privileged as the people of God.

Yet are they born to trouble. It is no part of their privileges to be exempt from trouble. They have like other men, their cares, and losses, and trials, and pains, and a share in all that woe, to which, ever since sin came into the world, the race of man has been exposed. And they have other troubles beside these : troubles altogether of another kind : such troubles as the world knows not of. Their awakened consciences and renewed hearts have cares, and sorrows, and conflicts, all connected with spiritual and eternal interests, which are a cause of deep solicitude, and often of great tribulation to their souls. O, who but a Christian man knows the burden of indwelling sin ? the dangers of a vain and evil world ? the devices and maliciousness of the devil and his angels ? Who but a Christian man knows how hard a thing it is to fight his way to heaven ?

Ah, my brethren, if yours is the life of newborn, heaven-born souls, you bear me witness that the child of God is one whose every day is, more or less, a season of trial, vexation, and distress, by reason of the wickedness within him, and around him, and because of the difficulty of keeping himself pure, and living with God, despite the world, the flesh, and the devil, all combined against him. Truly is he forewarned that "it is through much tribulation" he must enter into the kingdom. Christian, you know it well. You feel it every day. And it may be, you have been so troubled, so harassed, so sorely tried with afflictions in God's providence, so grievously tempted by the enemies of your soul, that you are ready to question whether or no you can be indeed a child of God. 'Can I,' you will ask, 'can I be one whom God loves, and yet be so constantly and so variously afflicted?' O, if such be your thought, let me say to you, look again at our text, look throughout every page of God's holy word, and will you not find this continually declared to be the lot of those most dear to Him, that in this world they shall have tribulation. Trouble is appointed them. It is their portion. We do not say they have nothing beside. No, blessed be God, they have abundant consolations, and joy unspeakable. But without trouble, none of them are. God ordains it: it is part of the discipline by which He makes them fit for glory. Had you no trouble of any kind, spiritual or temporal, then might you doubt indeed how you could be of the number of his

children. But now, instead of taking your trials as occasions for doubt, rather regard them as tokens of your adoption. Especially your *spiritual* distresses, they bear witness to you, above all other, that you are children of God. What do you read of all the saints in glory? "These are they that came out of great tribulation."

Men of the world! You know nothing of these things. You have your outward cares, and distresses; but of the soul's conflict with sin, of the heart's trouble from its own corruption, of sorrows and anxieties connected with your spiritual state, alas, you are ignorant. Too sure a sign that you are *dead*. A corpse can feel no pain. Dead souls have no cares. The best blessing I can ask for you is, that you may be troubled. "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."

II. We have in our text A FACT AFFIRMED: THAT THE PEOPLE OF GOD, WHEN TROUBLED, ARE NOT WITHOUT A HELP, AND THAT THAT HELP IS GOD HIMSELF.

"I am He that comforteth you:" so speaks Jehovah to his Church. "Behold the Lord is my helper:" so speaks the Church concerning her God.

But how is the Lord his people's help? Does He save them out of trouble? Remove their trials? Destroy their enemies? Set them free from all disturbing, and distressing circumstances? No: we see daily proof to the contrary. We see that if sometimes He takes away

one affliction, yet by-and-by He permits another: if now He gives deliverance from some temptation, yet it is not long ere another is suffered to arise. How then is God a help in trouble, if troubles still remain? We answer that it is thus. The Lord either removes the distress, or gives patience and power to meet it. If He does not see it well to take away the cause of grief, He then grants to his suffering children grace to bear that grief. Or if, after taking away one trial, He allows another to overtake them: yet with the trial He sends the strength they need, and so sustains them under it. So it is He helps them; takes the suffering away, or else gives strength to bear it.

Hezekiah was sick: he prayed, and God removed the sickness. Paul was visited with a thorn in the flesh: he also prayed, but the thorn remained: yet, "my grace," said the Lord, "is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." In both cases the Lord was their help, but not in the same way. Hezekiah and St. Paul, both were heard in their prayers, and both were relieved; the one however, by the removal of the trouble: the other, by grace sufficient to endure it. And thus, we say, God is wont still to deal with his people. He sees what is the best way to help them: He knows what is most for his own glory, and He acts accordingly. Troubled Christians, bear this in mind—God *will* help you. You have his own word: "Call upon me in the day of trouble, *I will hear thee*, and thou shalt glorify me."

That word he has never broken. Thousands of his saints have tried it, and found it true. Thousands have had cause to repeat David's confession, "I called upon the Lord, and He delivered me from all my fears." You too shall be enabled to say the same. But, remember, you must be content to let God Himself be the judge of the best way in which help is to be given. What your trouble at this time may be, we know not: but God knows well: yea, every particular of it is open to Him: then cast your care upon the Lord, He careth for you: and in that way which He sees to be wisest and best, He will grant you his aid. It may be, He will soon bid all your present trials leave you; the dark clouds that now overhang your path, shall be broken up, and scattered; dense as those clouds may be, if He sees fit to command it, one moment, and they shall be gone. Or, it may be, the trial shall remain: the circumstances which trouble you shall continue: but the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, shall draw nigh to your soul, cheer you, and strengthen you, and so change your feelings under your affliction, by causing his power and consolation to be vouchsafed toward you, as that you shall even rejoice in your tribulation. Then be willing to let God decide how, and in what way, help is to be given you. His wisdom cannot err. His love—you know how infinite it is toward you. Trust Him, and you shall not be ashamed.

III. We have yet to notice THE PECULIAR

CHARACTER OF THAT HELP WHICH THE LORD'S PEOPLE HAVE IN HIM. Our text speaks of it as a *present*, yea a *very present* help, in time of trouble.

“The Lord is *nigh* unto all that call upon him.” They have not, as it were, to send for his help. He is a God *at hand*, always with his saints, wheresoever they may be. “When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee :” such is his promise : “*with thee* :” not merely ready to come to our help, but actually present.

O what a comfort have believing men in that very truth, which is to wicked men so terrible, I mean, the omnipresence of God ! Go where they will, be in what circumstances soever they may, at the call of duty, separated perhaps from all help of man, or in such trouble as friends nearest to them can do nothing to remove, still God is with them : God is looking upon them : God is listening to them : God is aware of every thought, every feeling, every desire, that is in their minds : O truly He is *very* present.

In two ways especially, we may say, God is *nigh* to help his people : by his *Providence*, and by his *Spirit*.

By his *Providence*. Are they sick ? Are they in want ? Are they in danger ? Are those dear to them in suffering ? Are there any circumstances whatsoever which now at this time distress them ? Or have they reason to fear, that any such circumstances will ere long arise to trouble them ?

God has but to speak, and the sickness is

gone, the want relieved, the danger past, the cause of anxiety, be it what it may, is removed. The power that with a word gave birth to a world, the same is it which rules over earth and heaven, and that power it is which is pledged to God's children, to do all things well for them. Therefore we say, this Providence of our God, his governance of all things, every where and at all times, as seemeth best to his godly wisdom, this makes Him to his people a very present help. They cannot be where God is not.

Believers, what a thought is this for you, in the midst of a changing, anxious, troublesome world! O, the blessedness of reposing on the unseen, but almighty arm of a covenant God: the comfort of hiding ourselves by faith secretly in his pavilion, and abiding, by reliance on our Father's ever present power, under the shadow of his wings.

Again, God is very present by his *Spirit*: present to give help to the souls that trust in Him.

Is it the Lord's will not to remove their trials? Their causes of trouble continue. Their outward circumstances continue distressing. Their soul's conflicts and temptations seem unabated. God keeps them in the furnace of affliction. Yet is He Himself also with them there. It is the Holy Ghost that then becomes their friend: such a friend as no being else can prove: one that can enter into the very breast; can hear the unuttered language of the soul; can speak within; can calm the spirit; can see exactly where

the trouble lies, and bring some word, some truth, some promise to the heart, and with a power that only He can exercise, at once exchange the sigh of sorrow for the song of praise.

This is indeed to be a very present help; a comforter within. Other comforters can but speak to the outward ear; this Comforter, the Lord the Spirit, converses with the inward man. Ye that are Christians indeed know this. Ye have heard his voice. "The world," as Jesus speaks, "cannot receive Him, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him, but ye know Him, for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."

But there are, it may be, mourners in Zion here, ready to say that this is nought to them; they have been in trouble; they are in trouble now; they have prayed; they have asked for help; but, they complain, no help appears. Providence gives no deliverances. The Comforter speaks no word of consolation. What are they to think of their state? Surely the Lord hath forsaken them!

Is it thus, beloved brethren, with any of you? Do you know that you have sought the Lord, sought Him in Christ as your Father, committed your way unto Him, cast your burden upon Him? Then sooner shall God be plucked from his throne than your hope shall fail. His covenant will He not break, nor alter the word that He hath spoken. He has *promised* to be your help, and He *will* be so; yea, strange as it may seem to you, He *is* so even now. Did He indeed *forsake* you, your case were far, far other

than it is. But He hath not forsaken you. He is dealing with *you* as He doth with very many of his children. He is calling you to patience, to perseverance, to prayer, to faith. It will not be long, and you shall find that He is with you.

Meanwhile this is his word for your instruction, and your encouragement: "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." Still cleave to his promise. He will not fail you, nor forsake you.

But not a few of you, beloved brethren, have found, and do find day by day, your help in God. Under all your cares, sorrows, conflicts, temptations, you cry to Him, and He delivers you. He opens your path: He supplies your needs: He strengthens your souls: and oftentimes He removes your troubles altogether away. By his power and providence without, by his Holy Spirit's grace within you, He proves Himself your constant friend.

Suffer the word of exhortation. Keep close to God. Fear nothing so much as separation from Him. Be afraid of sin, of worldly-mindedness, of trifling, of whatever would break your communion with Him. "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God." Live in habits of watchfulness, devotion, and prayer. Prize, and use the word of God, the house of God, the Sabbath, the holy table, and all means of grace, as channels of intercourse with heaven. Keep your hearts

with all diligence, and let your daily conversation be that of men who *walk with God*. So, whenever trouble comes, you have your refuge nigh. You know that God is with you. You call upon Him, you ask his help, and you *feel* that you are safe. O, I entreat you, Christians, for your comfort in all trouble, keep close to God. And to you shall be fulfilled the blessed promise, so beautifully representing the nearness of God to his people, "Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer: thou shalt cry, and He shall say, here I am."

SERMON XVII.

PREACHED DECEMBER 27, 1840.

PSALM XC. 1.

LORD, THOU HAST BEEN OUR DWELLING PLACE IN ALL GENERATIONS.

ANOTHER year, beloved brethren, has well nigh run its course. We are assembled now, on the last of its sabbaths, in the presence of our God, once more to join in the worship of his name, and the hearing of his word. O that this, the last, yet may prove among the best of sabbaths, which this year has brought to us. Let us each lift up our hearts in prayer for the special blessing of the Holy Ghost on this day's thoughts and occupations, and so shall we close the public worship of our year with thankfulness and praise.

I have taken a text, this morning, such as I think that Christian men will feel to be most suitable to the season, and most welcome to their hearts. The Psalm to which it belongs is entitled "A prayer of Moses, the man of God." It appears to have been occasioned by a fearful chastisement, sent on the Israelites in the form of a wide spread mortality among their families. "Thou carriest them away as with a flood: they

are as a sleep : in the morning they are like grass which groweth up : in the morning it flourisheth and groweth up ; in the evening it is cut down, and withereth."

It was this sight of human frailty that led the man of God to solemn meditation, and to fervent prayer. In the midst of scenes, shewing at every turn the instability and uncertainty of the life of man, he betakes himself unto his God. Surrounded by decay and death, his comfort is to look to One who changeth not, the immutable, eternal Jehovah. And what is the light in which he contemplates his God? "Lord," saith he, "Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations." "All earthly things have faded, and are fading still : mortality is stamped on man, and all his race : nothing below stands firm and abiding : but, "Thou, Lord, art the same, and thy years shall not fail : " time works no change in Thee : and therefore to Thee thy servant's hope shall turn, and under the shadow of thy throne, the refuge of thy saints in every bygone age, my soul would fain abide, sheltered beneath the covert of an everlasting love.'

Such is the spirit of the text : a devout and thankful resort to an unchanging God, in the midst of a decaying, dying world. And do we not feel, my Christian brethren, that this is just the frame of mind for such a season as the present? O, as each year closes its round, how do we look back on its days that are past, and mark the changes they have brought, the blanks they have created, the friends they have removed,

the perpetual alterations they have, from time to time, been effecting, and what a sense of the fickleness, mutability, and weakness, of all earthly hopes, and human confidences, does the reflection leave upon our minds.

Then let us improve the thought. Let us turn it to our soul's advantage. Let us be sure that we have something more solid and enduring than any thing below, whereon to stay ourselves for our best enjoyments, and our everlasting peace.

Believer, let the sense of this uncertainty attaching to all things, yea, the purest, and the dearest things of time, operate with thee, as it did with Moses in his day; let it lead thee to look upward, above all the perishing objects that surround thee here, and see in thy God the sure and never-failing refuge of thy soul. I pray that such may be the effect of that consideration of the words before us to which I now invite you.

I. We shall notice, **WHAT IT IS THAT MOSES DECLARES THE LORD HATH BEEN UNTO HIS PEOPLE.** "Lord, Thou hast been our *dwelling place.*" And

II. We shall observe, **THE PERPETUITY AND CONSTANCY WHICH HAS MARKED THEIR EXPERIENCE OF THIS PRIVILEGE:** it has been so "*in all generations.*"

I. We notice, **WHAT IT IS THE LORD HATH BEEN UNTO HIS PEOPLE:** "their *dwelling place.*" Now at once it is plain that this is a

spiritual matter. It affects not the body, but the soul. The body has its dwelling place in a house made with hands. It is the dwelling place of the soul, of which we have now to speak. And *that* is in God.

Let us follow out briefly a few ideas to which the expression gives rise. They will lead us to some important truths. A dwelling place, what is it?

1. I reply, it must be *a place with which we are well acquainted*: we know it: we are familiar with it. A house I have never seen, never entered, I cannot call *that* my dwelling place. No: and just so it is with God's people, and their souls. By nature indeed they are far away from God. Left to themselves they had never sought Him, never seen Him, never known Him. But He, in his mercy, reveals Himself to them. In his word He makes Himself known. By the means of grace established in his Church He maintains a declaration of Himself to man. And by his Spirit He makes both these effectual. Thus Moses knew God. A written word, it is true, he had not till the giving of the Law. But Jehovah had spoken: had spoken to his fathers: had spoken to him: had made him to know Himself as his God. And Moses was in God's Church, a child of Abraham, and so had means of acquaintance with God. And then, by the Holy Spirit's grace, these means were blest. Moses so knew God as to love Him: he loved to wait on God: he loved to walk with God: he became a man of God. There was thus a familiarity established. Moses, in his spirit,

ascended and conversed with his God. He knew distinctly who and what God was. Jehovah was no stranger to him.

Christian, so is it with thee. The testimony of the word of God, the means of grace in the Church of God, the blessed operations of the Spirit of God, all have brought Thee nigh unto Him. In thy soul thou dost contemplate God, and dost enjoy as real and certain a perception, and acquaintance with Him, as thy bodily sense can have of any material thing. 'This eye of my body,' you say, 'surveys my house, my home, and is familiar with every object there: even so my soul,—faith is her eye,—surveys her God and acquaints herself with Him, and knows his character, his attributes, his works, and is admitted to a spiritual, a secret, a holy familiarity with Him. "I know in whom I have believed."

Happy man that can bear this testimony! Brethren, this knowledge of God, this distinct perception of Him, and acquaintance with Him in your souls, you must have, or God is not your dwelling place. He cannot be so to those who know him not.

2. A dwelling place we always understand to be a place to which a man has *right of access*. If I may have the door closed against me, or be forbidden to approach the threshold, assuredly *that* is not my dwelling place. No, my dwelling place is that into which I have a lawful entrance, and from which no man may debar me.

In this respect, truly, Jehovah is the dwelling

place of his saints. They have a right of access to Him. "We have access by one Spirit unto the Father." Jesus saith, "I am the way, no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." "I have opened the door. Sin, and guilt, that rendered the fallen sons of Adam all outcasts from God, I have removed. Justice and Holiness, that forbad their entrance, I have satisfied. I have done for my people all that was needful in order to procure their admission. Here is my blood, the atonement for all their sin. Here is my righteousness to justify them with God. Yea, for what purpose is my constant intercession? Is it not to bring them, and keep them, near unto God?"

The believer in Jesus, then, the man who in truth approaches God through Christ, to him the way is open. God Himself bids him welcome. And so, as the Apostle writes to the Hebrews, "we have boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us," and thus do we draw nigh, "with a true heart, in full assurance of faith."

Christian, ever keep in view this truth: keep Jesus in view as your way to God. In Him it is you have your right of entrance into the presence of Jehovah. Come in his name, and you shall never be cast out.

3. A dwelling place gives always the idea of *habitual residence*. I do not call an inn my dwelling place. I am a visitant only there. I hasten back, as soon as may be, to my home.

That home is where I *stay* : I come back thither, and there I *abide*.

So the saints regard their God. Their souls return to Him continually. They seek, and find, their home in him. Their spirits, in the exercise of secret communion with Him that is invisible, abide with God.

This is one of the great marks of difference between false and true Christians. The false Christian is indeed a man who is yet in his sins : and being so can have no communion with God. For, “ what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness ? what communion hath light with darkness ? ” The unholy soul cleaves to this world, and sin, and seeks not after God.

But the man in whom the Holy Spirit dwells, has, unseen to the world around, a perpetual intercourse with heaven : his thoughts and affections are set on things above : the home of his soul is there.

Beloved brethren, ask each of you this question, where is *my* heart's abode ? Tell me, my soul, where is *thy* home ? Are thine aspirations heavenward ? Is it to God they rise ? Is it with God I love to stay ?

4. Once more, a dwelling place, we may say, implies, for the most part, the scene of our comforts, the place of our safety, our refuge, our rest. If I am in trouble, I go not abroad, I get me home. Noah's dove wandered over the face of the earth, but she found no place for the sole of her foot, and so she hastened back again to the ark : there she had safety, shelter, and re-

pose : it was her dwelling place. So saith the believer, as did the Psalmist, “return unto thy rest, O my soul ;” ‘thou findest all without full of disquietude, trouble, uncertainty, temptation, sin : the world is no resting place for thee : but hast thou then no comforts elsewhere ? no refuge ? no resource ? O yes : thy Noah, thine ark, thy home,—it is above. “Thou hast made the Lord thy refuge, even the Most High thy habitation.”

Another test this of real religion : another mark of spiritual Christianity. Brethren, do you feel that for safety, peace, and consolation, you can, you do return, and that continually, evening by evening, unto your God, and say, “I will lay me down in peace, and take my rest,” rest for my soul, as well as for my body, “for it is Thou, Lord, only, makest me to dwell in safety.” Yea, habitually, day by day, and amidst all the turbulence and trial of a distracted and distracting world, are you secretly retiring homeward, ascending upward, seeking shelter in your God ? Then you know what it is to have Jehovah for your dwelling place.

Now this it is, that Moses, in our text, declares the Lord hath been unto his people. He has caused them to know Him. He hath given them a right of access to Him. He hath taught them to abide in Him. He makes them to find their comfort, rest, and safety, in the communion of their spirits with Him.

II. Observe THE PERPETUITY AND CON-

STANCY WHICH MARKS THEIR EXPERIENCE OF THIS PRIVILEGE. "Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling place *in all generations.*" From age to age Thou art thyself the same. From age to age the same art Thou to thy people. All other things change, but in Thee thy saints have ever found their sure, their fixed, their certain peace.

This portion of our text seems to me to yield two considerations. We are reminded how unchangeable the Lord *has been*: and so we are taught how unchangeable He yet *will be* to his Church.

1. We are reminded how unchangeable the Lord *has been*: the same through all generations that have gone before us. The experience of fathers, and of children, and of children's children, has been alike: and the testimony they have borne is one. In God they have known a Being of almighty power, and of marvellous and condescending love: He has called them to seek his face: they have done so, and never in vain: He has been to their souls a refuge, a comfort, a stay; He has been a rock, and a defence; He has been a shelter, and a home; and, abiding with Him, they have found a repose and safety inexpressibly precious.

Now this universal experience of God's people, this one unvarying testimony which they bear, is a matter of much importance, and should be made, and cannot but be made by all true Christians, the subject of frequent meditation. And in reading the word of God it is delightful

to a Christian's mind to trace in all the history of his people the evidences of the fact: the evidences which shew that in all generations He has been the same to whoever have put their trust in Him. Keep this in view as you read your Bibles. It will meet you continually, and to the believer will ever prove a happy topic of reflection. And why so? Because, as we said,

2. Our text intimates to us, that what God *has been*, that He yet *will be* to the Church. Therefore the servant of God, observing, from the history of that Church in ages past, what the saints have found in Him, learns at once what *he* may also look for in his God.

The God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, is *his*. Did they, from generation to generation, place their trust in Him, and find Him faithful? was He, from age to age, their dwelling place? and did they ever testify the safety, and the peace, to be enjoyed under his defence? and still for generations since their day do the lives of his children continue to accumulate the proofs of what their God has been in his unchangeableness toward them? Then saith the believer, 'This God is my God for ever and ever; under the shadow of his wings shall be my refuge; in the secret of his tabernacle will He hide me; "they that know thy name will put their trust in Thee, for Thou, Lord, hast never failed them that seek Thee."

And here is the advantage of the believer's hope. He knows on whom He trusts. He has

the evidence of near six thousand years to assure Him that his reliance on the Lord his God shall never make him ashamed. The witness of the past is the warrant of his expectations for the future. "I will trust," saith he, "and not be afraid; for the Lord is gracious, his mercy is everlasting, and his truth endureth from generation to generation." 'Jehovah is the same to me, that He was to Abraham, to Moses, to David, and all that before me ever trusted in his name, and I know that I shall not be confounded.' "He is a rock: his work is perfect: a God of truth, and without iniquity; just and right is He."

Beloved Christian brethren, I have taken such a topic as this for your consideration, as I have said, this day, because it seemed to me so suited to the period at which we are arrived, the closing sabbath of the year. It is at such seasons we especially feel the transitoriness of all things here, their mutability, their uncertainty. And therefore it is at such seasons we are prepared to prize, I trust, the precious truth, that however the lapse of years brings change to earthly things, and only serves to shew the work of decay and death that is going on all around us in this world, it brings no change to the believer's confidence, exhibits no weakness in the foundation of his hope, but just the reverse; years roll on, ages pass away, generations are born and die, but the Lord, our dwelling place, remains immutably the same, and shall be so for ever.

I wish you, then, to enjoy this truth to-day. Time is wearing all things else away, but your God changeth not. "Lift up," saith He, "lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath; for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished."

But what use shall we make of this blessed consideration? Christian, is your God immutable? Have you, in the midst of a decaying, disappointing, perishable world, a dwelling place in Him, a dwelling place that stands all time, and fadeth not away?

Then how should you more and more seek to abide therein? more and more live above this world, and dwell with God? O there is a holy calm, a staid assurance, a conscious security, to be enjoyed, far, far above what Christians in general seem to know. I want you to attain it. Especially living, as most of you do, in the midst of all the agitations of this vast metropolis, with its numberless anxieties, perplexities, temptations, and sins, you must, if you would have peace, if in the midst of the ever varying, ever shifting, ever troublesome scene around you, you would preserve a quiet, holy, self-possession, and maintain a steady consistency of life, you must, I say, yet more than you have done, make God your dwelling place.

Would you do so? Cultivate private devo-

tion. Never neglect secret prayer. Commune with your own heart, and in your chamber, and be still. Make God your confidant. Ask in all things his guidance. Tell to Him all your difficulties. Confess to Him all your sins. Spread before Him all your griefs. Cast your care on Him. Keep strictly to the precepts of his will. Guard against every sin. Walk circumspectly. Watch and pray. Diligently read the word of God. Regularly and devoutly use the means of grace. Especially prize the holy communion, a sacrament particularly designed to keep you in fellowship with God, and all his saints.

This is the life for a child of God, who would have stability and peace of mind. My Christian friends, that is in some degree the life you lead already: with many of you in no small degree: but yet aim higher: seek more heavenly-mindedness: draw nearer to God: remember your privilege, to come to Him at all times, in and through Christ: it is yours to abide in Him: and the more you do so, the more that "peace of God which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds, through Christ Jesus."

Men of the world, it is otherwise with you. O that you saw your peril! Your hopes ere long must fail you. Nothing short of God Himself can stand for ever. Make this world your dwelling place, it must ere long fall, and then what will your condition be? God save us all from the sad delusion. May none of us be content to repose our souls any where but in Him.

All else is fading. Time is speeding fast away.
The world is in her wane. Man is dying daily.
Jehovah alone abides. Be Jehovah then our
dwelling place, and we stand for eternity.

SERMON XVIII.

PREACHED JANUARY 3, 1841.

GENESIS XXII. 14.

JEHOVAH JIREH.

So did Abraham designate the spot where the Lord had interposed to save his son. He had taken the knife: he had stretched forth his hand: one moment more, and Isaac had been slain. But God's purpose was accomplished: Abraham's faith had been sufficiently tried, and proved: his arm is arrested, therefore, ere the fatal stroke is given: Isaac is spared: and immediately at Abraham's feet a ram is found, and he becomes the sacrifice in Isaac's stead.

"Jehovah Jireh!" the patriarch exclaims, "The Lord will provide!" 'He *hath* provided here: I see his hand: I recognise his watchful care: He brought me to this extremity, but he never designed that I should shed my Isaac's blood in sacrifice. He meant to try me, he meant to call my faith, and obedience, into exercise; but all along, He has made his own arrangements, He has ordered this whole transaction in his infinite love and wisdom; and here, in this unconscious animal, I behold the token of his foreseeing, foreordaining mercy. He bids me spare my son,

and in his room this ram is prepared : I will mark the place henceforward, in memory of this event, and Jehovah Jireh shall its name be.'

My brethren, we cannot put ourselves in Abraham's place. We cannot imagine what his feelings were, as he released his beloved son from the altar whereon he lay, and substituted the ram, so opportunely presented, in his stead. The joy and thankfulness which filled his breast, joy at his son's deliverance, and thankfulness for the proof of his God's unfailing vigilance, and care, and faithfulness, must have been feelings of the power of which we cannot conceive.

Nevertheless, though we cannot share in his emotions, we are permitted to partake of his privileges. *His* God, is *our* God. The Lord that provided for him, still provides for all his people. The watchfulness, and care, and love, that followed his steps, is pledged to us also. And though, like him, we may be brought to an extremity, like him we shall never be forsaken in that extremity ; but, for all occasions, shall find the help of our God sufficient ; in all emergencies, his seasonable interposition shall relieve, or his almighty succour shall sustain us : under all circumstances his Church shall have cause to trace the tokens of his unerring fore-knowledge, and providential goodness, ordering all things for the best, and supplying help in every time of need. Many, O many, shall be the spots, in the pilgrimage of every believer individually, as well as in the passage of the Church collectively, through the world's

wide wilderness to glory, where gratitude, and joy, and love, shall raise their Ebenezer, "hitherto the Lord hath helped us:" and faith, and hope, taking up the song, shall rejoice in an assurance for the future, that he who hath delivered, will deliver, and shall mark the place, as Abraham marked Moriah, and call its name, "Jehovah Jireh,—the Lord will provide."

Christian brethren, I choose these words for our text this morning, because I trust that you will find the thoughts to which they lead very suitable to the period at which we are now arrived. Through the goodness of God, we are spared to hail the opening sabbath of another year. At such a time we would wish to fix our minds on a subject appropriate to our circumstances. What is our position? Like travellers entering on a stage they have never trod before, and in the course of which they know that many difficulties, many dangers, must await them, but the extent of those difficulties, the magnitude of those dangers, are as yet unknown, we this day are setting forward anew on our heavenward road, we enter on another portion of our journey, and what it may present—who shall say? what difficulties, trials, temptations, wants? No human foresight can predict them to us; no human might, or skill, prepare against them. O, is it not then an unspeakable comfort to know, that there is One, whose eye discerns our every situation long before, and whose love and care are such, that to all who trust in Him nothing shall arise, no, not all their jour-

ney through, but He will have anticipated its occurrence, and made all needful preparation. Is not that truly a strong consolation, "The Lord will provide?"

On this account, then, I chose this passage for you to day. It was meant for *you*. Abraham was indeed led to speak thus from his own particular circumstances. But the truth he uttered was not peculiar to him. No, the record of it in this place clearly is meant for the instruction and comfort of the Church in every after age. It is "written for our learning, that we through patience, and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope." Then so let us take it, Christian brethren, take it as your motto for this new year. And may God the Holy Ghost, who caused the words to be preserved to us, bring them to our hearts with power, and make every child of God go forward, with Abraham's confession on his lips, and Abraham's faith, and hope, and joy, and confidence, to animate his heart; "Jehovah Jireh, the Lord will provide."

I shall view the text in three ways :

I. AS EXPRESSING A MATTER OF BELIEF.

II. AS DECLARING A RESULT OF EXPERIENCE.

III. AS FURNISHING A PRINCIPLE OF ACTION.

I. We may view our text as expressing A MATTER OF BELIEF. "The Lord will provide." It is a truth propounded to the faith of the

Church. The people of God are called upon to trust Him for all things : things temporal, things spiritual, things eternal. They are bidden to receive it as a fixed and settled article of their creed. They are to believe in God, to put their whole trust in Him, and to be persuaded of his especial love and regard toward them. Take some examples of this.

To Abraham it was said, "Fear not, Abram, I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." To Isaac, the Lord appeared, and said, "I am the God of thy father ; fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee." To Jacob the assurance was given, "I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac, and behold I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." To Moses the promise was, "Certainly I will be with thee," and upon that word he was to stay himself in the arduous undertaking to which he was called : it was afterwards renewed, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." To Joshua the encouragement was vouchsafed, "As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee : I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee."

And so we might go on to multiply examples of individual servants of God, to whom, as a matter of faith, and firm belief, it was ever proposed, that for all before them, whatsoever their lot was to be, the Lord would provide.

But let us take the general declarations made

to the Church at large. Take them as they meet you in the history of God's ancient national Church, the Jewish people, the type of his Church mystical, "the blessed company of all faithful people." What was said to Israel? "As thy days, so shall thy strength be. There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky. The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. Happy art thou, O Israel! who is like unto thee, O people, saved by the Lord?"

Such was the language in which they, as the chosen nation, were called on to confide in the special overruling care and favor of their God. And what was said to that people viewed nationally, is said elsewhere to all those who are spiritually the Lord's elect. "They shall be my people," saith He, "and I will be their God:" it is the promise of the new covenant, the covenant of the Gospel; and in it you observe how all the faithful are assured of Jehovah's special regard to them, and are called on to *believe* that He doth consider Himself pledged to them as a God, to exercise his wisdom, power, and providence, for their present and eternal good. Yea, it is written again, "I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty;" a declaration made, not to Israel after the flesh, but, as St. Paul teaches the Corinthians, a declaration addressed to all who are children of God in Christ Jesus. Here they are taught to know what the Lord

Jehovah undertakes toward them: and that, like as a father pitieth his children, keeps his eye on them, arranges for their good, provides for their welfare, even so doth God regard and bless the souls that are his. "The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by Him."

True, He may, He will allow them to be tried, and that oftentimes very sorely. Their faith in his word, their obedience to his command, and their resignation to his will, may be tested severely as Abraham's was, and the strait and extremity to which they are brought, may frequently be such as shall almost stagger them: but then it is they are bidden to know, that "there hath no temptation taken them," for which the Lord doth not provide; and "He is faithful, and will not suffer them to be tempted above that they are able, but will with the temptation, also make a way to escape, that they may be able to bear it." It was just so with Abraham. He was tempted, tried, but not above what God had made him able to bear, and at length the way of escape was opened, shewing how the Lord had provided, that is, had foreseen and forearranged all things for him.

In like manner God has required all his people to believe that He will deal with them. It is, my Christian brethren, a part of your creed. "I believe in God:" "Jehovah Jireh:" 'I trust my all with Him: my times are in his hands.'

II. We remarked, that our text might be

viewed as declaring THE RESULT OF EXPERIENCE. It was preeminently so in Abraham's lips. He saw how the Lord had provided : had, as it were, gone before him to the mount, had kept strict watch upon his every step, and marked his every movement, till the time, the moment, the exact crisis for interposition had arrived, and then the voice from heaven is heard, Isaac is released, the ram is substituted, and the faithful patriarch's heart is relieved and comforted. It was *then* the spontaneous expression of his own experience broke forth, "Jehovah Jireh," the Lord hath done as He loves to do, and as He ever will do for his people, provide in mercy and wisdom for them, against their every emergency.

But it was not Abraham only that had reason from his own experience thus to speak. Let us hear what others of God's servants have witnessed. There is nothing more refreshing, more establishing to believers' hearts than this, the listening to such testimony, the testimony of the Church from age to age, as to the faithful, tender care, and providence of her God.

How touching those few words of Jacob, when he was a dying, and would pronounce his blessing on the two sons of Joseph : he commends them to the Lord ; but mark the terms in which he speaks, "God, before whom my fathers, Abraham, and Isaac, did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads." You observe his acknowledg-

ment. The Lord had provided for *him*: had fed him all his life long, unto his dying day: had redeemed him from all evil. He had been brought to extremities, there had been times when he owned himself to be "afraid, and greatly distressed," but out of all the Lord had delivered him.

Pass on to David's day. What testimony does he bear? What had been his experience? Hear him on his dying bed. "David said to Solomon his son, be strong, and of good courage, fear not, nor be dismayed, for the Lord God, even *my* God, will be with thee, He will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." You note the emphasis of the words, "*my* God;" it is there the testimony of experience appears; God will not fail thee, and why do I say so? He has not failed *me*. All my life through He has kept me, and ordered all things for me; I know how He provides. And here, while we mention David's name, can we fail to call to mind that most striking and affecting witness of his, the result of his experience, borne in Psalm xxiii., his witness to the providential care and goodness of his God. "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want: He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth me beside the still waters: He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. 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. Thou preparest a table before me, in the

presence of mine enemies : Thou anointest my head with oil : my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." We cannot take a word of the Psalm without taking the whole. Every word is to our point. Every word speaks of love, and care, and faithfulness. It is all an attestation from experience, of Jehovah's ever watchful eye, and guardian hand. It is the echo of the text, "The Lord will provide."

Take another servant of God, one much tried, but one who, out of all his trials, could come forth with a heartfelt, grateful, glowing acknowledgment, of the constant and unfailing care of his God toward him. "His compassions," he declares, "fail not : " "they are new every morning : great is his faithfulness : the Lord is my portion, saith my soul, therefore will I hope in Him." They were the words of the prophet Jeremiah, and you mark the testimony is a *personal* one. It is the testimony of a man whose own experience has taught him to hope in God, because it has shewn him how constant are the compassions, and how great the faithfulness of Jehovah toward him. He had found the Lord never failing to provide for his security. "Jehovah Jireh," was Jeremiah's confession too.

Pass on again to the New Testament page. Like testimony is not wanting there. How striking those words, they are very few, but how full of meaning, as giving the result of St. Paul's individual experience, when he writes to the

Philippians, "My God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." What gave him this assurance? What was it that enabled him so confidently to promise to his brethren the supply of all their necessities? "*My God*," you observe. There lies the testimony. *I* know how He provides. He has provided for *me*: and he will provide for *you*. And so in other places we meet with his repeated allusions to the way in which the Lord had kept his eye on him: notwithstanding all his afflictions, "out of them all," said he, "the Lord delivered me." "The Lord stood by me, and strengthened me; and the Lord," he therefore adds, implying in the strongest way what past experience had taught him, "the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom."

How beautiful, how comforting, how encouraging it is, thus to listen to the one attestation of all the saints of God, in every age. They have all one witness to bear. They have all one song in the house of their pilgrimage. "In the name of their God they set up their banners," and on every banner shines but one and the same blessed memorial, "Jehovah Jireh, the Lord will provide."

Dear brethren, may it be granted to you, and to me, to add our confessions to those of all the faithful that have gone before us. Be it ours to trust, as they did, the promises of God: and assuredly with them it shall be ours to own, with

overflowing thankfulness, his constantly providing care and love.

III. I view the words of our text as bearing practically on ourselves. I said we might take them as furnishing A PRINCIPLE OF ACTION. For is it so? Will the Lord certainly provide? Then what remains?

1. I would say, let his children dismiss all fears. We do not say they shall feel no trials. Trials unquestionably they will have. But let them remember upon whom they have to depend; One who foresees all things; One who *has* foreseen from everlasting every thing that concerns their welfare; and in his covenant, a covenant ordered in all things and sure, has already made all provision for their need. Then is it for them to "trust and not be afraid."

Believer, remember that undue anxieties, and fears in *you*, are an imputation on your God. They seem to indicate your doubt whether He will provide. Look at your own infant child. He has no cares for the future. Why? He trusts in you. 'My father will take care of me.' His freedom from care bespeaks his confidence in you. So let it be with you, and your God. Do you know his promise for things temporal, that your bread shall be given, and water shall be sure? Then is it yours, as Jesus tells you, to take no thought, no *distracting* thought, "what shall we eat, what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed?" And why not? "For," saith He, "your heavenly Father

knoweth that ye have need of all these things." And then again as to spiritual blessings, is it not said, " Faithful is He that calleth you, who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ?" Then ought it not to be yours to say, ' I will go in the strength of the Lord God. God is able to make all grace abound toward me; and that grace shall be sufficient for me.' Yes, for all things, things temporal, and things spiritual, God is pledged to you. Cast, then, as you are exhorted, " cast all your care upon Him, for he careth for you."

2. I will remark, if we are persuaded that the Lord will provide, then how should this have the effect of making us determined in following the path of duty, leaving consequences all with Him. The thought of possible consequences, how often is this a snare to Christians. ' True,' says one, ' I see my duty, my path is plain, but if I do my duty, what distress, trouble, loss, and perplexity shall I entail on myself:—how men will misconstrue my motives: how my friends will be offended: how my prospects will be blighted; I see nothing short of ruin to follow.'

Alas, alas, have we then forgotten that the Lord will provide? Have we found reason to distrust his word? Is it so, that we cannot leave results, and consequences, in his hand? Not such was Abraham's conduct. Every thing was against him in doing what God prescribed. ' Slay my son, my son Isaac? what a deed! What a deed for a father to execute! What will

the world think of me ! what will it think of my God Himself ! Besides, Isaac ! all the promises, promises so long given, all are bound up in Isaac ; if I slay Isaac, my hopes are ruined, and God's promises must fail.' It would have been very natural for Abraham to reason in this way, and from a fear of consequences hesitate to do as God required. But no : the command was plain. He had only to obey. It was not for him to think of consequences. God would see to them. So, brethren, it must be with us. Cannot we trust God ? Is He not sufficiently mighty, and sufficiently wise, to arrange matters, so that no harm shall come to us in duty's path ? No *real* harm ? What we fear as evil, may never come ; or, if it comes, instead of an evil, it may turn out in the end to be a positive good. At all events, if we know that the Lord will provide, that He will undertake to order all things well, then surely we have nothing to do but obey his will, and leave all events with Him.

3. I will add one more remark. If the Lord will provide, then what encouragement does this give to his people to believe, that the means they employ for any appointed end, shall not be in vain. This is the holy use of the doctrine of God's foreknowledge and foreordaining care.

'The Lord will provide,' says the man who would abuse all precious truth, 'therefore I may be negligent.' 'The Lord will provide,' says the devout believer, 'therefore I will be diligent : diligent in my worldly calling, diligent in my Christian duty, diligent in using all means for

my temporal and spiritual welfare, for I know that wisdom, power, and love, are watching over me, and how certain it is that my Almighty Father will cause by his providing care that all events shall issue well for me. And so the truth of our text becomes again a principle of action. It makes all true children of God happy and active, from the persuasion that He will overrule all in goodness and faithfulness for them.

SERMON XIX.

JOSHUA XXIII. 14.

AND, BEHOLD THIS DAY I AM GOING THE WAY OF ALL THE EARTH: AND YE KNOW IN ALL YOUR HEARTS, AND IN ALL YOUR SOULS, THAT NOT ONE THING HATH FAILED OF ALL THE GOOD THINGS WHICH THE LORD YOUR GOD SPAKE CONCERNING YOU; ALL ARE COME TO PASS UNTO YOU, AND NOT ONE THING HATH FAILED THEREOF.

THESE were the words of Joshua, the captain of Israel. He was now old and stricken in age. In his early days it had been his lot, and a happy lot it was, to act as the personal attendant on Moses, the man of God. He was Moses' minister. And when Moses died, Joshua was appointed by the Lord to succeed him, and to him was given the honor of leading the tribes of Israel into their long promised inheritance. Under his guidance they crossed the Jordan. At his direction they compassed Jericho seven times, till the walls of the city fell down to the ground. At his desire the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, while Israel fought with the Amorites, and hastened not to go down until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies. Under his command the armies of Israel went forth

conquering and to conquer ; one city and people after another being overcome, till they found themselves masters of the land of Canaan, and all that God had sworn concerning that land to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, they saw fulfilled in themselves.

“ The Lord gave unto Israel,” it is said, “ all the land which He swore to give unto their fathers : and they possessed it, and dwelt therein. And the Lord gave them rest round about, according to all that He swore unto their fathers : and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them : the Lord delivered all their enemies into their hand. There failed not aught of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel ; all came to pass.”

About seventeen years had since elapsed, and Joshua found himself declining. He felt that he had not long to live. And loving his nation most truly, he resolved to make one more effort to serve them, by calling them around him, and delivering to them a parting charge, an affectionate and faithful exhortation.

“ He called for all Israel, and for their elders, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers,” and then in the midst of the assembled congregation, he proceeded to address them, reminding them of what the Lord had done for them, bidding them to remember what He had promised still to do on their behalf, and entreating them, as they prized the favor and protection of their God, to cleave unto Him with purpose of heart. It is at the close of this ad-

dress that we meet with the words of our text. "And, behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts, and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof."

Now the main thing to be noted in our text is the subject of the appeal which it records. What is it? It is the *faithfulness* of God. My Christian brethren, how precious a matter then for holy meditation is there here for you! The faithfulness of God! You have staked your all upon it. A testimony therefore like that of Joshua before us comes with peculiar weight and value to your hearts. It tells you what is the character of that God to whom you have committed yourselves for time and eternity. And you behold in Him one on whom you may safely rely. He is One who cannot fail those that trust in Him. He is One who ever has made good his word unto his people. He is One that changeth not. "They that know thy name," said David, "will put their trust in Thee: for Thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek Thee."

In aiming then to make use of our text, for the comfort and edification of believing souls, let us notice

I. TO WHOM JOSHUA WAS SPEAKING. To whom did he make this appeal? The question

will serve to remind us of some important facts and truths, as regards all true Christians.

It was to Israel that Joshua spoke : a people whom Jehovah had chosen to Himself, and separated from all other people on the face of the earth.

They had been in captivity. They were bondsmen in Egypt. The Lord sent to them his servant Moses. By him He commanded them to come out of Egypt. He bade them set forward on a journey through the wilderness that lay between Egypt and Canaan. He told them that Canaan was their's. He had engaged long since to give it them. Now therefore he called on them to arise, and go forward to their inheritance. Forty years did they pass in the wilderness, and all that time did He undertake to feed, and guide, and to defend them : leading them on safely so that they needed not to fear, until He should have brought them to their rest, and "guided them in his strength to his holy habitation."

Believer, how much is there here which serves to picture your condition. You were in bondage, a captive to the prince of the world, serving sin. God sent to you. His Gospel was the message of his love. Thereby He called you to come out of the world. He bade you seek a better portion. He opened before your view the heavenly land. "Arise," said He, "for this is not your rest." "Seek the things that are above. I have prepared for you a city." And He gave you grace to listen, and obey. You set

forward for heaven. A sinner though you were, yet convinced of sin, and longing for pardon and salvation, you heard of Jesus the Saviour of sinners, and you believed: you said, 'this Saviour is for me.' You laid hold on Christ; and in so doing you laid claim to heaven. Thenceforward you became a traveller towards the heavenly city. A wilderness lay between the region you had left, and the land you had in view: that wilderness you must traverse. But how? you needed sustenance: you needed guidance: you needed defence. Whence should you receive them? The Lord undertook to provide for all. Food for your souls, direction in your way, protection to the end, all that you required He pledged Himself to supply. "Jehovah Jireh," you said, "The Lord will provide." And thus far you are become like Israel. You are *spiritually*, what they were *literally*, pilgrims, under God's defence, journeying toward a promised land.

II. Observe, WHAT IT WAS THAT JOSHUA AFFIRMED. It was this, that all which God had undertaken He had fulfilled. Not one thing had failed, all was come to pass.

See then, believer, what ground you have for confidence. Israel's God is your God. The faithfulness He shewed toward them is the same that He will shew toward you. You behold them in possession of the promises. All the good things which the Lord had spoken they had realized. So shall it be with you. God

saith to each of you, as he said to Jacob, "I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of."

Now, Christian brethren, I desire that you should take and enjoy the comfort of this truth. St. Paul sums it all up in few words when he writes to the Hebrews, "He is faithful that hath promised:" I wish you to rest upon that rock, a faithful God. And in order that you may do so, you must bear in mind what it is that God hath promised: what those good things are which the Lord hath spoken concerning you.

You are, as we have said, pilgrims in a desert land. And you are "journeying unto the place, of which the Lord hath said, I will give it you." Now, what the Lord hath promised you is, as it was with Israel, all that you shall need by the way, sustenance, direction, defence, and safe conduct to your eternal home.

Sustenance:—your souls require it. Alas, this is a land which yields no food for souls: souls, I mean, who know what it is to "hunger and thirst after righteousness." Truly do such continually cry out as David did, "My soul thirsteth in a barren and dry land." "Husks which the swine do eat," are to be had in abundance; but "bread of life" there is none.

Then now behold God's provision. "My flesh," said Jesus, "is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed: he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." This is the sustenance, believer, for your soul: Christ as revealed in his

word : Christ as set forth in his ordinances : Christ as manifested by the Lord the Holy Spirit to your hearts : it is on *this* you live : herein you do find *food* : day by day you take of Christ into your souls, that is, the truths you know concerning Christ you meditate upon, and enjoy in their power and application to yourselves. “ The life I now live in the flesh,” said St. Paul, “ I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” O yes, there is *life* in that truth, “ He loved me, and gave Himself for me.” Here is the personal appropriation of the Saviour. This is to “ feed on Him by faith in our hearts.” And this is the nourishment provided for the souls of the people of God on their pilgrimage. Let them but have Christ in their hearts by faith, and their spirits are strengthened and refreshed, and they go forward on their journey heavenward, rejoicing in God their Saviour.

Again, *guidance* is another blessing Christian pilgrims want. Our God promises it therefore to them. “ If any of you lack wisdom,” saith St. James, “ let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.” God undertakes to instruct his people, and He will do it. By his word He maps out their path. By his Holy Spirit He lightens their eyes to see the good and the right way. By his providence too He often indicates his will. And humble, praying saints, who only wish to know and keep that will, the Lord never forsakes. “ The meek,” it is said, “ will He

guide in judgment, and the meek will He teach his way." And Christians find that the Lord does teach them. He opens their path before them. He makes their discernment of truth and duty to grow more clear. Sometimes they have to wait awhile, but at length the cloudy pillar moves; they follow, and are safe.

Ye who are pilgrims indeed, think often of the promise of direction which God has given you. Frequently you know not what is the course that you shall have to take. But the Lord foresees your path: and He promises to guide you. What is your prayer? "Shew Thou me the way that I should walk in, for I lift up my soul unto Thee." And what is the Lord's promise in reply? "I will instruct thee, and teach thee, in the way that thou shalt go; I will guide thee with mine eye."

Once more, *defence* is what you need. Your road lies through an enemy's land. The world has ten thousand traps laid for your feet. And hosts of evil spirits, under the command of the devil, are leagued against your souls. How shall you make your way? The Lord hath said, "Fear not; greater is He that is in you than all that are against you." It is written, "God shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." The Israel of God may still take to themselves those animating words, spoken to his people of ancient days, "There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky. The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the ever-

lasting arms, and He shall thrust out the enemy from before thee, and shall say, destroy them."

Thrice happy, then, indeed, is the people who have the Lord for their God. There is nothing they need which He does not promise to provide. He undertakes all for them, to feed, to guide, and to defend them, all their journey through, yea, until He shall have carried them safely over the Jordan of death's dark flood, and landed them on the shores of heavenly and eternal peace and blessedness.

Christian, we repeat it, all this God has pledged Himself to do for you. And now the thought I want you to enjoy is this, that such is his *faithfulness*, He cannot but fulfil to you all that He has promised. Just as the Israelites experienced that faithfulness, so shall you. Not one good thing failed them, of all the Lord their God spoke concerning them. Nor shall one blessing, which Jehovah has bound Himself in covenant, an everlasting covenant, a covenant made in Christ for you, not one blessing which He has thus bound Himself to give you, will He fail to grant.

Yet, your own enjoyment is not the only end I would have in view. The glory of God, his honor and praise, *this* also is concerned. For if your souls are stayed, as they should be, on the faithfulness of God, then will you trust in Him, and repose upon Him, and bear witness to Him before the Church, by your faith, and holy reliance upon his word, that, like one of old, you

“judge Him faithful that hath promised.” And this leads us to notice,

III. WHAT IT WAS THAT JOSHUA CLAIMED FROM ISRAEL. He claims from them an acknowledgment that what he said was true, “Ye know,” said he, “in all your hearts, and in all your souls,” how the Lord your God has dealt with you. He appealed to them to say whether God had not been true to his own word with them.

Now, Christian, you are to be ready to answer a like demand. By the confession of your lips, and by the steadfastness of your lives, your testimony must be borne to the truth of your God. You are to be prepared to tell any fellow-traveller, whose heart may be fainting, how he need not fear, for that the promise of God is sure, that you have proved it, and found it true. “Come hither, all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what He hath done for my soul.” Yes, and the world too, you must let it see, in a course of holy confiding submission, known and read of all men, what God has been to you. And that you may thus confess your God, you must live by faith, must take God’s promises and try them, and must put them to the proof. Then, how blessed to be able to reply, ‘yea, thank God, I do know, in all my heart, and in all my soul, that not one word of his hath failed me. I have looked to Him, as He bade me do, for sustenance, direction, and defence, all my way hitherto, and never have I been disappointed.

Often, alas, as I have been wanting to Him, never has He been wanting to me. He has kept his covenant; and that covenant is all my salvation, and all my desire.'

I charge you, Christian brethren, for the honor of your God, be ready to speak thus: and in order thereto cherish the habit of faith, the habit of trusting your God, more and more. Treasure his promises in your minds. Store them in your hearts. And as, from time to time, you feel your need of the mercy He engages to bestow, plead these promises in prayer, and implicitly rely upon his fidelity, waiting for the fulfilment of his word.

There are blessings which you daily, hourly, and every moment need. Look for them then, ask for them, and expect them every day. Israel wanted daily food: the manna daily fell. They continually needed water in the desert: continually the streams of the smitten rock were flowing at their feet. Constantly they stood in need of guidance in their way: God took not the cloudy pillar from them by day or by night. So, believer, it is to be with you. Go, morning by morning, for sustenance, and for direction to your God. He has said that He will give it you. Intreat Him then to do it; use the means thereto which He has ordained, and never shall you want.

There are also other blessings, which seem to be required more especially at particular times. Help in danger; succour in conflict; comfort in trouble; these, as circumstances change in this

troublesome changing world, you will, at certain seasons, more than at other times, require. Then, again, go to your Father for them. What saith he? "Call upon me in the day of trouble, I will hear thee, and thou shalt glorify me." "Thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, fear not, for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." These, and such as these, are the promises God has given you for your times of extraordinary trial. At such seasons then call them to your remembrance. Take them, and lay them before the Lord. Beseech of Him an accomplishment of them. Leave to Him the *way* in which to send you comfort, or deliverance; and be assured, you shall certainly find Him to be your "very present help in time of trouble."

This *habit* of faith; this simple, firm, unhesitating faith; this resting on the Lord; this recurring to Him, day by day, and in every time of need; it is a duty which his faithfulness binds upon you. If He be so true to his engagements, if He be first so gracious as to make these engagements, and then so exact in the fulfilment of them,—surely, Christian, you are under an obligation, indeed, to honor Him by trusting his promises, and living your pilgrim life on earth with the words of the Psalmist as your song, "I

will go in the strength of the Lord God, I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only."

Thus, then, we have seen some little of the character, comforts, and duties of the people of God. Their *character*: they have come out from the world, and are pilgrims through earth to a rest in heaven. Their *comforts*: they have the promises of a true, and unchangeable God, a God that cannot lie, for the ground of their hope. Their *duties*: being so sustained by everlasting love and faithfulness, to acknowledge how good, and how true, is the God of their salvation, and to honor Him still, by implicit faith in all the word which He has spoken.

The Lord enable you, my Christian brethren, to take the comforts, and to maintain the duties, of your high calling. And then, how blessed the prospect of a time, when all the Church of God shall stand, like as Israel stood, when the words of our text were spoken to them, actually in possession of their promised land; all their trials over; Jordan itself, even though with overflowing banks, safely passed; the whole assembly of redeemed souls securely gathered into their Canaan of celestial joy.

What a glorious period will it be! Then indeed may the appeal be made, "Ye know in all your hearts, and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed you:" and O how glad, how solemn, how thankful, shall be the response, "Salvation to our God, which sitteth on the

throne, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever.”
‘ All glory to the power, and love, and faithfulness, that brought us in security to this good land. All praise to Him whose word, so gracious and so true, we rested on, and ever found it good; and now his promises are all fulfilled in our everlasting joy.’ When that strain of praise and triumph shall be raised, God grant, beloved, that you and I may be there to swell the song !

SERMON XX.

REVELATIONS XXI. 5, 6.

AND HE THAT SAT UPON THE THRONE SAID, BEHOLD I MAKE ALL THINGS NEW. AND HE SAID UNTO ME, WRITE, FOR THESE WORDS ARE TRUE AND FAITHFUL. AND HE SAID UNTO ME, IT IS DONE. I AM ALPHA AND OMEGA, THE BEGINNING AND THE END. I WILL GIVE UNTO HIM THAT IS ATHIRST OF THE FOUNTAIN OF THE WATER OF LIFE FREELY.

AND who is it that speaks in terms so august, and at the same time terms so gracious? It is the Lord Jesus Christ. He speaks from heaven. Brethren, let us lend an attentive ear to this his voice of majesty and mercy, conveyed to us by the inspired Apostle in our text. May God the Holy Spirit give entrance to the Saviour's words into every heart!

The several topics in our text we shall best consider, by taking each in the order in which it is there presented to us.

And what is it that strikes us first? It is the high and sacred dignity of the speaker: the dignity of Him whose words St. John is recording. How is He described? "He that sat upon the throne!"

What throne is this? The 11th verse of the previous chapter tells. "I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat upon it, from whose face the earth and heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works."

The throne then, is the *judgment* throne: that tribunal from which "God shall judge the world in righteousness," by Jesus Christ. It is Jesus that shall occupy the throne. Hence his own words, when picturing the awful transactions of the last great day, "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the *throne of his glory*." The same then was the throne which St. John beheld. *He* saw it in *vision*. You and I, brethren, are to see it in *reality*. "Behold, He cometh with clouds, and *every eye* shall see Him." O would you look up to Him then in peace? Would you not be afraid before Him when He takes his awful seat? Listen now to the words which you shall hear, as spoken from his throne: listen now in faith, that you may listen then with joy.

"Behold I make all things new:"—these words, and their important meaning, are the next matter to be observed. Under what circumstances are they represented as spoken? We must refer to the context.

At the close of the previous chapter, as you have seen, St. John records his vision of the last and universal judgment. Then, with the beginning of this chapter, the judgment is considered as past. What follows? "And I saw," saith the Apostle, "a new heaven and a new earth:" a new habitation for the saints of God, which is to appear after this present state of things, "the first heaven and first earth, are passed away." So St. Peter declares of *these* heavens which are now, that they shall be dissolved, and that *this* earth shall be burned up; "nevertheless," saith he, "we, according to his promise look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." Immediately then upon this new order of things appearing, what did the Apostle further witness? "I, John, saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." This city signifies the Church. So it is afterwards explained. "Come hither," said the angel, "and I will shew thee the Bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away, and shewed me that great city, holy Jerusalem." The Lamb's wife, and the holy city then are one. Now the Lamb, we know, is Christ: the Lamb's wife, we also know is his Church: the holy city therefore is the same, the Church, the whole collected body of the saints of God, those who sleep in Jesus, and whom God will bring with Jesus when he comes. This city St. John saw coming down, to be fixed in the midst of the new heavens and new earth. That is to say, the

Church, the saints of God, shall be established in possession of that blessed state of things, which shall open on the close of the judgment day.

Something of the glory and joy of that state is then foretold. "I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away."

And under these circumstances it is, immediately that the holy city is fixed in her land of light and love, so soon as the Church is settled in her inheritance, then "He that sitteth on the throne" speaks, and declares, "Behold, I make all things new." 'I have changed, completely changed, the condition of my people: the former things are passed away, a world of sin, and pain, and grief: their lot is now, and for ever, one of purity, and happiness, and safety. Welcome, Ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'

O what a moment of thrilling joy to all the redeemed, when the judgment being ended, the wicked sent away, Jesus and his saints and his angels alone remaining, the new heavens and earth shall open on the sight, and the Church, suited to the occupancy of this delightful territory,

as a beautiful city formed to fill the fairest spot of all the universe, shall take possession of her glorious land of promise, and all her children, safe and triumphant in the light of God's countenance, "shall reign in life by Jesus Christ."

Then, indeed, that blessed Redeemer, having brought all his saints from out of this world of evil and of woe, to those regions of celestial sanctity and joy, shall truly say, "Behold, I make all things new!"

Brethren, you would share that blessedness. Then, remember, as all things there are *new*, so they who dwell there,—what are they? *new* creatures in Christ Jesus. You must be made new creatures: you must be born again: else never will you have any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Ask then, ask earnestly in prayer, and you shall have the Spirit of Jesus, to give you a new heart, to cause you to put on the new man, and, conforming you to Christ, shall make you "meet to be partakers with the saints in light."

To proceed with our text. St. John is now himself addressed. The voice of Him that sits upon the throne is directed to him. "And He said unto me, write, for these words are true and faithful." "The words thou hast just heard; that great voice out of heaven, declaring the blessedness of the people of God in their glorified state, and my own affirmation, that all things are made new for their eternal joy,—write all that thou hast heard; it shall all be fulfilled; what thou hast had revealed in vision, my saints shall as-

surely possess in full reality : the words “ are true and faithful : ” write them then, and let my Church receive the record of them, and rest upon their verity ; all shall be made good.’

Christian brethren, how sweet to you is the truth, that what your God and Saviour speaks, you may take with firm persuasion that it shall never fail. “ My people,” it is written, “ shall never be ashamed.” Their hope, built on eternal promises, shall never betray them. And though that hope is fixed on “ things not seen as yet,” yet all shall be realized to believing souls. Their expectation, warranted by the word of the living God, cannot perish.

Believer, look heavenward, and bless God that the word which tells you of your portion there is a true and faithful word. So amid the sundry and manifold changes of the world you shall have a settled peace. You shall look above and beyond these regions of uncertainty and of disappointment, and descrying, with faith’s strong and illumined eye, “ the land that is very far off,” it shall be your triumph to say, “ *there* is my home, a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” And especially, ye sorrowing children of God, who now are oftentimes in heaviness through your manifold tribulations, rejoice in the assurance that yet a little while and God shall wipe away the tears from off all faces, and you shall reckon the sufferings of this present time, not worthy to be compared with the glory revealed in you. O, think much on this : it is no vain imagina-

tion. Your hope depends on the faithfulness of One who cannot lie.

But let us go a little further with our text. We shall find still more upon this point. "And He said unto me, it is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end."

Here you mark the strong expression used to signify to us the security of the believer in Christ, as regards his future blessedness. "It is done," saith the Lord. And so St. John is to write, and tell the Church. The portion of the saints is prepared. All their happiness is secured. Their joy and glory are as certain to them as though they even now were entering upon their inheritance. In the will and purpose of their God and their Redeemer all is made sure. Jesus says, "it is done:" and his counsel *shall* stand, his people *shall* be glorified.

But then, what is there in the word of Jesus to give us all this confidence? Is there any thing in Himself, his own being and nature, to guarantee the safety of the hope that reposes on his declarations? Hear his own words, as though designed to answer this inquiry; "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end," the first and the last, existing before all time, continuing to exist when time shall be no more: eternal and divine. Here then we have in fact an assertion of the Godhead of Jesus. The terms are just such as in the Old Testament we often meet with, and they are there used to denote the everlasting existence of Jehovah. "Thus saith the Lord, the King of Israel, and

his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts. I am the first, and I am the last, and beside me there is no God." So in the very opening of this book of Revelation, you hear almost the same words uttered by the Lord Jesus, and connected directly with a most solemn declaration of his Deity, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, which is, and which was, and which is to come, *the Almighty*." Then what are we to understand by the language in our text? Does not the Saviour seem to say to his servant John, 'Write, as I have bidden thee; write, and tell my Church of all her bliss to come; the words are true which promise her such felicity; the thing in effect is done; and here is the ground of her safety, that I, her Lord and Saviour, I who promise her these glorious joys, I am the eternal and unchangeable God, and from first to last the whole matter of my people's salvation has been my care, and I, by the hand of my almighty power, will bring that salvation to all its predicted and most blessed consummation.'

Thus the safety of the believer's hope, and the certainty that it will be fulfilled, lies in this, that He, who is the author of that hope, is none other than the eternal Son of God, who, being Himself divine and everlasting, has, from the beginning, made the salvation of the Church his charge, and will never cease his care of that Church, until He shall have brought every member of it safe to glory.

Humble Christian, pause awhile, and reflect on the wondrousness of this great truth. Who

is it that has taken thy soul into his care? And what is it that makes thee sure of the glory and joy which are before thee? Is it not this, that He who saves thee, and promises to glorify thee hereafter for ever, is Himself very and eternal God, and from everlasting even until now has been, and henceforward even to the end shall be, his people's faithful friend, and almighty protector; "Jesus, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." And so then He speaks in our text. It is as though He would satisfy thee how sure is thy hope. He tells thee *who He is*, that thou mayest know *how safe thou art*. "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end," 'eternal in my nature, divine in my existence, always and unchangeably the same, ever thy Redeemer; and when I affirm of thy salvation, yea of thy eternal glory, that it is *done*, I give thee this for the ground of thy confidence, that I, thy Saviour, am, and have been from eternity past, and shall be through eternity to come, one with God in all his attributes, and one with Him in all his purposes and acts for thy salvation. From everlasting to everlasting I am God.'

Beloved brethren, clasp again the promise of his faithfulness, and bless his holy name for the full assurance of hope which He thus emboldens you to entertain. The Lord increase your faith!

But there yet remains another, and a most precious portion of our text to be considered. How does it close? The Saviour is still speaking: "I will give unto him that is athirst of the

fountain of the water of life freely." How beautifully do words such as these strike upon the ear after what has gone before.

St. John has had a vision of the glory and bliss prepared for the people of God. He has heard the certainty of their hope declared from the lips of "the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ." Therefore, for all who know themselves to be of the number of God's people, here is indeed "everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace."

But then, how many are there that will, as they hear such things, be ready to say,—'Alas, this happiness it is not mine: too long have I neglected these concerns: Jesus, and his great salvation, I have despised: I have lived in folly, and earthliness, and sin: I can have no claim to share in the joys of the children of God: would that I could repent! would that I might return unto the Lord! O that he would look upon me, and be merciful unto me, and change my heart, and forgive my sins, and make me a new creature, and save my soul from the power of evil, and cleanse me, and sanctify me, and make me his own!'

Brethren, do any of you speak thus? Is this indeed your heart's desire? Do you sigh for deliverance from the sin you have too long loved? Do you, from your souls, seek after God and holiness? Are you truly hungering thus, and thirsting after righteousness? Then here is the Saviour's word to you: "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the

water of life freely." It is as though He had said, 'think not that all the joys which I have in store for my saints, are denied to you: true, you are sinners, and have been so far beyond all that you feel, or can conceive: I know all your guilt and vileness: and I also know all the pain, and grief, and wretchedness, you are now enduring, and all the earnest longing after pardon and grace, all the humble intreaties for restoration, peace, and holiness, which now fill your hearts: and I have mercy for you: the water of life flows for such as are athirst, and that is *your* condition: your souls are athirst for salvation: come then to the fountain: come by faith to me: believe my word: there is pardon for your sin, I died to obtain it: there is peace for you with God, I ever live to bring you near to Him: there is grace to cleanse and sanctify your hearts, I have it to bestow, even the power of the Holy Spirit: then delay no longer: come unto me, and I will give you of the living streams: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink."

And *one* word there is, in this part of our text, which we must particularly note: it is the last word, but it is the very word which makes all the Saviour's promises so dear to us, because so suitable to our condition. *How* does Jesus say that He will give of the water of life? He will give "*freely.*" Yes, so the invitation ran, when the prophet Isaiah was commissioned to deliver it, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come: and he that hath no money, come: yea, come without

money, and without price." And blessed be God, so it is still. The grace of his Gospel is free. No payment is required. No merit of ours is demanded, to make us worthy of the boon. The only requisite,—What is it? *A thirsting soul*: A soul that longs for grace. Whoso will, let him come. He that so cometh shall in no wise be cast out.

Awakened and penitent sinners, keep this word "*freely*" ever in view. It is the special and distinguishing feature of the Gospel. It is that without which there would be no Gospel to you. Had you aught to pay, had you merit of your own to bring in order to prove yourselves deserving of salvation, alas! that salvation would never be yours. But it is not so. God knows your utter ruin. He knows you have nothing to pay. And therefore He gives *freely*.

Yet the enemy of souls will often suggest to you the contrary of all this. And false notions of men in the world around you are exactly opposed to this truth. The world, that is to say, all unenlightened men, invariably think of salvation as a blessing to be earned at least in some measure by their own deserts. Yes, and your own foolish pride, and naturally narrow and unworthy thoughts of God Himself, these will often operate to lead you away from a simple reliance on God's free grace as the only hope of your soul. Watch against all these: and especially when a sense of your own guilt is strong upon your conscience, and the burden of sin lies heavy on your heart, then beware of the thought,

for it is sure to rise, that creatures so vile and so undeserving, cannot claim God's mercy, cannot, may not, ought not to think that eternal life is theirs, not, at all events, until they have done something on their own part, to prove that they are such as God may look upon with favor and complacency. The thought, I say, will arise, and if it finds place in your hearts, then so long as it prevails, so long will it shut you out from the full comfort of the Gospel: it will keep you lingering at a distance from Christ, in fear and doubt, and prevent your drawing nigh to the fountain of life, to which He calls you. No, remember, what He gives, is given *freely*. He asks no price. He will accept none. You have, you can have, none to offer. Then dream no more of making yourselves deserving of salvation, but praise your God and Saviour that all his mercies are so free, and for yourselves ask grace that you may rightly receive them, and be blest for ever in his love.

It is written, and they are precious words, "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst, Come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." The Lord the Spirit enable us all to believe and obey the blessed invitation.

